A new institutionalist analysis of local level food policy in England between 2012 and 2014

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DECLARATION

I declare that the work presented in this thesis, except those elements specifically declared, is all my own work carried out and finished at City University London.

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Abstract

This thesis explores the potential for food policy groups in England to render the food environment within their local areas more sustainable and resilient. The main question it addresses is how institutional norms, values and practices affect food policy groups' capacity to pursue their aims.

The research is informed by earlier literature identifying factors that shape the governance context within which a food policy group operates. It finds that institutions affecting food policy groups reside in four locations: within groups, between groups and their local authorities; within the local context; and within the multilevel governance context.

The study design is five case studies: the London Food Programme; the Islington Food Strategy; the Bristol Food Policy Council; Manchester Food Futures; and the County Durham Sustainable Local Food Strategy. These were selected to have diversity in: local government structure; location of the group vis-à-vis local government; and progress towards a food strategy. Data collection was through document analysis, direct observation, and semi-structured interviews.

The analysis shows the importance of food policy groups purposively determining and articulating institutions for efficiency and to foster actor agency to overcome constraints. Groups try to align their institutions with organisations they seek to influence in order to boost legitimacy and influence policy efficiently. Despite the dynamism of food policy groups and the difference they make in the lived experience of local areas, at present they are not prompting major change in the over-all food system configuration.

This research applies new institutionalism to the study of local level food policy for the first time, enabling insights into how institutional factors affect capacity. It contributes new perspectives to the new institutionalist literature on agency and institutional change.

The research is the first coherent exploration of the capacity of English food policy groups. It provides an evidence base to guide local food policy groups to be cognisant of contextual factors as they adopt structures and practices to maximise their impact.

Key words: Local food policy; food policy councils; urban food strategies; sustainable food; good food; food security; food governance; new institutionalism.

Acronyms

AAP	Area Action Partnership
AD	Anaerobic digestion
AFN	Alternative Food Network
AGMA	Association of Greater Manchester Authorities
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BCC	Bristol City Council
BFPC	Bristol Food Policy Council
BID	Business Improvement District
BSE	Bovine spongiform encephalopathy
CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group
CDFP	County Durham Food Partnership
CDP	County Durham Partnership
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
CVS	Community and Voluntary Sector
DCC	Durham County Council
DCLG	Department for Communities and Local Government
DCMS	Department for Culture, Media and Sport
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
DRCC/DCA	Durham Rural Community Council/Durham Community Action
EEC	European Economic Community
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FIG	Food Interest Group
GATT	General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade
GLA	Greater London Authority
GLC	Greater London Council
GMCA	Greater Manchester Combined Authority
HWB	Health and Wellbeing Board
IMAX	Income maximisation
LAA	Local Area Agreement
LBI	London Borough of Islington
LDA	London Development Agency
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership
LFP	London Food Programme
LGA	Local Government Association

LOGOC	London Olympic Games Organising Committee
LSP	Local Strategic Partnership
MACF	Manchester A Certain Future
MCC	Manchester City Council
MTE	Mid-term evaluation
NFU	National Farmers' Union
NHS	National Health Service
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
PCT	Primary Care Trust
PDO	Protected Designation of Origin
PGI	Protected Geographical Indication
PSFP	Public Sector Funding Package
PSG	Project steering group
RDA	Regional Development Agency
SAADMP	Site Allocations and Development Management Plan
SCA	Sustainable Communities Act
SFCN	Sustainable Food Cities Network
SRF	Strategic Regeneration Framework
SUGC	Strategic Urban Governance Capacity
TOC	Theory of Change
UK	United Kingdom
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WRAP	Waste & Resources Action Programme
WTO	World Trade Organization

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1   Introduction

This chapter provides the broad background for this research by describing the resurgence of sub-national food policy around the world, and provides definitions of key terms and understandings that are used throughout the thesis. It introduces the subject and scope of the research project as the effect of governance context on the capacity of local food policy groups and programmes in England to pursue their aims, between 2012 and 2014. Finally, a breakdown of thesis chapters is provided.

1.1   Emergence of local level food policy

Since the middle of the 20th century the food system that serves the global North has been configured by neoliberal, capitalist policy. The current configuration of the food system is subject to powerful globalising trends, as advances in technology and communications, and international trade agreements, mean produce from intensified agriculture is transported across huge distances, from its place of production to places of processing and manufacture into composite food products, and onwards to the place of consumption. Power in the food system is concentrated with the small clutch of corporate players that stand between the multitude of producers and the multitude of consumers, and who place high store on operating at scale and efficiently. In this way they are able both to extract value and to provide ostensibly cheap food at the consumer end. The true cost of food, however – in terms of the social, environmental, and economic impacts of the food system – is externalised and unrepresented in the consumer price of food products (Lang et al. 2009).

The term 'food system' is used in throughout thesis to refer to all stages of food supply from production, to distribution, to consumption, and waste disposal, as well as the contextual influences, inputs, outcomes and outputs, all of which are intrinsically connected (see figure 1-1) (Lang et al. 2009, Lang and Heasman, forthcoming). In light of the non-divisibility of the food system, this thesis refers to the *configuration* of the food system rather than the food system *per se*, in the belief that alternative food provisioning arrangements are sub-systems that remain part of the whole and remain relational to all other parts, rather than separate, alternative food systems operating in parallel.

There has been growing uneasiness over the dominant food system configuration described above due to the negative impacts and the confluence of pressures that are casting doubt on whether it can be sustained. These pressures, termed the 'new fundamentals' by Barling et al (2008), include: the impact of climate change, water stress, compromised biodiversity and eco-systems support, decreasing non-renewable fossil fuels, population growth, disproportionate land use to cater to high protein diets, soil degradation, unfair and insecure labour conditions, and dietary change and public health.

Figure 1-1 The food system configured

Energy inputs	Labour	Environmental 'givens'	Socio-cultural influences	Economic drivers
Fuels	Skills, livelihoods	eg climate, water, land, biodiversity	eg religion, gender, family	eg price, profits, trade

International organisations → Policy guidelines, advice etc

Regional bodies → Laws, regulations, subsidies, etc

National governments → Laws, regulations, subsidies

Local governments → Laws, regulations, subsidies, etc

INPUTS
Agrichemicals, pharmaceuticals, equipment, seeds

PRIMARY PRODUCTION
Farming, fishing, horticulture, plantations

PROCESSING & MANUFACTURE
Craft / large factories

DISTRIBUTION & LOGISTICS
National / international, import/export

RETAIL
markets, shops, supermarkets

FOODSERVICE
catering, cafés, restaurants, public sector

DOMESTIC FOOD PREPARATION

CONSUMPTION

Training & education

Research, development, engineering & technology

Finance capital

Public health, hygiene controls, risk management

Consciousness industries, eg advertising, media

Civil society organisations

Cultural impact	*Social impact*	*Public health & nutrition outcomes*	*Waste & biological outflow*	*Energy & outflow and material emissions*

Source: Lang and Heasman (forthcoming)

The new fundamentals have already demonstrated potential to disrupt food supply in the shock food price rises of 2007/8, which led to riots in a number of locations around the world (Bohstedt 2014). Morgan & Sonnino (2010) similarly identify five trends that signify that complacency over the food system is no longer an option: the surge in food prices, increase in food insecurity, recognition that food security is a matter of national security, the effect of climate change on the agri-food system, and growing incidence of land conflicts. These five trends are manifest in different combinations and degrees of importance in different places, where they comprise what Morgan and Sonnino call the 'new food equation'.

The implication of the new fundamentals and the new food equation is that policy makers at all levels – international, EU, national and sub-national – are acknowledging the enormous importance of the food system and its relation to an array of modern ills (Morgan 2014; Morgan & Sonnino 2010). Consequently, there is recognition of the need for policy and planning in order to build resilience, so as to continue to meet the needs of populations in the future. However, proposed solutions differ between levels and places, from those that see the answer in increased production through biotechnology – an approach that allows government to shrug off its responsibility and deposit it with the private sector – to those that advocate for concerted

food policy – that is, intentional consideration of food issues and impacts in policy-making across all policy domains.

It is against this backdrop that there has been a surge of interest and activity in food policy at the sub-national and local levels. Cities are recognised as being particularly vulnerable to the failures of the current system configuration since they lack the capacity to produce sufficient food for their populations and have largely lost direct sourcing links with their hinterlands (Steel 2008; Steel 2012). Moreover, cities are obesogenic environments that offer limited opportunities for physical activity but where energy-dense, unhealthy food products are cheap, readily available and heavily marketed for their convenience (Morgan & Sonnino 2010; Carey 2013). The FAO's *Food for the Cities* programme has issued calls for city regions to lead efforts for a sustainable, resilient, fair and healthy food supply across the urban-rural continuum in both developing and developed countries, and is highlighting the need for collaboration between sub-national and local governments, civil society, the private sector and the donor community (FAO 2011; FAO 2014).

Meanwhile, a trend has emerged at the sub-national level in a number of developed countries for groups of actors from the public, civil society and private sectors to take on governance responsibility for food issues; in some cases these groups are one of several entities within a wider programme of food-focused work[1]. These groups acknowledge that food is a component in some of the most pressing problems of our times, reaching across multiple policy domains and services that are delivered at the local government level, and they advocate for concerted food policy. Such groups began emerging from the 1980s[2] and they are particularly prolific in North America[3], where the most common mechanism is a food policy council at the city, county, or state level (Burgan & Winne 2012). A parallel movement has grown up in Europe over the last ten years and there is considerable interaction, exchange, and cross-inspiration between places and across continents[4].

Recognising that their local areas are under threat and rendered vulnerable, local food groups pursue a different food system configuration to the current, dominant configuration forged by national government and the private sector (Morgan & Sonnino 2010). The precise vision of

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[1] This will be demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 7 in particular, where there are several inter-related groups of actors under the auspices of a wider programme of work.

[2] The earliest example identified by this researcher is the Knoxville Food Policy Council in Tennessee, USA, which was formed in the mid-1980s. In the UK the London Food Commission also existed in the 1980s under the auspices of the Greater London Council (dissolved in 1986 and replaced in 2000 by the Greater London Authority), and served as inspiration for the Toronto Food Policy Council (Blay-Palmer 2009).

[3] As of 2012, Morgan (2014) counted 193 food policy councils in North America.

[4] See footnote 2. In return, the Toronto Food Policy Council inspired the establishment of the London Food Board in 2004 under the Greater London Authority.

each one varies, but a common term is 'sustainability'. The underlying meaning of sustainable in this context requires careful unpacking in order to understand the nuances and to outline a shared vision of local food policy groups. For this it is necessary to turn to the academic literature to date.

1.1.1   Outlining a shared vision of local food policy groups

At a basic level, sustainable means 'able to be sustained', and can therefore be seen as the antithesis of, and the antidote to, the current food system configuration, which has been exposed as inherently un-sustainable and in-secure. Lang and Barling (2012, p.322) have articulated the close relationship between sustainability – defined by multiple social, environmental, and economic criteria – and food security: 'a basic truth remains that the only food system to be secure is that which is sustainable, and the route to food security is by addressing sustainability'.

Lang and Barling propose a socio-economic perspective of food security that concerns the whole food system, not just the production and consumption ends, and that accepts the need to deal with a complex array of problems across policy domains. Such an approach would transcend the deep contestations that have beleaguered food security as a concept and led to the formation of several factions: there are more than 200 definitions of food security in circulation (FAO 2003; Midgley 2013), and it has gone through several incarnations since it was coined in the 1970s – from global food availability, to including access, multiple levels of food security, and nutrition (Midgley 2013). Broadly speaking two dominant camps have emerged in the food security field. The productivist camp that emerged following the 1974 World Food Conference lays responsibility for food security at the national level and sees the solution as increased agricultural production (Sonnino 2014; Lang & Barling 2012). The hunger and food access perspective has grown up out the work of Amartya Sen in the 1980s, meanwhile, and is concentrated on the household level, although questions around access have shifted from physical availability of healthy food to ability to acquire it (Sonnino 2014).

The suggestion of a socio-economic, holistic approach to food security has captured the attention of researchers focused on urban food contexts, as it resonates with the practical intentions of local food policy groups that pursue a concerted food policy across domains and service areas. That this approach is eclipsing food security as it has previously been understood is demonstrated in the findings of Sonnino's (2014) discourse analysis of 15 urban food strategies from the UK, US and Canada, in which the term 'food security' was absent from all the document titles but was implied within the wider health and sustainability agenda. She suggests that cities represent a meso-level between the national (macro) and household (micro) levels, where food security is derived from responses to public health, political, socio-economic

and ecological food crises. This builds on an earlier proposal that the urban arena makes a suitable unit of analysis for a 'sustainable food security framework' that views relations between all stages and actors in a holistic fashion through a combined sustainability and food security lens (Sonnino et al. 2014).

For all of its potential services to food security, however, sustainability itself still suffers from a high degree of nuance and interpretation, so that Morgan and Sonnino (2010) express doubt over whether agreement will ever be reached over what exactly constitutes a 'sustainable food strategy'. While Lang and Barling (2012) present a gold standard of sustainability that meets multiple social, economic and ecological criteria, there is a high risk of trade-offs between them and, since the three pillars assume different degrees of importance in different places depending on civic priorities, they feature in individual strategies with different degrees of emphasis. The danger is that there will be an enduring incompatibility between the anti-hunger roots of food security, which emphasises access to healthy and nutritious food for all regardless of origin, and a view of sustainability that emphasises origins and ethics of supply and would seem to imply that perfectly nutritious food that does not meet these standards ought not to be supplied at all (Mendes 2007; Mendes 2008; Allen 1999). If this comes to pass the 'sustainable food security framework' could amount to little more than an aspiration, while in the everyday experience sustainability the one hand, and efforts to address hunger and nutrition on the other, exist in different ball parks.

Sonnino did, however, identify a unanimous quest for more local food provisioning, which requires close consideration for its relation to sustainability. As noted above, the objective of more local food provisioning is supported by the FAO 's Food for the Cities programme (FAO 2011) which recommends forging regional food links, and several scholars have also advocated re-connecting cities with their rural hinterlands through space-based conceptualisations such as sitopia (Steel 2012), foodsheds (Kloppenburg et al. 1996), and the new food geography, shown in figure 1-2, which envisages drawing upon and supporting the rural hinterlands of cities through the mechanisms of urban food strategies, public procurement and short food supply chains (Wiskerke & Viljoen 2012; Wiskerke 2009).

Figure 1-2 The new food geography
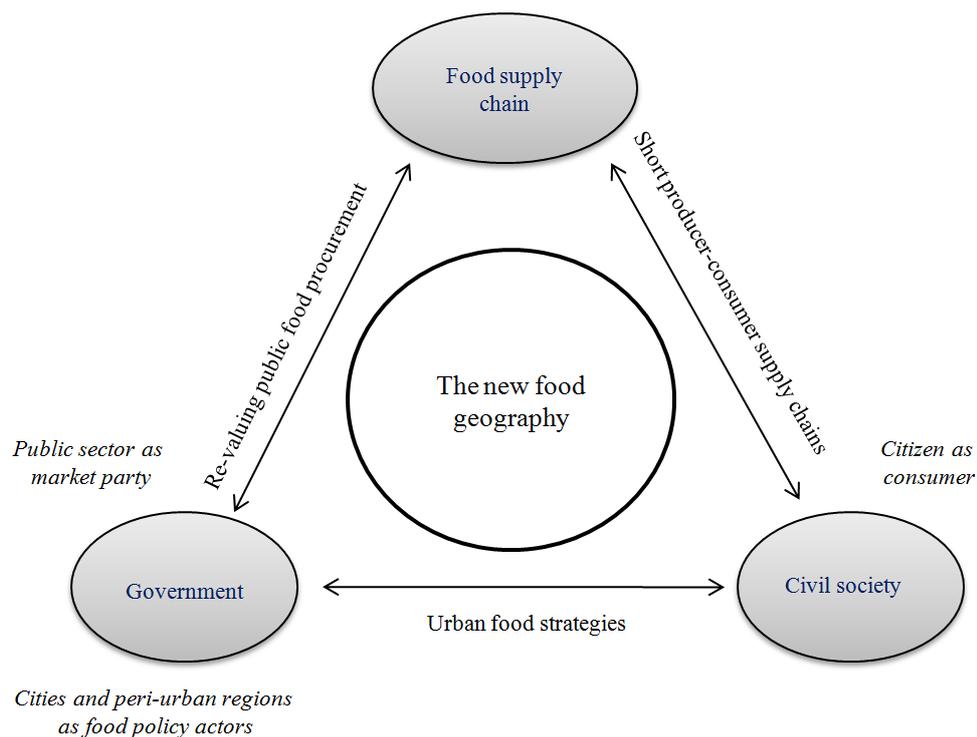
(Source: Wiskerke & Viljoen 2012; Wiskerke 2009)

Crucially, however, the strategies analysed by Sonnino pursue local food not as an end in itself, but as a means to a sustainable and resilient end. In particular, favouring local food is a means for supporting the local economy, both through direct transactions and through multiplier effects. In this way, the strategies appear to adopt cosmopolitan localism that is 'capacious, multicultural and inclusive' (Morgan & Sonnino 2010, p.212). This has been termed as reflexive localism that involves 'articulating 'open', continuous, 'reflexive' processes that bring together a broadly representative group of people to explore and discuss ways of changing their society' (DuPuis & Goodman 2005, p.361 original emphasis). Pursuing food as an end in itself, on the other hand, would constitute 'defensive' (Winter 2003; Hinrichs 2003) or 'unreflexive' (DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Goodman et al. 2011) localism, also known as the 'local trap' (Born & Purcell 2006; DeLind 2011), and build cultural and social barriers to exclude all that is non-local on the assumption that non-local food must therefore be global, and that all 'global' food is socially, economically, and ecologically exploitative. This demonstrates that the terms 'local' and 'sustainable' should on no account be conflated, since local alone does not guarantee social or economic sustainability. Even as a proxy for environmental sustainability on the grounds of reduced food miles and carbon footprint 'local' is inadequate, as it is unable to take account of impacts over the full lifecycle.

As an adjunct to the above argument, some comment is needed on the observed tendency in the literature to pluralise food systems and to prefix the term with the words local-, localised-,

urban- or community (eg Feenstra 2002; Hinrichs 2000; Feagan 2007; Bellows & Hamm 2001). These phrases could be seen to negate cosmopolitan localism in an idealist attempt to carve out a food fiefdom around a place, and to contradict the explanation of the food system as holistic and non-divisible. All places of human settlement, their demands and impacts, are in symbiosis with all parts of the food system, in all locations (Marsden 2013). They influence what is produced, where, and by whom, how it is physically transported to cities and distributed within them, exchange relations, consumer choice and access, waste disposal, and all other externalities all along the way (Sonnino, 2009). Modern farming and food processing requires such complex inputs that it would be impossible entirely to segregate a local or regional food system from the whole (Kneafsey 2010), but Dahlberg conceives of interconnected sub-systems of the greater whole existing at different levels, from the household to the global (Dahlberg 1997, as referenced by Mendes 2007). Thus, expressions of plural food systems that appear to be place-related are best understood as sub-systems that remain connected to the greater whole.

The next consideration is where precisely sustainability exists within the complex of nodes, links and stages of the food system. This question is addressed by Wiskerke's new food geography (Wiskerke & Viljoen 2012; Wiskerke 2009) which, beyond advocating for local food sourcing, includes two other points that provide for a richer vision: firstly, the values underlying exchange relations, and secondly, the governance context. Considering the first point, the exchange relations within the new food geography are based on 'sustainability' or moral values, as actors involved in them share good intentions for the environment, the local economy and social aspects of the food chain, rather than merely seeking competitive advantage. This is consistent with Morgan's (2014) identification of a common thread between food policy groups as the desire to address socio-economic problems associated with the industrialised food system, in lieu of a system whose inter-actor relations are based solely on competitive advantage. It also has touch points with social embeddedness, the lens used by much of the academic literature on local food and alternative food networks (AFN) that merits further discussion.

Social embeddedness has its roots in Polanyi's assertion that the human economy is embedded in economic and (crucially) non-economic institutions (Polanyi 1957), and its subsequent reworking by Granovetter in a bid to redress the neglect of social structures in economic transactions (Granovetter 1985). Block (1990, as cited by Hinrichs 2000) elaborated further by locating social embeddedness between marketness and instrumentalism: marketness is the continuum representing the importance of price considerations versus non-market considerations; while instrumentalism denotes individuals' prioritisation and pursuit of economic versus non-economic goals (such as morality, ethnic-, friend- and family ties). This framework has been used by Hinrichs (2000) in her study of social relations in farmers' markets and community supported agriculture, and in Sage's (2003) study of issues affecting AFNs in south-west Ireland. However, the conceptualisation has also come in for some criticism. In

particular, quality has tended to be seen as a centrepiece of embeddedness, having gained prominence in response to food safety scandals of the 1980s and early 1990s – despite being highly contested and open to appropriation. This has led to a common but erroneous assumption that quality, local, and natural are synonymous (Winter 2003; Murdoch et al. 2000), which is wont to lead to defensive localism.

The economic sociology perspective on embeddedness is inadequate to explain the intentions of food policy groups because it focuses on only one aspect – food provisioning itself – whereas local food policy groups are concerned with a wider range of powers and responsibilities across policy domains that can shape all facets of how food is manifest within, and around, the city. However, Sonnino (2013) establishes a bridge with the wider intentions of food policy groups by identifying the re-scaling of food policy to the local level, and particularly cities taking the lead on food policy, as a new stage in the research agenda on food localisation (following initial enthusiasm based on putative environmental and socio-economic benefits, and articulation of the dangers of defensive localism and vulnerability of local food in the face of an unsupportive multi-level governance).

What is more, Sonnino and Marsden (2006) advocate extending the concept of embeddedness of local food beyond its roots in economic geography and the social realm, and transposing it to the socio-cultural, spatial, and regulatory plane. AFNs are viewed as strung between two dimensions: the horizontal that relates to the cultural, political and regulatory context at the level at which they operate; and the vertical dimension made up of multilevel governance that shapes and frames local conditions, both constraining actions and offering opportunities. This resonates with the second facet of Wiskerke's new food geography, that it promotes governance that binds regional actors from the government, private sector supply chain, and civil society sectors through urban-rural relations, tradition, culture, and joint problem-solving, thereby overcoming the inter-sector tensions that usually occur in food system governance as the sectors overlap and jostle for dominance (Barling 2008). These approaches introduce the importance of governance into local level food policy as a crucial concept for understanding the tensions, interests, and negotiations behind food system configurations. The sheer number of actors and interests involved in food policy, and the respective powers of different government departments at national and sub-national levels, means food policy, located as it is at the intersection of two governance dimensions, is highly contested (Caraher et al. 2013; Morgan 2009).

The following section delves further into the concept of governance, and identifies governance-related drivers to the emergence of local level food policy and potential barriers to its efficacy.

1.2 Governance drivers of local food policy

This section provides an explanation of governance and how it relates to food. First, it traces the shift to governance over the last 30 years and conceptualises two dimensions of governance, vertical and horizontal. Local level food policy is identified as occupying the contested space at the intersection of the two. Next, gaps in horizontal and vertical food governance are identified and their implications discussed.

1.2.1 The shift to governance

The last 30 years have seen a shift from top-down, centralised government typified by the Westminster model towards multi-sector governance in which a raft of new actors – from civil society organisations and agencies, businesses, and voluntary and community groups – now sit alongside public sector actors in partnerships that formulate and implement policy. The involvement of new, multi-sector actors in policy making is explained with the help of policy networks, conceived by Rhodes and Marsh (1992) as constructs within which actors from the public, private and civil society sectors negotiate over policy. Policy networks will be discussed in more detail in section 3.4.1 below, which covers possible conceptualisations of food policy groups.

The advent of governance has coincided with globalisation, and rampant neoliberalism has forced deregulation and privatisation of public services. However these ought not to be understood as a ceding of power by the state (Pierre & Peters 2003), but rather that the state no longer 'rows' (ie delivers services or makes decisions unilaterally) but 'steers' using a clutch of tools such as monitoring, cultural persuasion, financing, and a reserve right to intervene (Stoker 2000). While the national state may not be physically present during governance negotiations, it retains the capacity to steer by proxy through agency actors that are funded by – and ultimately accountable to – national government (Wilson 2003). This shift has taken place for every policy domain. It means that the food system is not governed solely by top-down regulations, but the private and civil society sectors have entered into food system governance, as depicted in the 'food policy triangle' in figure 1-3 (Barling 2008).

Figure 1-3 The food policy triangle

PUBLIC:
Eg Public standards;
trade relations;
economic policy

CIVIL SOCIETY:
Watchdog; advocacy

PRIVATE: Vehicle of food
supply; private standards
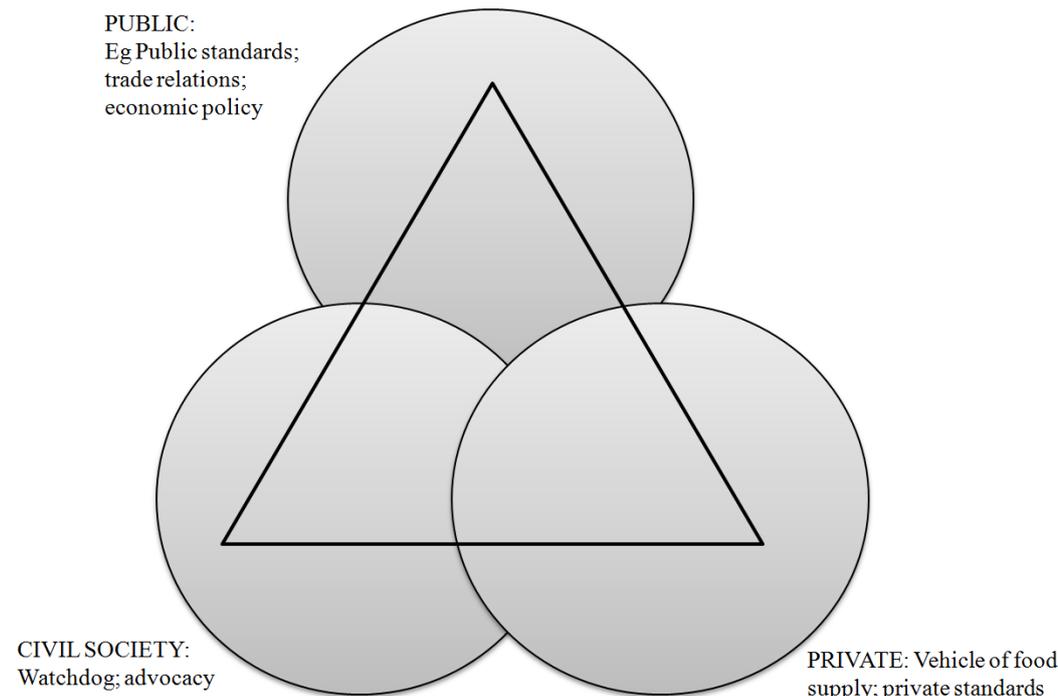
(Source: Barling 2008)

The shift to governance has taken place around the world but it was first recognised and conceptualised to explain policy making for the EU and its relationships with member states (Rhodes 1997). Actors from multiple sectors are involving in policy making at every level – local, regional, national, super-national (EU), and international. Multi-level or 'vertical' governance refers to the telescopic distribution of powers and responsibilities between the levels, from the international to the local, such as central government's determination of the structure and function of local government. There is a patchwork of powers between policy domains between the levels (Cairney 2012), as policy at the lower levels is framed and constrained by policy at higher levels, which can either set regulation to be implemented by lower levels or provide parameters and broad strokes to be interpreted and adapted to local settings. The levels are not restricted to interacting only with their neighbours, and communication is not always top down; for instance, the (now defunct) English regions and local authority areas have, in the past, by-passed central government to obtain European funding for regeneration. Meanwhile, horizontal governance concerns how the powers and responsibilities for each level are discharged by the actors and sectors involved in governance. The horizontal dimension at the local level is shaped by the historical, geographical, socio-economic, cultural, and political settings that create a particular set of needs, preferences, and priorities.

The intersection of the vertical and horizontal governance dimensions is a space fraught with tensions, as the local level seeks at once both to fulfil its responsibilities and to protect the

interests of the local population, including from threats posed by multilevel governance. At the same time, local areas seek to project an image up through the vertical dimension; for instance, English cities may seek 'World' or 'European' status in a bid to attract investment, based on the cultural assets or economic opportunities they can offer (Pierre 2011). It is within this space that local food policy resides and, as such, is beset by tensions. On the one hand the local level is responsible for a number of policy domains and services that are connected to food, such as planning, public health, environmental health, social services, sustainability, local economy, and public procurement. On the other hand, its powers and responsibilities with respect to these domains are framed and constrained vertically by the regional, national and international levels of policy.

1.2.2   Food governance gaps

Having described what is meant by governance and the tensions inherent therein, this subsection identifies gaps in food governance in each of the two dimensions and explores their implications.

Taking first the horizontal dimension, each of the policy domains for which the local level has powers and responsibilities tends to be handled as a discrete policy silo, with little communication or joint action with others. This means that food issues are dealt with at the local level in a fragmented fashion, with a high risk of contradictions. No one person or team takes overall responsibility for food or for the many socio-economic and environmental problems stemming from the current food system configuration that span these silos, and there is a danger of domain-specific policies contradicting or counteracting each other, and issues falling between the gaps (Morgan 2014; Haughton 1987; Pothukuchi & Kaufman 1999; Caraher et al. 2013).

This fragmented horizontal governance of food is a driver for the emergence of local food policy groups, as a common denominator of urban food strategies is 'the *intention* to connect and create synergies between different public domains [...] that are in one way or another connected to food' (Wiskerke & Viljoen 2012, p.28 emphasis added). This observation is supported by the academic literature on prominent local food policy groups to date, which shows adoption of this joined up approach, although usually with one domain serving as a 'hook' or entry point to gain initial buy-in, in keeping with the civic priorities *du jour*. For instance, the initial framing of the Toronto Food Policy Council was public health, as was the work of the London Food Board when it was formed under the Greater London Authority in 2004, but both maintained wider underlying policy objectives on food access, affordability, education and production, which means there has been an undercurrent of activity that prevents issues being over-looked and enables them to be brought to the fore at any time if priorities

change (Blay-Palmer 2009; Mah & Thang 2013; Reynolds 2009; Morgan & Sonnino 2010). The horizontal food governance gap can also represent a barrier to effective local level food policy however, because while there is the *intention* to connect food-related policy domains, actually achieving this is not a given but depends upon a range of other factors and practices within local governance. In addition, local level policy is often framed within discrete policy domains, so that silo-thinking is perpetuated up through multi-level governance.

As for vertical, multi-level governance, McRae observed that actors involved in food policy councils in Canada 'feel strongly that existing institutional responses at the federal, provincial and municipal levels are inadequate to address fundamental food security problems at the local level, and that municipalities, which in many provinces have a responsibility for public health, need to take a new approach if long-lasting solutions are to be found' (MacRae 1999, p.192). This is supported by Caraher et al (2013), who propose that local food policy groups emerge in order to compensate for inaction by other levels – especially national governments – over the threats associated with the current food system configuration and/or tensions between approaches to dealing with them.

The principle of subsidiarity holds that policies should be formulated and enacted at the most local level possible and the state should step in only if local authorities and communities are unable to achieve the required action (FAO 2011). While this validates the existence of local food policy groups and ensures initiatives are appropriate to local circumstances, it ought not to be taken to mean that a policy void at the national and regional levels is in any way desirable or helpful to effective local food policy. A policy void, or lack of a concerted food policy, is not no policy at all, but rather a hands-off food policy that gives responsibility for food entirely to neoliberal market forces (Derkzen & Morgan 2012). As such, it is at odds with the intention of local food policy that seeks a more sustainable food system configuration.

As well as being a driver, vertical governance gaps can also constitute a threat or barrier to the effectiveness of local food policy. As Morgan et al (2006) demonstrate for the case of California and Tuscany, inclement national and supra-national policy impedes initiatives at the local level, and there is a need for consultation through other scales, and for local action to be embedded and supported. This has the additional benefit of avoiding the premature assumption that food provisioning has been solved by the local level, obstructing from view the need for long-term, complementary action throughout the vertical governance scale (Barling et al. 2002).

This sub-section has shown that food governance gaps in the horizontal and vertical dimensions serve as drivers for local level food policy, but may also serve as barriers to its ability to achieve its objectives. Local level food policy does not exist in a vacuum but, located as it is at the intersection of the vertical and horizontal dimensions, it is highly contingent on its context, policy framing and constraints, and the powers and responsibilities that may be employed.

1.3   Subject and scope of research

The previous section established the importance of governance context and found that governance gaps in the horizontal and vertical dimensions can present problems for local food policy groups (and wider programmes, where relevant) realising their intentions. What is not clear is how exactly governance arrangements, structures and practices affect their capacity to pursue their objectives. This is the central question addressed by this research project, which takes local level food policy in England as its subject.

As at mid-2012 local level food policy groups and/or strategies (and related programmes of work) existed in England in Greater London, the London Borough of Islington, Bristol, Sheffield, Brighton and Hove, Manchester, Bradford, Plymouth, Sandwell, Herefordshire, and County Durham, the latter two of which include both rural and urban areas. Since then, over 20 more have been formed, thanks, in part, to the coordinative activities of the Sustainable Food Cities Network[5]. While there is diversity in the structural set-up of the groups and their precise roles and functions, they all have several points in common. The first is some degree of buy-in from local government, albeit varying considerably in formality from political adoption of a strategy, signing up to a Charter, or location of the group within local government structures, to provision of resources, either financial or in-kind (such as provision of meeting room or allowing officers to participate during working hours). The second is involvement of civil society actors alongside the public sector. The third is an intention to have some influence over policy, in addition to other functions that vary between cases. The fourth and final common point is the intention to bridge food-related policy domains at the local level.

The English context is of particular empirical interest for the study of local food policy groups because the national policy direction over food is overwhelmingly neoliberal and therefore at odds with the concerted policy approach. Secondly, there have been a number of recent shifts in national-local government relations, as successive governments have redrawn of administrative boundaries and adopted different philosophies on the role of local government, including the localism rhetoric under the Conservative-led Coalition government that came into power in 2010. As a result, an investigation of the effects of governance arrangements, practices and structures between 2012 and 2014 is expected to yield rich insights.

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[5] The Sustainable Food Cities Network is a three-year initiative (2013-16) funded by the Esmée Fairbairn and run by the organisations Sustain, the Soil Association and Food Matters. It aims to encourage the establishment of 'food partnerships' in cities and other local authority areas across the UK by providing guidance, networking and an awards scheme. Through the initiative, the coordinators have been funded to set up food partnerships in six urban areas (Newcastle, Cardiff, Belfast, Stockport, Bournemouth and Poole, and Liverpool), but there are around 30 more that have not received funding through the initiative in the wider network.

It should be noted that this thesis does not seek to evaluate local food policy endeavours or to judge them on their achievements. As the initiatives are relatively recent it would be unreasonable to expect them to have delivered on all their objectives – and, in any case, it would be more appropriate for such judgements to be based on in-built evaluation criteria. Rather, this project uses governance and new institutionalist theory to investigate the effects of governance factors relating to the food policy group itself, and the rules, norms and practices both in the immediate local governance context and in multi-level framing.

1.4   Thesis structure

The purpose of this introduction has been to provide the topical background to this research, and to provide definitions and core understandings of key terms and concepts – that is, the food system, sustainability, food security, and governance. It has introduced the subject and scope of this research project as primarily local level food policy groups in England (unless they are part of a wider programme, in which case the latter is the research subject) and identified the importance of governance context in their effectiveness.

Chapter two provides a detailed background on the English case. The current and recent national approach to food policy is presented, followed by examples of multilevel framing of some food-related policy domains to demonstrate the capacity and restrictions on local level food policy action. A description of recent shifts in the philosophy and structure of local government is provided.

 Chapter three reviews the literature to date on local level food policy groups in developed countries, dealing with nomenclature and modus operandi, and which actors and sectors are – and should be – involved. A conceptual framework is drawn up of factors that can serve as enablers and barriers to a local food policy group within its particular context, and the research problem is identified.   Next, consideration is given to how food policy groups may be conceptualised, discussing the potential fit and limitations to their classification as policy networks and partnerships. New institutionalism is proposed as a theoretical tool for studying how norms, values and practices affect food policy groups' capacity to work towards their aims. Finally, the research questions are articulated.

Chapter four sets out the research design and methods for the research project. Explanations are provided on the procedure for identifying relevant literature to review, the selection of case studies and the choice of data collection methods. The strategy for analysing data is set out, together with the case study protocol and the approach to ethical considerations.

Chapters five to nine present the findings from the five case studies on the London Food Programme, the Islington Food Strategy Partnership, the Bristol Food Policy Council,

Manchester Food Futures, and the County Durham Sustainable Local Food Strategy. Each chapter covers first the local level context and the background and current structural set-up, aims, and priorities, before describing structural and operational factors affecting their capacity to pursue their aims, both pertaining to the group itself and the multi-level framing.

Chapter ten contains a comparative discussion of the findings. The first section concerns the visions, aims and objectives of the case study groups, and the second section compares them on the basis of factors, under the headings of the four dimensions or locations within which institutions exist. New institutionalism is used to explain how the factors affect the food policy groups' capacity to pursue their objectives.

Chapter eleven concludes this thesis by reflecting on the key themes pertaining to the main research question, examining the broader implications of the local food policy phenomenon for the food system, and providing some guidance for local food policy groups. The second part reflects upon the research process and methodological lessons learned. Finally, some avenues for future and on-going research on local level and urban food policy are identified.

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2 The English context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter sets out the background on English food policy. Although the focus of this thesis is food policy at the local, predominantly urban, level, it is important to acknowledge the national context within which it is situated, not least in order to appreciate the framings and constraints on local policy making. First it provides an overview of food provisioning arrangements, before tracing the general approach to food policy for England[6] in recent history and acknowledging how this approach relates to WTO and EU contexts. Next, examples are provided to show the potential for food policy action at the local level within the frames and constraints imposed higher levels. Finally, an account is given of national-local government relations to establish the role and remit of local government, followed by an analysis of structural changes that could present issues for effective local level food policy.

2.2 UK food provisioning snapshot

The predominant food provisioning arrangements for the UK are tied to the current globalised food system configuration that was described in Chapter 1. The country is a net importer of food and drink, with imports valued at £40.2 billion in 2013 (of which £14.4bn was highly processed food products, £17.8 billion lightly processed, and £8 billion unprocessed) – against exports to the value of £18.9 billion[7] (Defra, 2014b). In 2013, 53 per cent of the food consumed in the UK was produced domestically[8], with the remainder originating from 22 other countries (figure 2-1). Just under a quarter (23 per cent) of the UK's food supply originated from within the EU, with the biggest suppliers being The Netherlands, Spain, France, Germany and Ireland. The UK's reliance on the EU is unsurprisingly since, as an EU member state, it adheres to the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) that has provided the framework for a unified and preferential agricultural market since 1962, and which provides the broad framing of agricultural policy of member states[9]. This means that supply is relatively non-risky (Hubbard & Hubbard, 2013) – at least as long as the UK remains in the EU[10]. That said, these data relate

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[6] For Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, food-related policy areas (agriculture, health, food standards, tourism, trade promotion, planning and inward investment) are devolved. These lie outside the scope of the present project, which focuses on England.

[77] Including alcoholic drinks.

[8] 85 per cent of dairy and eggs consumed were domestically produced; with 84 per cent of meat; 49 per cent of cereals; and 22 per cent of fruit and vegetables.

[9] A series of reforms have shifted the CAP's emphasis from its original purpose of preventing food shortages by the EU (then the EEC) buying surplus produce at market rates, as explained in section 2.3 below.

[10] The Conservative government elected in May 2015 has pledged a referendum on the UK's EU membership in 2017.

only to the final stage of food products' processing[11] and also mask the fact that even where food is considered to be domestically-produced it is still highly dependent on imported inputs, such as energy and animal feed (Barling, Sharpe, & Lang, 2008; Hubbard & Hubbard, 2013).

Figure 2-1 Origins of food consumed in the UK in 2013
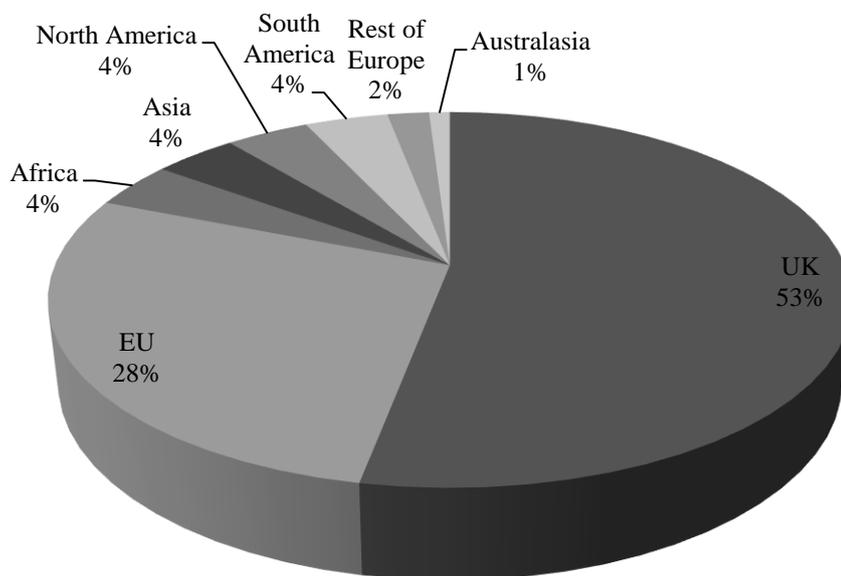
Source: Defra (2014)

The food industry makes an important contribution to the UK economy. Despite being outstripped by imports in value terms, food and drink accounted for around 6 per cent of overall UK exports in 2013. It is the largest manufacturing sector in the UK, with an annual turnover of £95.4 billion and Gross Value Added (GVA) of £25.7 billion (ONS, 2014). The vast majority of the UK's food supply passes through the hands of private companies on its journey from 'field to fork'. At the end closest to the consumer, the food retail landscape is dominated by the 'big four' supermarkets (Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's, Morrisons) which wield extraordinary power within the current food system configuration, setting conditions for suppliers' market participation. The combined share of these four multinational companies in the UK's total food retail spend – £175 billion in 2014 – is estimated at between 60 and 75 per cent (Defra, 2014a; IGD, 2014). The food service sector[12], meanwhile, was projected to reach a value of £82.5 billion in 2014 (Wingett, 2014). The public sector procures food to the value of £1.2 billion

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[11] Country of origin refers to the location of the final stage of processing. Processed food products, particularly those that are highly processed, include composite products that contain ingredients sourced from a variety countries, which have undergone primary processing in different locations around the world.

[12] Foods supplied for consumption outside the home, including restaurants, cafeterias, canteens and catering operations in all public- and private-sector settings.

each year for consumption in schools, hospitals, care homes, prisons, and other public sector settings (Bonfield, 2014).

While these statistics paint a picture of abundance and availability, eating practices in the UK fall short of the recommendations in the Food Standard Agency's *Eatwell Plate*[13]: people are eating nearly three times the recommended maximum of foods high in fat and sugar, and too much milk and dairy and meat, fish, eggs and other protein sources; on the other hand, they are eating too little starchy food and too few portions of fruits and vegetables (Defra, 2014b). Diet-related ill health is a major cause of concern. In 2012, 25 per cent of adults were obese and a further 37 per cent were overweight; health problems caused by obesity and overweight are costing the National Health Service around £5 billion a year. The reasons behind the country's poor consumption habits are many and complex, and include socio-cultural factors, lack of education and awareness, availability, access and affordability.

Food poverty – the inability to afford or to access foods that make up a healthy diet (Department of Health 2005) – has risen to worrisome levels since 2010[14]. Food poverty is a facet of poverty and the growing incidence coincides with the prolonged period of slow economic growth and austerity instigated by national government. There is evidence that changes to the welfare system in the UK have tipped more people from the lowest income households into food poverty (Cooper & Dumpleton 2013; Hirsch 2013). Thus, neither the causes nor the remedies of food poverty lie squarely within the realms of food policy. However foods that are high in calories but devoid of nutrition are considerably cheaper than healthy food (Jones, Conklin, Suhrcke, & Monsivais, 2014) – not to mention heavily marketed and conveniently ubiquitous. There is evidence that the lowest income households spend the least on fruit and vegetables (Defra, 2014b), and as food prices increased from 2007-8 and have not dropped back to their

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[13] The *Eatwell Plate* is a pictorial representation of recommended proportions of different food groups in the diet. It does not give specific target amounts but the diagram indicates that, as a general rule, one-third of the diet should be comprised of fruit and vegetables and one third starchy foods, with the remainder split between dairy, protein, and a smaller amount of foods that are high in fat and/or sugar.

[14] There is no single, agreed method for measuring food poverty. Defra has used the percentage of household income spent on food to gauge affordability (Defra, 2012a) but this masks inequality within households, where some members' food needs are prioritised over others'. For this reason food poverty tends to be identified via indicators, such as deprivation of certain foods or meals (proposed by Carney & Maître, 2012 for Ireland), minimum income for an acceptable living standard, or use of emergency food services. The minimum income indicator points towards an increase in food poverty since 2007: the Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey (Lobstein, 2007; Nelson, Erens, Bates, Church, & Boshier, 2007) shows that lower income families fail to meet national dietary guidelines; the Defra Family Food Survey found that a nutritious diet became less affordable between 2007 and 2013 (Defra, 2014a); and the Rowntree Foundation traced a five year story of higher prices, stagnant earnings, and benefit cuts leading to the need for single people to earn £16,850 to achieve a minimum acceptable living standard, and couples with children at least £19,400 each (Hirsch, 2013). This is supported by the emergency food indicator as referrals to food banks increased 850% between 2010 and 2013 (Trussell Trust, 2013).

previous levels (as of 2014), the current food system configuration is unable to provide for a slice of the population.

These food provisioning arrangements have not come about spontaneously or accidentally, but are the outcome of a policy approach to food over several decades. The next section outlines the emergence of the English approach to food policy since World War 2.

2.3   English food policy emergence and overview

In the immediate post-war years, food-related policy for the UK was forged with the intention of boosting self-sufficiency and preventing future food shortages, such those experienced during World War 2. The 1947 Agriculture Act is acknowledged as the cornerstone of modern productionism as it encouraged intensification of production. The long-time assumption was that creation of more public goods and human wellbeing would be the automatic consequences of producing more food through scientific know-how, secure supply, and affordable food for the consumer (Lang, Barling, & Caraher, 2009; Lang & Rayner, 2003; Lang, 1998).

Since the early 1960s the approach to food production has been framed by the UK's membership of the EU, a flagship of which is the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which initially supported production by buying up produce when market rates fell too low. This created a strong nexus between the state and farmers (Feindt, 2012), with the latter in a position of power over the food supply chain. However as a result of ensuing over-production, a system of subsidies to modulate supply was introduced with the McSharry reforms of the early 1990s. Over the decades the perspective on food security – both for the EU and the UK – shifted from promoting self-sufficiency to improved trading relations to ensure a diverse supply base from a number of stable countries, thereby protecting against shortages if one source should fail. The emphasis on free trade, and the WTO requirement for the reduction in trade-distorting subsidies following the inclusion of agriculture in the Uruguay round of GATT[15] negotiations from 1986-1994, motivated further rounds of CAP reform in the late 1999s and early 2000s, whereby farm subsidies were decoupled from production and payments were instead based on compliance with environmental, safety standards and animal welfare (European Commission, 2012). The most recent reforms in 2013 include measures intended to extend the focus on environmental stewardship and to encourage new entrants into farming due to concerns over farmers' average age (European Commission, 2013).[16]

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[15] General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the precursor of the WTO.

[16] There are a number of other EU regulations and directives relating to food to which the UK must conform, concerning food safety, food labelling and marketing claims, and the requirement to uphold the common market in public food procurement practices. These regulatory mechanisms do not so much shape the general approach to food policy as provide a framework to ensure its safety and the smooth

Concurrent with the move away from agricultural support systems and subsidies to control supply from the 1980s onwards was the rise of neoliberalism, to which then-Prime Minister of the UK, Margaret Thatcher, was an ardent subscriber. The theoretical aim was that, with next to no state intervention, the emergence of competitive markets would both stimulate economic growth and improve social welfare. Food provisioning was left to market forces with next to no government intervention (Hawkes, 2012), an approach that supported the rise of the globalised food industry that dominates today. For farmers, the implication was a loss of power, which shifted down the supply as they were now obliged to sell through traders, towards retailers who control supply chain. The state has become the auditor of baseline food standards, while food companies use quality as a tool for competitive differentiation (Feindt & Flynn, 2009; Hawkes, 2012).

As for consumers, the onus (albeit unrecognised) has been on buying more food in order to stimulate economic growth and, at the same time, to choose a healthy diet. As a result, a focus of food policy has been on providing people with information (such as through labelling or social marketing) to enable them to choose healthy foods if they so wish (Defra, 2002), but this assumes that people will always choose the healthiest diet available to them based on the information they have. It ignores socio-cultural factors that underlie food choice, food skills, and the food environment within which people make their choices, which industry has been allowed to shape largely unchecked (Jebb, 2012; Lang, 1998; MacMillan & Dowler, 2012). Indeed, the Labour government under Tony Blair preferred the language of individual choice, as it feared accusations of creating a 'nanny state' (Lang & Rayner, 2003). Herein lies one of the critical tensions in modern food policy. With public health messages focusing on individual choice, the food environments within which choices are made are shaped by major food companies, who have an economic interest in selling their food products and for whom foods that are high in sugar, salt and fat yield larger margins. Moreover, the same companies are largely responsible for information provision on the healthiness of their products, via marketing and labelling.

A series of food safety crisis in the 1980s and 1990s stemming from prioritisation of business interests over consumer protection and animal welfare led to some concerted changes in food safety legislation (Jukes, 1993). Following the BSE[17] crisis the food policy infrastructure was shored up with the establishment of the Food Standards Agency (FSA) and the separation of

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running of the common market. Alongside other member states, the UK has input into the governance processes to determine EU legislation (while lobbying by the private sector and civil society is influential). EU legislation must be written into national law and, particularly in the case of directives, there remains a degree of scope for interpretation.

[17] Bovine spongiform encephalopathy

business and consumer interests at the government department level[18]. While consumers had previously been excluded from discussions on public health, at this stage (and in keeping with the emergence of multi-sector governance), the voluntary sector began to have more of a voice – albeit with incomplete representation for all sectors of society (Feindt & Flynn, 2009; Timotijevic, Barnett, & Raats, 2011).

In the wake of the 2001 Foot and Mouth Disease crisis, the 2002 report of the Policy Commission on Food and Farming, *Food & farming, a sustainable future* (Curry et al., 2002), presented a view of a somewhat more sustainable food chain. Known as the 'Curry report', it discussed the need to take a more holistic view of the supply chain, but the rationale was efficiency rather than making the link between production and processing on the one hand and the poor health effects of over- or inappropriate consumption on the other (Lang & Rayner, 2003).

The Blair government's response to Curry's recommendations, *The Strategy for Sustainable Food and Farming: Facing the Future* (Defra, 2002), was essentially a rural strategy that used environmental sustainability (then a major topic at the EU level due to CAP reforms in progress) and valorisation of regional specialities as the basis for assuring the future viability of a farming sector that was still reeling from the spate of food and animal health crises. Again, this is symptomatic of the tension between different facets of food-related policy, as sustainability was regarded not so much required end in its own right and on its own merits, but as a means to build the industry's economic health.

The *Strategy for Sustainable Food and Farming* remained very hands-off, stating that regulation was to be considered a last resort for achieving socially desirable outcomes that could not be delivered in any other way. The (now defunct) Regional Government Officers and Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) were identified as the delivery bodies, but the strategy did not explore the complex links with more urban areas[19]. Any hopes that these entities might offer a whole supply chain approach that linked production with consumption (Barling, Lang, & Caraher, 2002) were unrealised. The *Regional Food Strategy for England*[20] was launched in 2003 and had the primary goal of using regional specialities as a means for promoting economic development. It was delivered by an agency called Food From Britain with a budget of £3

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[18] The BSE Enquiry found that the Ministry for Agriculture, Farming and Food was compromised by industry influence over consumer safety. It was subsequently dismantled and in 2001 replaced with Defra (the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) with food safety responsibility given to the newly formed FSA.

[19] With the closure of the RDAs under the Coalition government (see section 2.4.2 below), these strategies are no longer current. A small number of Local Enterprise Partnerships[19] (LEPs) have made development of the food and drink sector a priority (eg Cumbria, the Black Country) but this has no statutory underpinning so can be withdrawn at any time.

[20] Unable to source this document from Defra but known to have existed due to review (Gorton & Tregear, 2008).

million, but was criticised in evaluation since both Defra's definition of regional foods, and that of the European PDO/PGI[21] scheme that it sought to promote, were purely place-related with no environmental, health, or welfare criteria (Gorton & Tregear, 2008). This should not have come as a great surprise since a key point of the national government's response to the *Curry report* was the production of safe and healthy food in response to market demands, rather than for health reasons *per se*. The only attempt to shape consumer-side issues was through mandating the Department of Health to develop a *Food and Health Action Plan* (Department of Health, 2005), based yet again around information provision and supporting healthy choices.

A turning point in taking a more holistic view of food nationally came in 2008 with the publication of the *Food Matters* report, commissioned by then-Prime Minister Gordon Brown (Cabinet Office, 2008). It recognised the interconnections of food across health, food safety, the economy and the environment, in keeping with the acknowledgement (now seen at the local level) that food is an issue that touches upon multiple policy domains, and supported the need for a joined-up approach. The intention was that Defra would take the lead in coordinating food policy issues across government departments, and a Council of Food Policy Advisors was formed by Hilary Benn, then-Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, for an initial limited period.

Food Matters also heralded the re-entry of national food security into food policy discourse, published as it was in the wake of the food price spikes of 2007-8; prior to this the term had fallen out of use as it was considered a synonym for protectionism and parochialism, and no longer relevant in the era of free trade and multiple, global food sources (MacMillan & Dowler, 2012). The *Food 2030* strategy (Defra, 2010), published in January 2010, sought to address new questions around food supply resilience and to forge coordinated food policy across government departments, and a multi-stakeholder, governance approach including actors from the food and farming industries, consumers, and third sector organisations. However *Food 2030* was criticised for failing to set out government intervention mechanisms over industry (Marsden, 2010) and questions were asked about whether Defra had the power to drive the change required in a business dominant climate (Ecologist, 2009).

The Coalition government that came to power in May 2010 quietly shelved *Food Matters* and the *Food 2030* strategy, and the Council of Food Policy Advisors was disbanded. As part of the quango cull the FSA was also carved up, with front-of-pack labelling re-assigned to Defra and nutrition and public health to the Department of Health, leaving the slimmed-down FSA with a dislocated food safety remit. Food security remained a topic on the table, however, not least

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[21] PDO (protected designation of origin) and PGI (protected geographical indication) are EU schemes to promote and protect the names of agricultural products and foodstuffs that are associated with specific geographical areas. The former is for products that use traditional techniques within an area, while the latter is for products that are closely associated with an area, with at least one stage of production or processing taking place there.

with the 2011 publication of the *Foresight report on the Future of Food and Farming* (The Government Office for Science, 2011) which set out the challenges of feeding a growing world population and called for decisive policy action to take into account the global food system and draw connections between nutrition, economy, and food security. The Coalition government commissioned its own consultation on how to meet the *Foresight report's* challenge, and its initial conclusions (Defra, 2012b) were pitched to achieve 'win-wins' between environmental and economic interests – that is, fostering the development of biotechnology to enable more food to be produced without requiring more resources.

The Coalition government placed the onus on industry to make changes in their practices within the parameters of the current configuration through a series of voluntary deals relating to environmental sustainability and public health. These include the introduction of a voluntary scorecard for catering and food contractors to balance quality and costs aspects of public procurement (Bonfield, 2014), and 'responsibility deals' whereby food companies would reduce the salt, sugar, and fat in their products (Department of Health, 2013). The latter indicates some headway towards government acceptance that consumer choice is shaped by the food environment and socio-cultural factors (Jebb, 2012), but the efficacy of voluntary deals is questionable. For instance, a report into the impact of responsibility deals showed patchy commitment and a slow pace of change (Which?, 2012).

So far this section has presented a brief précis of the main shifts and developments in the national food policy approach in England over recent decades. It is apparent that, even as the focus of food policy has shifted over time from agricultural economics and interests towards consumer affairs and macroeconomic concerns, there have been a number of long-standing tensions between how food-related concerns have been represented, particularly public health and nutrition, environmental sustainability, food safety, the food economy, and community development and food justice issues. The inter-relations between these concerns – how they shape, support, or counteract each other's benefits – have tended to be overlooked. The English trajectory demonstrates the observation that government approaches will represent their primary interests or policy approaches (OECD 1981, as cited by Lang et al 2008), even though the advent of governance has led to the entry of more voices into the food policy arena that both challenge and champion their own interests.

Although issues relating to food security, resilience and sustainability have been recognised at the national policy level for England, with different degrees of emphasis at different times, they have been dealt with discretely as a means to an end, rather than each one being a desirable end in itself. Consequently, the approach to dealing with food related questions has been at odds with the concerted approach to food policy that is emerging at the local government level, which recognises the interconnections to a far greater degree; as of 2015, there is no concerted national food policy in England. This, together with the absence of regional food policy since the

dissolution of the sub-national government and administrative layer that provided some potential for coordination on a territorial or foodshed basis, represents a gap in the vertical governance dimension of food policy in England. It raises the question of what exactly the local government level can do to compensate for such gaps.

This section now turns to the services and policy domains for which the local level has responsibility, this section examines four responsibilities of the local level that are strongly connected to food – planning, public procurement, school food and the related area of education, and waste. As noted in section 1.2.2 above, there is a tendency for food-related policy domains to be handled as discrete silos with little to no coordination over food issues, which can lead to local level tensions and contradictions and act as a barrier to integrated food policy. The following sub-sections are not intended as exhaustive explorations of local level food policy in action but rather to demonstrate potential in some of the most frequently exercised areas, and policy framing and constraint by higher levels.

2.3.1 Planning

Local planning authorities are obliged to draw up a Local Plan that sets out planning policy and plays a crucial role in determining planning application decisions. Local Plans, and the planning system in general, have potential for shaping the food environment through, for instance, provision of food growing spaces and determining sites of different kinds of food outlets, however this potential can be imperilled by multi-level framing. This is because Local Plans must be in general conformity with the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) and are submitted to the Secretary of State for ratification. Moreover, the Secretary of State can call-in planning decisions and may over-rule them, and plays the role of arbiter over appeals. This means that a local authority may not, for example, refuse planning permission for the construction of a new supermarket purely on the grounds of promoting the local food economy and safeguarding the viability of small businesses. Rather, the supermarket would get the go-ahead unless solid evidence is put forward to show that the adverse impacts would outweigh the benefits.

Under the Coalition government the *NPPF* was reduced from over 1000 pages of regulations to little over 50 pages (DCLG, 2012). Although the slender new tome leaves scope for interpretation at the local level, it aims for a light touch towards removing barriers to new development through its presumption in favour of development. In some places this has led to conflict, especially over building on Green Belt land which is permitted under 'exceptional circumstances' but without specifying what constitutes exceptional. The *NPPF* also jeopardises local authorities' intention to use planning to shape the food system by restricting changes of use of business premises. A number of local authorities have introduced restrictions on the location of new unhealthy food takeaways within a certain distance (e.g. 400 metres) of schools and playgrounds in an effort to discourage unhealthy eating by children, and to encourage them

to stay in school for lunch (GLA and CIEH, 2012). The *NPPF* effectively negates these restrictions by no longer requiring prospective proprietors of fast food outlets to obtain permission for changes of use.

2.3.2 Public procurement

Local authorities are responsible for procuring food, drinks and catering for all services under their control, including council-run schools and care homes, while NHS Trusts are responsible for public procurement for hospitals, and Universities for their catering services. Each must issue calls for tenders to prospective suppliers detailing their requirements and award contracts to companies for a fixed number of years. On the surface this seems to give the public sector considerable scope for specifying quality and sourcing criteria for the foods they buy, however public procurement at all levels under the EU must comply with procedures designed to ensure an open market, which are set out in the EU procurement directives and subsequently implemented in procurement regulations of member states. In particular, the EU directive on public procurement prevents origin being specified amongst criteria in calls for tender out of a desire to preserve the common market. This can thwart intentions to enable more local food provisioning in the interests of building resilience and supporting the local economy.

That said, Member States enforce the 'no-local' rule with different degrees of rigour. One loophole is to use proxy criteria that would necessitate local food, such as (now dismantled) requirements of Rome's school meal service that specified seasonality and freshness (served within three days of being harvested) (Morgan & Sonnino, 2008). The reformed 2014 EU Public Procurement Directive, due to be written into national laws by 2016, does allow for specification of eco-labels (as long as they are transparent, third-party, and non-discriminatory), environmental impacts throughout a product's lifecycle, and social factors during the production process, such as employing disadvantaged and long-term unemployed people (European Union, 2014). As well as providing scope for preferential procurement of socially and environmentally sustainable products, the new rules could provide new proxy specifications for local food, particularly through the lesser environmental impact of foods that are not transported long distances.

At the national level, the government has published sustainable buying standards for food and catering services, which set out mandatory standards for central government departments but represents best practice for all other organisations and is therefore not enforceable at local government level (Defra, 2014c). In several respects the mandatory standards go no further than legal baselines, such as over animal welfare, traceability and production standards. In other respects there is a moderate movement towards more sustainability, such as 10% of raw ingredients (by value) meeting integrated production/integrated farm management standards or being organic. In a few areas, such as requiring all palm oil to be sustainably sourced, and for

fish to meet the FAO Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, they adhere to private certification schemes. The intention of this 'balanced scorecard', which also includes elements on nutrition, is to promote public food procurement not just on the basis of value for money but considering quality and taste, on the premise this can be better value despite the higher costs because it promotes greater take up, and at the same time bolsters the British food economy (Bonfield, 2014). The criteria in the scorecard adhere to EU rules, but it contains a strong suggestion that the EU promotes procurement on price alone.

2.3.3 Food in schools

Provision of school meals is a statutory obligation in schools in England, and children of all ages from families receiving certain state benefits are entitled to free school meals. Since September 2014, following pilot schemes in a handful of local areas and the recommendations of the School Food Plan (Dimbleby & Vincent, 2013), all children receive free school meals for the first two years of primary school (Clegg, 2013). The intention is that universal school meals will increase take up, ensuring that more pupils receive adequate nutrition to support learning, and to act as a leveller to remove stigma associated with receiving free school meals that can act as a barrier to take up. In the vast majority of local authority areas there is no funding for universal free meals beyond the first two years.

National nutrition standards for food served in state-run schools were initially established in 1940 but abolished under Thatcher in 1980. They were re-introduced in 2001, but were generally seen as weak. Following a high profile campaign, new nutritional standards were announced in 2006, with final standards incorporating several interim standards, such as on tuck shops and breakfast clubs, published in 2009 (Long, 2015; UK Parliament, 2011). While these standards are conducive to improved public health and reduction of health inequalities, during the time of the fieldwork there was growing concern that they were sliding into irrelevance as the new self-managing Academy schools introduced by the Coalition's education policy are exempt[22]. The School Food Plan (Dimbleby & Vincent, 2013) raised this issue and also proposed that school food standards should be amended again to make it easier for chefs to create appealing and nutritious meals and, as a result, increase uptake. Consequently, new nutrition standards came into force in January 2015 and apply to all Academies funded before 2010 and after June 2014; Academies founded during the intervening period should consider them as guidelines (Long, 2015).

In terms of sustainability, school catering is included under the voluntary sustainable buying standards mentioned in section 2.5.3 above. The Soil Association's Food for Life Catering

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[22] As of September 2014, 56 per cent of secondary schools and 11 per cent of primary schools had converted to the Academy format (Weale, 2014).

Mark[23] has been a useful tool in raising sustainability standards, as it sets out a step-wise approach to providing food that is not only nutritious but more sustainable too. The scheme can be commissioned by local authorities for all schools under their control, however the trend towards contracting out catering services by local authorities, as well as the devolution of catering to individual schools, means campaigners must work harder to obtain commitments from commercial entities or target schools on a one-on-one basis.

A key component of Food For Life is a whole school approach to food, which was also advocated in the School Food Plan. Such an approach connects school food nutrition with education, not just in cooking skills but by incorporating food questions into learning across subject areas, but it is non-statutory and relies on the motivation and confidence of individual headmasters.

Clearly there are long term public health and nutrition benefits to teaching cooking, healthy eating and food growing skills in schools, but education policy falls under the National Curriculum, and not under public health policy. In 2014 changes to the National Curriculum that all maintained schools in England must follow makes the teaching of cooking skills statutory up until the age of 14 under the foundation subject Design and Technology (Department for Education, 2013) – although campaigners argued for food to be more central, as a subject in its own right. However the level of funding for cooking equipment in schools comes down to budget administration by Local Education Authorities, so that resources for quality teaching vary considerably.

2.3.4   Waste

Local authorities provide front-line services in waste collection, management and disposal, although in many areas waste services are shared between several neighbouring authorities, bringing cost savings from greater efficiency. Although the UK's waste policy adheres to the waste hierarchy, which provides a sequence of preferential management – waste prevention, re-use, recycling, recovery and, finally, disposal (Defra, 2013) – local government is not under legal obligation to conform to it. However, instruments have encouraged them to do so, such as escalating costs due to landfill tax increases by national government (most recently to £80 per tonne in 2014, the eighth consecutive year of increase), which serves as an incentive for exploring all other options before disposal.

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[23] The Food for Life Partnership is a scheme run by civil society organisation the Soil Association to promote an ethos of healthy, tasty and sustainable food in schools. Thanks to funding from the Big Lottery, schools can sign up to the scheme and access materials free of charge. They can also work towards bronze, silver and gold awards for their catering services. Where catering is still in the hands of local authorities, they can commission the Food for Life scheme for all schools in the local area.

Over the last decade the main focus of local authority waste management has been on recycling (e.g. of packaging materials), as local waste authorities can off-set some of the costs of waste service operation by revenue from recycled materials. More recently there has been growing attention to the recovery node, which has stemmed from the identification of food waste as a priority in the national *Review of waste policy in England* (Defra, 2011). England produces 177 million tonnes of waste a year, of which 7.2 million tonnes is household food waste. In response to the priority of the *EU Landfill Directive* of diverting biodegradable municipal waste from landfill, national government has focused on promoting Anaerobic Digestion (AD) for recovering nutrients for renewable energy and fertilisers. A £10 million scheme for funding for AD development, run by WRAP[24], has sought to promote development of the technology at the local level, and the NPPF provides flexibility for local authorities to identify sites for new waste management facilities, including AD.

Despite this national momentum, local authorities are not obliged to provide separate collection of household food waste; currently around 50 per cent do, but many combine food and garden waste into one collection (which is a barrier to AD as much garden waste is not appropriate). Where separate food waste collection is in place, it has been hampered by lack of awareness. Roll-out of food collection schemes requires communication and information provision to secure its success – yet council budget cuts have reduced communication capacity as it is regarded as a non-essential work area. There is no obligation for businesses to collect food waste either and many – especially SMEs – find the associated work and costs prohibitive. A scheme to facilitate business food waste collection has been funded under WRAP.

Finally, national government has targeted waste prevention through the instruments of information campaigns and voluntary deals. Firstly, the government-funded Love Food Hate Waste campaign, run by WRAP, has targeted awareness of household food waste issues by providing information and tips to consumers on food management to avoid waste, and especially promoting the financial gains from food management and re-use of leftovers. Secondly, the approach of national government to businesses' role in avoiding food waste has been through voluntary schemes, such as the Courtauld Commitment that aims to reduce household food and drink waste, reduce waste in grocery supply chains, and alter packaging designs to optimise recycling (WRAP, n.d.), to which businesses are under no obligation to subscribe.

Having established some of the food-related policy powers and responsibilities that exist at the local government level in England, and noted how they can be framed and constrained by multilevel governance through the vertical dimension, the next section details recent shifts sub-

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[24] WRAP – the Waste & Resources Action Programme – is a not-for-profit organisation that promotes the circular economy by promoting waste reduction, efficient resource use, and development of sustainable products and technologies.

national governance landscape in England, and establishes the current state of play in central-local government relations.

2.4   Local government in England

This section sets out first the recent history and philosophy of national-local government relations in England, and then explains sub-national structural changes, including those under the Conservative-led Coalition government from 2010.

Wilson and Game (2011) represent the 1930s as the heyday of 'old localism' in the UK, when local authorities were effectively service providers that raised most of their funds from local taxation and were free from central intervention. From the mid-1940s they functioned as delivery bodies of the welfare state, but from 1979 the relationship between central and local government changed dramatically as Thatcher viewed local government as the agent of the centre. The New Public Management[25] she espoused introduced the market into public services, with politicians' role being to set policy goals and that of managers to decide how to achieve them. A host of non-governmental agencies and quangos were created to carry out functions and services that previously belonged to local government, while local government became a contractor. The introduction of more entities into the local scene created the conditions for governance, whilst at the same time fragmenting services and creating policy silos.

Successive governments encouraged stakeholder relations and partnership-working, and continued to promote a rhetoric of community involvement. This has remained a far cry from old localism however: so-called 'new localism' permits de-concentration of power to local government only insofar as policies fit with national priorities (Crowson and Goldring, 2009, as cited in Wilson & Game, 2011, p. 391). For instance New Labour only offered local government earned or contractual autonomy whereby the best performers were rewarded with new powers but underachievers were subject to stringent improvement measures. In this way it may have actually increased central government control (Wilson, 2003). Meanwhile, central government still has a number of instruments it can use over local government, including primary legislative powers, monitoring and inspection, ministerial approval of local bye-laws, and statutory instruments for enacting primary legislation.

That said, in 2007 the then-Labour government passed the Sustainable Communities Act (SCA) (HM Government, 2007), an innovative piece of legislation intended to open up new ways for

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[25] New Public Management is a relatively loose term for policy doctrines on bureaucratic reform of the public sector intended to render it more efficient through market-led management (Hood, 1991).

central government to help local authorities promote sustainable local communities[26]. Local sustainability is defined broadly as 'encouraging the economic, social and environmental well being of the authority's area', and 'social well-being includes participation in civic and political activity' (HM Government, 2007). The SCA enables Councils to request new powers from central government, working with citizen panels to ensure the requests match community wishes. Examples of new powers achieved to date are Councils' ability to grant business rate relief to small and medium enterprises; power to insist Council contracts pay the Living Wage; and giving community groups a first right to bid for community assets that are to be divested (Local Works, 2012). If government declines a request it must work out a compromise with the Local Government Association (LGA), as 'selector'. The Act is innovative because for the first time it provides a bottom-up mechanism for changing national level power – although political agreement must first be obtained within a Council to make a request under the SCA, and the associated costs (mostly officer time) must be balanced against the financial benefits that they stand to gain (Local Works, 2012). There is evidence that the community consultation requirement has been unevenly applied, however, with more than half of the requests in the initial round originating from Councillors and officers rather than the community, and many Councils using the existing LSP as a consultation mechanism instead of bespoke groups (Bua, 2012).

At the time of the SCA some questioned why Labour did not simply introduce the General Power of Competence to act under its own initiative, as has been granted to local governments in other European countries as part of the devolution process (Wilson & Game, 2011). The General Power of Competence was finally introduced under the *Localism Act 2011*, but it has not had a major effect to date because resource constraints have discouraged activities that require up-front expenditure and risks of costly legal challenge have been avoided (Jeraj, 2013).

The local level has lacked financial autonomy from the centre in the last three decades, as local government services are funded through central government grants, business rates, council tax, and fees. Of these, council tax has been the only revenue that local government could both raise and allocate for itself. Under the Coalition, national government loosened its grip on finances to a degree by allowing local government to retain a proportion of business rates (with the remainder re-distributed centrally), removing some of the ring-fencing attached to grants (DCLG, 2013), and introducing City Deals[27] that are negotiated individually with cities or urban sub-regions that have drawn up sound plans to grow the economy and create new jobs (HM

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[26] The SCA was originally introduced as a private member's bill after five years of lobbying by Local Works, a coalition of national organisations, and eventually achieved cross-party support.

[27] Twenty eight City Deals were approved in two waves in 2012 and 2013. While arrangements are bespoke, there are three basic models that offer different degrees of ring-fence removals in the interests of economic development.

Government, 2011). Pressure to give more autonomy to the local level – and especially to cities – intensified after the referendum on Scottish independence in September 2014. The Core Cities are campaigning for the new powers promised to Scotland following the 'no' result to be mirrored in England, in particular with more powers over taxation (Core Cities, n.d.).

The Coalition government dramatically reduced the number of quangos but it retained multi-actor input by allowing the community and voluntary sector (CVS) and social enterprises to bid as providers (Cabinet Office, 2011). However in the economic climate CVS budgets have been precarious, while austerity and the slashing of local government budgets mean that the Coalition's new localism agenda has been accompanied by fewer resources for service delivery, cutting of statutory services and large numbers of redundancies (LGA, 2013). Some local authorities have joined forces with their neighbours to pool resources and share services, such as the West London Alliance of six boroughs in West London[28].

This section now turns to an examination of structural reconfigurations of the sub-national levels over recent decades, detailing first changes to the local government scene as a whole and internal structural changes, and then structural changes at the regional and sub-regional levels.

In an attempt to bring more order to the local government scene, which consisted of a vast number of small local authorities, a two-tier system of county and district councils was phased in throughout the 1960s, and the Greater London Council (GLC) was introduced as a pan-London layer of government. From 1979 Thatcher initiated a process of dismantling the two-tier system, dispensing with many district councils (the lower tier) and establishing large unitary authorities and metropolitan boroughs in lieu of the top-tier, redrawing boundaries in the process. The Major government and, subsequently, New Labour under Blair and then Brown continued the momentum towards unitary authorities through the 1990s and 2000s. As of early 2015, the two tier system remains in place for 27 county councils (with 201 district councils), and the remaining local authorities mostly conform to a unitary model (table 2-1).

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[28] The West London Alliance was formed in 2006 but with new efficiency initiatives since 2010 in children's services, passenger transport, property and asset management, and procurement (WLA, 2013).

Table 2-1 Structure of sub-national government in England

	Structure	No.	Notes	Powers & responsibilities
LA types	Unitary authorities	55	May be county-wide or urban	Education, roads, public transport, social care (children's and adults), housing, libraries, leisure, environmental health, planning, local tax collection
	Metropolitan district councils	36	Essentially unitary authorities since 1985, but there may be joint boards for some services eg fire, police, waste disposal.	
	London boroughs	33	Each of the 32 boroughs plus the City of London is effectively a unitary authority – but the GLA is has some service responsibilities /veto	
	Greater London Authority	1	Led by the Mayor; held to account by the London Assembly	Highways, transport, passenger transport and strategic planning, police, emergency services
	Isles of Scilly	1	Sui generis unitary authority	Mostly as for other unitaries, but with some services provided by Cornwall
	Two-tier authorities		NB there is also a third tier of civil parishes in some areas, with typical responsibilities being allotments, parks, public clocks.	
	County councils	27		Education, highways, transport, passenger transport, social care, libraries, waste disposal, planning
	District councils	201		Housing, leisure, environmental health, waste collection, planning applications, local tax collections
Leadership types	Leader plus cabinet	386	Model used in the majority of local authorities	Leader responsible for all council executive functions, decides whether to make decisions himself or to delegate
	Mayor plus cabinet	15	Mayor is directly-elected following a 'yes' result in referendum	Mayor responsible for all council executive functions, decides whether to make decisions himself or to delegate to cabinet or Councillors; has soft or informal powers.
	Alternative	52	Alternative based on committee system, only small councils are eligible	
Special arrangements	Local enterprise partnerships	39	Partnership between local authority and businesses	Economic priorities and growth, job creation
	City Deals	28	Precise deals are worked out individually between cities and Whitehall	More budgetary autonomy, plan for local growth
	Combined Authorities (non London)	5	Provide greater coordination between member local authorities; address national government with one voice	Economic development, regeneration, transport (but not replacing functions of local authorities)

Source: compiled by author from local authority websites

New Labour also introduced internal changes to English local authorities with the 2002 Local Government Act, which introduced separate scrutiny functions and brought a choice of three executive structures, two of which were Mayor-led. The Mayor-led structures proved unpopular. After coming to power in 2010 the Coalition government sought – unsuccessfully – to force more local authorities to adopt a 'Mayor plus cabinet' structure by ordering referendums in the 12 largest cities, although in the event only Bristol and Liverpool voted for the change. This means that, as of November 2012, there were 15 directly-elected Mayors in place in local authorities in England with responsibility for the council's executive functions and softer, less specific responsibility for representing citizen's interests through influence, persuasion, and coordination.

New Labour, intent on harnessing the conditions for multi-sector governance, introduced non-statutory Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs) as high level multi-sector groups to oversee partnerships between public, private and civil society sectors at the local government level. One role of LSPs was to develop Local Area Agreements (LAAs) with central government over targets and delivery plans for improvements in the area, and in 2007 they were tasked with drawing up Community Strategies (often called the *Sustainable Community Strategy*), which serve to frame general policy direction within local government departments. LAAs were abolished in 2011 and consequently the role of LSPs has become less clear. There are fears that they are being left to 'wither on the vine' as their potential as effective bodies to oversee local level multi-sector governance is being overlooked (Lowndes & Pratchett, 2012; Lowndes & Squires, 2012).

More internal changes to local authorities were brought by the 2012 Health and Social Care Act, which abolished Primary Care Trusts (PCT). While care commissioning functions were taken up by newly created Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs), public health and health improvement aspects of the PCTs have been folded into local authorities, and Health and Wellbeing Boards (HWB) established, bringing together Commissioners with elected local government representatives and health monitors to oversee health improvement work and provide a conduit of coordination with CCGs. The intention of this change, which was effected in April 2013 but planned for a year beforehand, was to improve efficiencies. As of November 2014 no academic research assessing the impacts was identified.

The regional level in England has also undergone a series of reconfigurations. Notably in 1986 Thatcher abolished the GLC[29], as a result of which there was no pan-London governmental authority for 14 years, until it was reinstated in 2000 with the creation of the Greater London

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[29] Thatcher's decision to abolish the GLC was reportedly personal and the result of antagonism between the Conservative leader and then Mayor Ken Livingstone, a stalwart of old Labour (Travers, 2003).

Authority (GLA). The GLA sits above the 33 London boroughs and is essentially a regional entity but whose Mayor has limited powers. Regional Government Offices were created by Prime Minister John Major in 1994 to represent government departments and work towards improving prosperity and quality of life. In addition to devolving power to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, between 1998 and 2000 Tony Blair's New Labour government established nine Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) as non-departmental bodies with an economic development remit. Corresponding Regional Assemblies were formed at the same time, initially to feed regional opinions into the RDAs but later to scrutinise them.

After coming to power in 2010, the Coalition government effectively swept away the regional tier of government by abolishing the regional Government Offices, RDAs and Regional Assemblies. The effects of this have been two-fold. Firstly, the establishment of 39 business-led Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)[30] in place of the RDAs has enhanced the involvement of the private sector in local governance. In 2013 the LEPs were given responsibility for European Structural Funds, in preparation for which they were required to prepare strategies that had to be approved by central government. Each LEP is quite different in terms of its aims and objectives and its composition, but as collective entities they have come in for criticism for their lack of a clear role. While it is recommended that they should include voluntary sector organisations, many do not (Compact Voice, 2014). There is a tendency towards promoting big business interests while small and medium enterprises are overlooked. There is no nationwide mechanism for monitoring their performance, and as each LEP has only two or three staff their under-resourcing means they are unable to be responsive to enquiries (FSB & CLES, 2014). Other vehicles established to promote local economic development are Enterprise Zones, areas that have lagged in regeneration where businesses choosing to locate can unlock a number of financial benefits; and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), in which local businesses pay a levy and have greater say in the management of their neighbourhood.

The second effect of the dismantling of the regional level of government has been an increased onus on the sub-regional level. The Regional Assemblies were replaced by non statutory Local Authority Leader Boards through which neighbouring authorities could cooperate over cross-boundary policy issues, and which have been able to apply to have some statutory function reinstated. In April 2011 the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) was formed as a strategic authority with responsibility for economic development, regeneration and transport, and it was through the GMCA that Greater Manchester negotiated its City Deal. Four similar combined authorities were formed in other parts of the country in April 2014[31]. The combined

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[30] LEPs between them cover the whole of England. Some local authorities are included in more one LEP

[31] The Sheffield City Region Combined Authority, the North East Combined Authority, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

authorities do not replace or take over functions of their local authority members, but they are intended to provide greater coordination and to address central government with one voice.

This section has demonstrated that the current role of local government in England is to coordinate service delivery, which tends no longer to be delivered by local government itself but contracted out to agencies, partnerships, the private sector, and CVS. There is some scope for formulating policy to be implemented within the local government area, but in the era of new localism policy is likely to be framed and constrained by national and higher levels of policy.

2.5   Summary

This chapter has established that the predominant food provisioning arrangements for the UK have been supported by decades of neoliberal policy that has allowed corporate interests to have considerable influence, while tensions have endured between how food-related concerns have been represented, particularly public health and nutrition, environmental sustainability, food safety, the food economy, and community development and food justice issues. Indications of the will to forge concerted national food policy across policy domains in the late 2000s have not come to fruition; vibrant, multi-sector discussion over food policy are on-going at the national, EU and global levels, but it remains highly contested with a melee of voices representing the interests of different groups and sectors. Although sustainability and food security have a place in national food policy discourse in the UK, there is a tendency to permit industry to self-regulate and to look to biotechnology proposed by corporations that stand to gain from it.

As for local government in England – the focal level of this research – its role has become one of coordinating service delivery, and under new localism local government lacks full autonomy from national government, although there are indications that more power – and particularly more budgetary control – is set to be devolved to the sub-regional level. Nonetheless, budget cuts are raising serious concerns about the ability of the local level to fulfil its function in the future. Within food-related policy domains, some specific frames and constraints originating from higher governance levels have been set out as examples, both in the form of policies and the location of policy-making powers and responsibilities.

Having acknowledged the policy potential and limitations at the local level in England, the next chapter reviews the body of literature on local level food policy groups in developed country contexts to date, in order to build up a picture of what they do, who is involved and what factors affect their ability to work towards their aims.

3 Local food policy groups

3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews existing literature on local level food policy councils and urban food strategies from developed countries[32], examining nomenclature, modus operandi, and which actors/sectors are (or should be) involved. Previous efforts to define success and to capture the secrets of successful food policy groups are reviewed, and a conceptual framework is drawn up based on 17 structural and operational factors that determine what a food policy group can do within its particular context. From this, the research problem is identified as the lack of systematic and coherent exploration of the factors that affect how food policy groups in England can work towards their aims. The chapter then discusses the merits and drawbacks of conceptualising food policy groups as policy networks and as partnerships, and proposes new institutionalism as a helpful theoretical approach to the problem. Finally, a set of research questions is articulated.

3.2 What are food policy groups?

There are two main bodies of literature concerning food policy at the local level: a small but growing number of publications on urban food strategies and a larger volume on food policy councils, mainly from North America where the first groups calling themselves food policy councils emerged in the 1980s (Burgan & Winne 2012). This divide is the source of some debate, particularly concerning their respective functions. Stierand (2012) distinguishes between food policy councils whose role is to 'counsel politics and administration on food issues' and urban food strategies that 'express aims and guidelines for the development of the urban food system' (Stierand 2012, p.72). Sonnino and Spayde (2014) also consider urban food strategies and food policy councils to be two separate mechanisms, although they ascribe to food policy councils the task of formulating an urban food strategy. Their justification for the distinction is not entirely sound however, since they draw on Lang et al's (2005) assertion that *national level* food policy councils' role concerns policy development and not implementation – yet national policy is often not implemented nationally but at the local level. Moreover, empirical evidence from local level experiences indicates that the line between policy advice, strategy formulation, and implementation is not always clearly drawn. Schiff (2008) found that food policy councils

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[32] The subject of this research is local food policy groups (and the wider programmes they are part of) in England but there is a paucity of academic literature on the English experience to date. This section therefore draws upon international literature in setting definitions and developing the conceptual framework. Although food policy context for different countries and sub-national organisational structures differ from those set out for England in section 2.4 above, English groups have been much inspired by their predecessors overseas and, as such, the commonalities are considered to be sufficient so as to enable inter-national deductions.

in North America can perform both policy and action functions, albeit with a tension between the two; Harper et al (2009) recommend a balance between policy and action, after observing that many food policy councils attempt to do both; while Burgan and Winne (2012, p.26) assert that the policy council's primary concern is policy but it can be 'the player of last resort when it comes to getting a program off the ground if there is no one else to do it'.

Unusually, in Toronto, Canada, the two co-exist as independent entities, albeit with close collaboration between them and some actors involved in both (Mah & Thang 2013; Fridman & Lenters 2013). The distinction is not in policy versus implementation of programmes but rather the focal point of their work: Toronto Food Policy Council is concerned with all food interests in the city across sectors (Blay-Palmer 2009), while the Toronto Food Strategy takes the departments and policies of the city council as its object and asks what food can contribute towards their objectives. It is not viewed as a document carved in stone to be implemented on a one-off basis but rather as a dynamic and on-going process (Mah & Thang 2013; Fridman & Lenters 2013). Illustrative though this distinction may be however, it would be wrong to take it as the basis for broad-sweeping definitions because the same distinction has not been made elsewhere.

In view of the debates in the literature, for the purposes of this research food policy councils and food strategies are understood to be two sides of the same coin. A food policy group is a group of actors who come together with a view to developing policy and/or influencing policy decision-making relating to food across multiple policy domains, with possible additional functions including (but not limited to) gathering information on the food system, fostering engagement, writing a strategy, holding local government to account, and leading implementation. An urban food strategy is a formal documentary expression of a vision, aims, objectives and an action plan that is formulated by a group of actors[33], and can be the centre piece of an on-going, dynamic process of identifying food needs and seeking engagement and policy influence. Food policy councils and strategy steering groups (regardless of nomenclature[34]) are considered to be broadly synonymous and are therefore referred to collectively throughout this thesis as 'food policy groups'[35]. It is crucial to acknowledge,

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[33]Not every group publishes a full strategy, but some prefer to release a food charter as a tool of engagement or a stand-alone action plan. Since these formats are also documentary expressions of visions, aims and objectives, they are included under the umbrella heading 'urban food strategy'.

[34] The term 'food policy council' is the most common name for such groups in North America where, despite the diversity of forms and purposes, it is considered to be so ingrained that there is no point changing it (Schiff 2008). In the UK there has been variety in nomenclature to date, including food board, food strategy steering group, etc. 'Food partnership' has been propounded as the collective term of choice by the Sustainable Food Cities network (see footnote 7 above) and has therefore increased in usage during the research period.

[35] The literature offers no comment on the empirical observation that in some cases a food policy group is one entity within a wider programme comprising other entities, as will be seen particularly in Chapters 5 and 7. Where comments or findings relate to a wider programme rather than just a group of actors, this is made clear.

however, that neither food policy councils nor strategy steering groups make policy decisions *per se* but they advocate for particular policy approaches (Burgan & Winne 2012). Strategies contain *recommended* policy unless or until they are adopted by local government, at which point they become policy. Decision-making over policy takes place within the structures of local government (public policy) or in private businesses (private policy).

In terms of who is – and who should be – involved in local food policy groups, Wiskerke and Viljoen's (2012) new food geography (figure 1-2) draws on the food policy triangle (Barling 2008) to express joint governance of the food system by the public, private, and civil society sectors. This would seem to suggest that all three sectors should be present in food policy groups. However other literature has focused on the absolute need for only the public and the civil society sectors to be represented. In particular, the involvement of local government is seen as a common thread through all such groups – so much so that there has been a tendency to refer to cities as 'actors' in the food system (Wiskerke & Viljoen 2012; Sonnino 2009; Marsden 2013). Morgan (2014), meanwhile, detects a shift in the role of civil society groups with respect to local food policy from advocating on the sidelines to collaboration with the State, although he warns that in the process they trade radicalism for policy influence, and still have less of a voice in policy-making than the State. An entirely non-governmental food policy group that lacks political buy-in will face a struggle to be regarded as legitimate and to achieve change (Orlando 2011; Schiff 2008), and is more likely to seek to challenge or engage the state rather than work with it (Derkzen & Morgan 2012). A food policy group that exists only within the local authority organisation, however, lacks the insights and energy of civil society (Derkzen & Morgan 2012), is vulnerable to electoral change (Wiskerke 2009; Morgan & Sonnino 2008), may want for staff with specialist food knowledge and experience (Wekerle 2004), and may struggle to propose changes to a system it operates within.

As for the private sector, Harper et al (2009) observe that food businesses are often un- or under-represented in food policy groups. They suggest that if they are not engaged from the start it is difficult to bring them in later if decisions have been taken that are not in their best interests. A possible explanation for the absence of the private sector can be drawn from the related literature on alternative food networks. If there is a perception that local level food policy is entirely opposed to the global food system, its aims and objectives are assumed to be incongruent with those of business. However, businesses come in all shapes and sizes and also exist within alternative food systems. The 'alternative' and the 'conventional' may be driven by different values but they are not discrete, watertight systems. Rather, they compete with and influence each other (Sonnino & Marsden, 2006, p. 181).

What is more, it would be a mistake to omit businesses entirely and consider the market-like functions of public procurement as sufficient, as Renting et al do in their paper on civic food

networks, in which they refer to 'urban and territorial food strategies in which *local and regional governments together with civil society groups* define concrete plans of action for improving agri-food systems at the local level and governments take up a role as market party by creating demand for local, sustainable food through public food-procurement schemes' (Renting et al. 2012, p.298 emphasis added). As almost all food passes through the hands of at least one private enterprise on its route from producer to consumer, ideally local level food policy groups would include broad representation of businesses, with a mix of size, values, and activity.

3.3   Conceptualising the potential of food policy groups

Having established what local food policy groups are and broadly what they do, this section draws on literature to establish what constitutes success, and to draw up a conceptual framework based on 17 structural and operational factors that determine what a food policy group can do within its particular setting.

In light of the trend towards food strategies and food policy networks on both sides of the Atlantic, it is unsurprising that several attempts have been made to distil the lessons from past experiences and disseminate them to help other groups. Several different types of 'how to' frameworks have been produced, mainly by advocates or practitioners, and take a variety of forms. One type sets out recommended themes and principles, such as the eight key issues identified by the Sustainable Food Cities Network that local level food policy groups may consider addressing (SFCN 2013)[36]. Another type consists of check lists or 'how to' guides on the work stages and/or administrative actions for formation of food policy groups so that their initiators may apply models that have already been deemed successful elsewhere (eg. Haughton 1987; Burgan & Winne 2012; McRae & Donahue 2013; Harper et al. 2009; Clancy 1988). Similarly Sonnino and Spayde's (2014) framework on components of an urban food strategy is a one-size-fits all check list. Such frameworks, employed separately or in concert, are certainly helpful for diffusing ideas and learning from experiences. They acknowledge to varying degrees the different governance contexts under which food policy groups operate in different places, but there is a danger that they are seen as implying a 'right' and a 'wrong' way to establish a food policy council or urban food strategy, and that ticking all the boxes will automatically yield success. In the case of Burgan and Winne's (2012) report '*Doing food policy councils right*' this is explicit.

Two frameworks have been proposed that go beyond check boxes or recommendations and attempt to identify and explore the factors that determine food policy group's success. The first

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[36] Sustainable food chains, community food projects, food knowledge and skills, public sector food, food enterprises, food poverty and access, healthy and sustainable diets, and food waste.

is proposed by Dahlberg (1995) following a study of food policy councils in five US cities and one county[37], and is underpinned by a set of questions for determining whether a food policy council can be considered a success:

1) Have the goals been met?

2) Has everything been done that was possible in that particular context?

3) Has it contributed to the education of political leaders, officials, and the general public?

4) How far has it contributed to solving the wider urban food crisis?

Question 1) is outside of the scope of the current research since the local food policy groups in England are relatively new and cannot be judged on final achievement. Questions 3) and 4) meanwhile are relevant only if the food policy council set out to do these things in the first place and therefore can be subsumed into question 1). The most pertinent is question 2), 'has everything been done that was possible in that particular context?', because it focuses on process rather than outcome and recognises the potential of governance context to aid or impede implementation.

Dahlberg presents, in no particular order, nine factors that he indentifies as determining what it is possible for a food policy council to do within a context. These are: regional values; city/county size and demographics; historical and political context; mandated role and powers; organisational position and integration into city government; composition; staff and budgetary support; consultants and advisors; and overall project management and leadership.

The second framework of interest is used by Mendes in two papers exploring Strategic Urban Governance Capacity (SUGC) to implement Vancouver's *Food Action Plan* (Mendes 2008; Mansfield & Mendes 2013). SUGC considers the re-shaping of the city's ambitions and the image it wishes to project, as well as governance and institutional capacity, including shifting roles and responsibilities under localism. She identifies a (non-exhaustive) set of five factors that are classified as structural, that is 'organizational arrangements and commitments involving local government' or organisational 'the role of different actors in operationalizing food policy goals and coordinating governance in the context of the structural commitments available' (Mansfield & Mendes 2013, pp.6–7). The structural factors are: staffing support; formally mandated role of food policy within local government; and integration of food policy into policy

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[37] Knoxville, Tennessee; St Paul, Minnesota; Charleston, South Carolina; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; Kansas City, Missouri; and Onondaga County, New York.

and regulatory frameworks. The procedural factors are: citizen participation mechanisms; and joint-actor partnerships and networks in planning and policy-making[38].

Clearly there are some synergies between the factors in Dahlberg's and Mendes' frameworks. In order to confirm them and to identify additional factors[39], the following sub-sections draw out factors determining what is possible in a particular context from a wider pool of academic literature on local level food policy in a variety of national contexts. Each of the sub-sections covers factors pertaining to a different governance location or dimension, and the factors are summarised in table 3-1.

Table 3-1 Factors that can affect success of food policy groups/strategies

Location/dimension	Structural factors	Operational factors
Structure, organisation of food policy group	Membership composition Consultants/advisors History, origins Resources (availability and source)	Grounds for membership Programme management & leadership
Location, relation vis-à-vis local government	Location Formal mandate/legitimacy	Partnerships and collaborations
Local level (horizontal) context	Local level powers Political environment/stability Administrative/management structures Habitual ways of working and processes	Understanding of levers and language
Multilevel (vertical) context	Multilevel food policy framing Policy framings/constraints in departments	Partnerships/mediation through levels

Source: compiled by author from literature review

3.3.1   Structure and organisation of the food policy group

The first point concerning the structures and organisation of food policy groups is their membership composition. Beyond the basic criterion discussed above that co-governance between the state and civil society actors is a necessity (and the presence of the private sector is desirable), there is a recognised need for diverse membership to maximise potential for attracting funding and implementation capacity (Dahlberg 1999), and to ensure a broad base of specialised knowledge (Clancy 1988). Typically this means actively appointing broad representation from across public sector departments and agencies, community groups and a

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[38] A word of caution is merited in advance of the discussion below on the role of institutions in structure and agency. Despite Mendes' terminology, it would be misleading to assume that the 'structural' factors are, by nature, constraints while the operational factors represent agency. In fact, institutions pertain to each may pose constraints and, equally, there may be space for agency in each.

[39] The majority are validated, but some of Dahlberg's points are combined or expanded. 'Regional values' are expanded to 'multilevel' in order to include national values also, and food-related values are acknowledged to be distinct from the policy framing in the various food-related domains. 'City/county size and demographics' is subsumed into 'historical and political context', while powers at the local level, administrative structures, and habitual ways of working are recognised as distinct.

range of business types from different parts of the food system. Yeatman (2003) also suggests representation that mirrors local interests in policy areas such as agriculture and welfare, which would provide ready-made actor connections with policy domains and networks that have some involvement with food.

One issue with the membership of food policy groups is the tendency to attract the middle class, and scholars have pondered, without much revelation, how to include actors from minority groups or those marginalised on the basis of class, race, or gender, who may be the biggest beneficiaries of strategies (DeLind, 2011; DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Jarosz, 2008; Kloppenburg, Hendrickson, & Stevenson, 1996; Mendes, 2008; Sonnino, 2009). Composition gives a first indication of 'how, by whom, and in whose interests food is governed' (Mendes 2008, p.247); inclusion can build bridges between sectors or perspectives while exclusion can reinforce divides (Dahlberg 1995).

Romer (2014) raises concerns about who chooses members and what legitimises them to do so, and questions the extent to which all actors are involved in decision-making as opposed to just participating in discussions. This is evocative of Dahlberg's (1999) attention to the administrative approach and working methods of the group, including over-all programme management and leadership, internal dynamics and division of labour, transparency, and strategic planning versus an ad hoc approach. Beyond setting the tone and approach, however, a leader is also a key actor in building relationships with partner organisations, within the corridors of local government and in the wider community, and across sectors, in order to build shared understandings of food issues (Fridman & Lenters 2013). Clancy (1988) identifies personal attributes for leaders that would work across both the internal and the external functions: 'vision, personalities that encourage sharing and community building, major management skills, significant time commitment, and incredible patience'.

Scholars and practitioners alike have stressed food policy groups' need for resources, and in particular funding to pay for staff time each week in order to perform core administrative tasks (Clancy 1988; Dahlberg 1995; Mendes 2008). While partnership working between sectors, agencies and departments can reduce the need for funding as some projects can be folded under partners' budgets, some activities do still need their own, dedicated budgets (Fairchild & Morgan 2007). Moreover, funding tends to be time constrained, which means that once it has expired there is a danger that actor interest and organisational capacity will drop off, causing any gains to be lost (Yeatman 2003). Dahlberg (1995) rightly warns that funding may come with strings attached regarding policy objectives or areas of activity, and the professional background of the individual staff member can also influence the way in which they discharge their responsibilities.

Past experience is also an issue where external consultants or advisors are hired who have experience of local level food policy – or even informal advice sought from other local areas or cities. Such advisors are likely to be regarded as experts in the field and, as a result, may seek to replicate successes in another context, or suggest a pre-conceived 'right' way to proceed. Finally, the historical background of the food policy work can frame and constrain its objectives; especially if a particular issue was used as a 'hook' to gain local government buy-in it may be challenging to shift focus to other policy domains at a later point (Morgan, 2009).

3.3.2 The group's location and relationship to local government

Two possible locations of the food policy group vis-à-vis local structures are identified in the literature: within local government and outside local government. Both are seen to have their pros and cons. Location inside local government brings greater legitimacy, signals a commitment to food issues on the part of local government (Stierand 2012), and increases with the group's proximity to the Mayor or leader's office – but it also comes with a risk of being beholden to the Mayoral agenda (Dahlberg 1995). Mah and Thang (2013) and Fridman and Lenters (2013) describe both Toronto Food Policy Council and the Toronto Food Strategy as based within Toronto Public Health, which enables them to bridge internal city divisions, create 'space' for addressing food issues, and function as a conduit for information between the community and local government so they can shape the policy environment via official (internal) and unofficial (cross-sector) channels (Fridman & Lenters 2013). The flip side is that location within a particular department or service can risk perpetuating silo-thinking and dictating which issues are tackle (Blay-Palmer 2009).

Location outside local government, on the other hand, is likely to mean a food policy group lacks the same legitimacy as if it sat within council structures, but it can play an advocacy role that may well not be possible if the entity that would advocate for change in government policy is located within its structures (Schiff 2007).

Yeatman (2003) concludes that working in partnership with various local government departments, while being an employee of none, prevents a group from being caged in by divisional structures and facilitates the establishment of new structures such as a cross-departmental committee to tackle a particular problem. Indeed a common factor between the examples of the 'internal' and 'external' models is the importance of partnerships between the community and the public sector, and with and between different public sector divisions. Forging and retaining collaborations that bring together actors and sectors who would not normally enter into dialogue with each other, and to persuade them to share resources, is a major challenge that requires legitimacy to overcome (Mount et al. 2013). As Mansfield and Mendes (2013) point out for the case of London, the sharing of responsibility for implementation

between groups of actors from different sectors can be critical for overcoming the barriers of mandate and powers and responsibility at the local level. Similarly citizen participation mechanisms indicate embeddedness in, and consultation with, a wider pool of actors around the food agenda, including outside experts (Mansfield & Mendes 2013).

Lastly, the role of food policy groups has been discussed in section 3.2 above with the conclusion that they do not make policy decision but rather develop policy and advocate for it, in addition to some other functions. An adjunct to this is the formality of the mandate, which determines how advice is received by policy makers. This may well be dependent to a degree on the location within local government, as well as the powers and responsibilities that exist at the local level (Mansfield & Mendes 2013; Clancy 1988). However certainly a formal mandate for the food policy group can bestow legitimacy and bring (relative) permanence to the issue of food, as well as the authorisation and (sometimes) resources to move into implementation (Mendes 2008). Haughton also emphasises the need for official sanction as 'without it, planners and legislators may have little incentive to use the policy to guide and evaluate plans' (Haughton 1987, p.183). On the other hand, legitimacy can also be drawn from external perceptions, such as how representative its membership is, its identify, and its role within the community (Clancy 1988).

3.3.3 The local level (horizontal) governance context

A 'governance problem' has been identified in the case of the London Food Strategy, as national government has endowed the Mayor with direct powers only over planning and public health, while other policy domains are the responsibility of the 33 London boroughs and the Mayor has only an advocacy role to play (Morgan & Sonnino 2010; Reynolds 2009). This demonstrates that the potential for direct implementation of food policy interventions at the local level is contingent on the powers and responsibilities that exist at that level.

In her examination of the fitness of the local governance context to implement a food strategy in the city of Vancouver, Canada, Mendes (2008) drew attention to the importance of political will. A supportive environment can be facilitated by a key policy decision taken by an actor in a position of power, such as a Mayor or leader, who has the capacity to mobilise support. However the stability of local politics is critical in maintaining a supportive environment. If there is electoral upheaval, prior commitments of both senior officers and of elected councillors risk being abandoned (Yeatman 2003) – a caveat reinforced by Caraher et al (2013), who report that efforts to establish a state-level food strategy in Victoria, Australia, ended overnight with the 2010 state election, and by Mah and Thang (2013) who noted that election of an anti-public health Mayor in Toronto and a Conservative majority at the federal level, left the Toronto Food Strategy on fragile ground. That said, the opposite scenario occurred in the 2002 Vancouver

civic elections, when the social reformist Coalition of Progressive Electors created a governance space that was amenable to the food agenda, and elected officials understood the potential contribution by community groups (Mendes 2007).

In terms of the facility of food policy groups working with various local government departments, Yeatman (2003) observes that management structures in Victoria, Australia, affected potential for cross-policy domain working. In particular, rigid line management structures stemming from local government ethos and ways of working limited the potential for senior staff to be freed from their core roles so as to take part in strategic policy work in partnership with other departments or organisations. This observation is supported in Wegener et al's (2013) study of regional food planning in the Waterloo region of Ontario, Canada, which found that attempts to introduce sustainable and healthy food initiatives through the planning system were hampered by 'the way planning has always been done' (Wegener et al. 2013, p.103), especially when it came to archaic approvals processes that are the legacy of past decisions. Schiff (2007), meanwhile, identified the problem of hierarchical structures meaning that local government staff who are supportive in a personal capacity lack the authority to speak on behalf of the municipality, and there is a lack of clarity over the job roles of officers and elected officials.

Other remarks in the literature indicate that lack of understanding of bureaucratic processes within local governments, and within specific departments, are a barrier to influencing policy. For instance, Feenstra (2002) identifies the need to 'learn language' in the creation of political spaces to work towards sustainable food systems, and Mendes (2008) refers to non-government actors' failure to engage municipal actors through a round of cold calling different departments by telephone, as they did not know how to frame arguments in order to generate interest. These experiences support the assertion that overcoming structural barriers requires not only knowledge of organisational arrangements for a department, but also how to influence arrangements, and the skills required to work across a range of departments (Yeatman 2003).

3.3.4 The multi-level (vertical) governance context

Section 1.2.2 above has already identified the gaps in vertical, multilevel food governance that act as drivers for emergence of local level food policy, and attention has been paid to the benefits of consultation through the scales so that local action is embedded and supported, and to ensure the need for long-term, complementary action throughout the vertical governance scale is not obscured. The framing and constraining of multilevel food policy in various policy domains that touch upon food has also been discussed, in particular as policy silos can lead to local level policies that contradict or counteract each other. While further examples to support

these points were identified in the literature, there is no need to give details to support points already well made.

The literature on Vancouver adds to the prior discussion as it demonstrates a role for a food policy group in re-scaling the food debate and acting as an inter-level mediator. The City of Vancouver did not accept the full burden of responsibility for food policy – nor could it – but it became a broker for different sites and interests as the Vancouver City Council's motion on creating a 'just and sustainable food system' referred to four vertical levels (community, region, province and nation) and two local (horizontal) administrative bodies (Mendes 2007). In this way the higher levels had a seat at the table in the city, even if the local level had no seat higher up, and policy approaches incubated at the local level could demonstrate their value (Mendes 2008).

3.3.5   Identifying the research problem

This chapter so far has identified that a food policy group's success should be judged in terms of whether it has done everything was possible within its particular context. Thus, what it is possible for a food policy group to do is contingent on context. Seventeen factors have been identified that between them shape the context of a food policy group and, consequently, its capacity within it. These factors are either structural or operational and have been divided into four categories that represent different governance locations or dimensions (table 3-1).

The studies reviewed above from the US, Canada, Australia and the UK have provided fragmented insights into how these structural and operational factors determine context and a food policy group's capacity within it. Since each place has its own particular institutional configuration and division of power between levels varies, the significance of the factors cannot be assumed to be transferable across national institutional systems; in some instances it will be, and in others not. While some insights from London have been included in the above literature review, to date there has been no systematic and coherent exploration of how these 17 factors affect the ways through which food policy groups seek to advance their aims in the English context.

Having explored the empirical literature on food policy groups, the next section turns to a theoretical conceptualisation.

3.4   Theoretical framework

This section takes a theoretical approach to food policy groups, first of all in considering how they may be considered as entities, and then developing a theoretical toolbox for understanding how they are affected by governance arrangements.

3.4.1   Conceptualising food policy groups

As noted in section 2.3.1 above, policy networks are a model of interest group representation, where actors from the public, private and civil society sectors take part in negotiations over public policy. These policy networks influence, but do not determine, policy decision-making, and enable the status or power of participating actors and interests within a policy domain to be discerned (Rhodes 1997). Rhodes and March (1992) conceive of policy networks as a continuum of types based on formality, having subjected an earlier version of the model by Rhodes (1981, as cited in Rhodes 1997) to empirical testing in the British political system. At one end are 'policy communities' with a limited number of actors, consistent membership, frequent interaction, and a degree of consensus over ideology and policy preferences. At the other end are 'issue networks', with large, loose, fluctuating memberships that play a largely consultative role. Between the two is a raft of other types with different features and varying degrees of closeness to government[40].

Figure 3-1 The policy network continuum

Policy community	Issue network
Limited no. of actors	Large no of actors
Persistent, long-term membership	Membership fluctuates
Economic/professional domination	Range of interests
Frequent interaction	Frequency fluctuates
Accept outcome legitimacy	Some agreement, conflict persists
Actors exchange resources, negotiation	Some have resources, consultative role

Source: Rhodes and Marsh (1992)

The policy network continuum – in particular its polar extremes – has much to recommend it as a suitable concept for food policy groups. The conditions of a 'policy community' are a close match for key features of the small groups of actors involved in local food policy groups. The conditions of an 'issue network', meanwhile, reflect those of the wide networks of actors with a professional or activist interest in food, with whom the steering groups maintain contact (often by email) and consult on an occasional or irregular basis.

A problem with policy networks is identified by Lowndes and Skelcher (1998), who prefer 'partnerships' for groups of multi-sector actors that have become a feature of the local governance context. Their objection is that the word 'network' is also used for one of the three modes of governance – networks, markets, and hierarchies (Powell 1991) – describing 'a means

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[40] Eg producer networks, territorial communities, professional networks, intergovernmental networks (Rhodes 1997)

by which social coordination is achieved,' (Lowndes & Skelcher 1998, p.314). They observed that all three modes, not just the network mode, came into play in different stages in the lifecycle of the regeneration partnerships they studied, so that labelling the assembly of actors as a 'network' is misleading. Although food policy groups are not expected to utilise the market mode since, unlike regeneration partnerships, in most cases there is no bidding activity for programme delivery[41], the point is fair since there is an in-built hierarchical mode through which the leadership provides coordination and establishes bureaucratic routines or institutions. Clearly, then, there are touch points between food policy groups and policy networks on the one hand, and partnerships on the other. This mean these concepts may yet prove useful in making sense of the empirical findings.

Some discussions in the policy networks literature can also shed light on the inner workings of food policy groups. Firstly, in his original version of the policy networks model Rhodes (1981, as cited in Rhodes 1997) maintained that the links between actors in policy networks were institutional – that is, formally structured. Wilkes and Wright (1987), on the other hand, developed an alternative version in which inter-actor links are seen as social and interpersonal. The evolved Rhodes and March version is a softening of Rhodes' view, considering that: 'In general, the case studies play down, although they do not neglect, interpersonal links' (Rhodes & Marsh 1992, p.197). This allowed them to conclude that both institutional and interpersonal links can have an enabling and a constraining effect on negotiations within a network. Secondly, the concept of resource dependency proposes that all the actors in a network are dependent on each other's resources – financial, statutory or legal authority, political legitimacy, informational, or organisational – to carry out their collective task. This could help explain how policy networks are assembled, in order to possess the full complement of resources needed to fulfil their missions (Kickert et al. 1997; Kooiman 1993), and how much say each actor has over decisions according to the relative importance of their resources (Rhodes 1988).

Adjunct concepts such as the nature of actors' links and resource dependency in effect illuminate the institutions of policy networks and modes of governance – that is, the rules, codes and procedures through which they operate. Although Rhodes remained wedded to the application of formal institutions to policy networks – such as governmental structures, constitutions and legislatures – new institutionalism provides for a more fine-grained study. The next section assesses the potential application of new institutionalism to this research project.

3.4.2   New institutionalist theory

New institutionalism concerns the rules, codes and procedures through which organisations operate and relate to each other. In her paper on local level food policy in Australia, Yeatman

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[41] An exception is the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, which at the time of this research is unique in the UK in that it is commissioned by local government to provide some services.

(2003) found that theoretical frameworks that include a regard for organisational arrangements could be useful in the study of food policy and local government, as well as theories enabling consideration of the local environment and bureaucratic influence. The present author is unaware of any other scholars having taken such an approach to date. This section therefore discusses the suitability of new institutionalism in the present research project, and identifies elements from within its broad church that show explanatory potential.

The root of new institutionalism in political science is March and Olsen's seminal paper that rebutted behaviouralism with the assertion that 'the organisation of political life makes a difference' (1984, p747), and which drew inspiration from doyens of organisational theory Meyer and Rowan (1977). Meyer and Rowan proposed that organisations ceremonially adopt normative 'rationalised myths' – that is, policies, programmes, technologies, and services – from their environment in a bid for legitimacy, even if these myths do not create efficiency. In contrast to old institutionalism, which took a formal, hierarchical and rule-based view of institutions and tended to equate them with organisations, in new institutionalism they are broadly defined as 'formal rules, procedures and norms, but also symbol systems, cognitive scripts, and moral templates that give frames of meaning guiding human action' (Hall & Taylor 1996, p.947). The body of literature inspired by March and Olsen (1984) resolved that institutions may be formal, such as rules and constitutions, but they can also be informal codes and conventions that are perpetuated through actors' behavioural practices and expectations of each other without being enshrined in writing (Lowndes 2005; Lowndes 2001). Institutions have been equated to 'standard operating practices' that actors acknowledge either explicitly or implicitly, but which may have a conventional rather than strictly legal basis (Hall 1986, p.19); they are recognisable to a third party in addition to the actor/user and the originator, which distinguishes them from simple codes or commands in a boss-subordinate type relationship (Offe 1996). Bearing this in mind, the new institutionalist perspective would identify the factors drawn out in section 3.3 above, that shape the context in which a food policy group operates and what it can do, as institutional.

There are several variants of new institutionalism, each proposing a slightly different definition of an institution to Hall's all-inclusive description above, and different takes on issues like change, stability, and actors' agency. The three main variants are generally agreed to be sociological[42], historical, and rational choice, each of which grew up independently through the literature of its discipline[43]. A raft of other variants have been identified subsequently – Peters

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[42] Also known as 'organisational institutionalism' due to its roots in organisational theory.

[43] March and Olsen (1984, p.747) laid the foundation stone for normative institutionalism and its use in political science in reaction to behaviouralism, recognising that 'the organisation of political life makes a difference'. Hall, in response to behaviouralism in structural functionalism and in a bid to explain distinctive national policy outcomes, introduced a historical dimension. Rational choice institutionalism arose discretely out of the study of US congressional behaviour and the assumption that rational actors conduct cost-benefit analysis in every decision in a bid to maximise self interest (Hay 2002).

(2005) identifies eight[44], although several are sub-variants that have been split off from the main forms or detected by only a small group of academics with little traction in the greater body of literature.

Figure 3-2 Key characteristics of three main variants of new institutionalism

	Sociological	Historical	Rational Choice
Definition of institution	Cultural conventions, norms, cognitive frames, practices	Formal & informal procedures, routines, norms, conventions	Rules of the game in society
Objects of study	Organisational fields, social movements, diffusion of institutions	National policy, power elites, divergent paths, varieties of capitalism	Individual choices & outcomes, collective action, game scenarios
Theoretical focus	Institutional and cultural focus for, and shaping of, agency	The institutional and historical context for, and shaping of, agency	Institutions to create stability and curb the worst excesses of agency
Theoretical assumptions	Actors follow norms and conventions or logics of appropriateness	A combination of cultural and calculus logics	Actors calculate best course of action to pursue their interests, within institutional framework
Time horizons	The recent past and the future	Long-term in the past	The present and the immediate future
Views on change	'Institutionalisation', including imitation, adaptation and the re-use of existing institutions	Change as context-specific, formative moments and path dependence (punctuated equilibrium)	Change willed by actors, conscious design, rational adjustment, bargaining and 'gaming'.
Meaning of engagement	Relatively powerless groups mobilise within an institutional environment shaped by public and private sector organisations	Large groups and coalitions of empowered actors block or promote institutional reform in their own interests	Small community and business groups design their own institutions without help of central government actors

(Source: Lowndes & Roberts 2013, pp.32–33)

Based on table 3-2, the sociological variant has the most potential explanatory power for the present research because it concerns the context within which a food policy group operates, and the time frame is the recent past (and present). Moreover, agency has an important role in the adaptation of institutions so as to impact on public policy. If food policy groups are considered to be organisations (which is not to contradict the possibility raised in section 3.4.1 above that they are policy networks or partnerships), and businesses, local government and its constituent departments are also organisations, Greenwood et al's (2013, p.1) definition of sociological institutionalism as applying the institutional perspective to the questions 'how and why do organisations behave as they do, and with what consequences?' appears fitting. However several authors have liberated policy analysts from having to opt for one variant to the exclusion of others, instead advocating a magnanimous approach to recognise that each sheds light on different facets of behaviour and therefore cannot give a complete explanation for actors' behaviours (Hall & Taylor 1996; Davies & Trounstine 2012). Lowndes and Roberts (2013) go

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[44] Normative, sociological, rational choice, historical, empirical, international, interest representation, and discursive.

further in detecting a third phase of new institutionalism characterised by convergence and consolidation between the variants identified in the second, fragmentation phase of the 1980s and 1990s, on the grounds that 'in robust institutional arrangements, regulative, normative and discursive mechanisms work together to shape behaviour', (Lowndes & Roberts 2013, p.50). This allows us to remain open to insights drawn from the panoply of variants and sub-variants.

In a similar vein it follows that some elements of sociological institutionalism will be an imperfect fit in the present project. For instance, the sociologist's concern with 'the existence of the institutions, their internal processes, and their relationship with other institutions in the field' is of rather less interest than how they 'shape public policies or influence other political processes', as Peters (2005, p.128) explains their allure for political scientists. The central concept of 'organisational field' cannot be equated with the context of food policy groups referred to in the previous section, since an organisational field is 'a level that identifies a collection of diverse, interdependent organizations that participate in a common meaning system' (Scott 2014, p.106) and, as such, is incongruent with the diversity and clash of culture between food policy groups and the organisations of the public sector. Rather, an organisational field is akin to sectoral activity, such as a private sector cluster around an industry or an alliance of civil society organisations advocating for sustainable food.

More helpful is the idea of an institutional matrix for a multi-dimensional governance environment that is shaped by 'the outcome of action at many different institutional levels (from the EU to national, regional, local and neighbourhood levels) and in different institutional locations (within the political, commercial, and civil society domains),' (Lowndes & Roberts 2013, p.180). There is also recognition that there is not one set of institutions negotiated between the vertical and horizontal dimensions but each service area or policy domain has its own norms and institutions that derived from professional practice and/or regulatory requirements (Lowndes 2005). Within the institutional matrix institutions can be envisaged as existing in several spaces: '[Organisations] contain within themselves many instances of robust institutionalized recursive practices. But relatively stable over time institutionalized recursive practices also exist between [organisations], as well as under, over and around them' (Fox & Miller 1995, p.92; Lowndes & Roberts 2013). Thus, each organisation – such as a food policy group, local government, local government departments and all other organisations within the matrix – has a set of institutions that determine internal arrangements and processes, while other institutions exist between them and configure their interactions. In this way each of the four locations/governance dimensions identified in section 3.3 – the food policy group, interactions between the food policy group and local government, the horizontal local governance context and the multilevel vertical context – are populated with institutions.

Having identified and located institutions, the next step is to consider how they work to determine arrangements and processes and to configure interactions. Four key concepts within new institutionalism are identified as having the potential to help explain institutional mechanisms with respect to food policy groups: modes of constraint, agency and institutional entrepreneurship, institutional isomorphism, and path dependency.

Scott (2014) identifies three pillars of institutions that are derived from various authors' definitions: regulative, normative, and cultural cognitive. Lowndes and Roberts (2013) re-worked these adjectives into three modes of constraint: rules, practices and narratives. Rules are the mode with the closest relation to the formal definition given by old institutionalism, which sees institutions as expressed in terms of reference, standards, protocols and regulations. Practices, meanwhile, are not set out in documents and have no official sanction but they add to, compete with or replace the formal rules. Finally institutions are transmitted in the 'subtle processes of explanation and persuasion' of narrative, written and visual media, and in this way are perpetuated or imbued with the narrator's spin and understanding (Lowndes & Roberts 2013, p.63). This means that in the present research institutions are likely to be detected within the strategies or other formal documents containing 'rules' of food policy groups, such as their terms of references, in the practices and activities of the groups, and in actors' accounts of the activities they engage in and the barriers they face.

Despite being labelled as 'modes of constraint', rules, practices and narratives not only constrain actors' behaviour. Rather, Lowndes and Roberts envisage slippages or inconsistencies between the modes, as rules are interpreted and put into practice, and as practices are represented in narratives. These inconsistencies open up spaces for actors to exercise agency – that is, 'to act consciously and, in so doing to attempt to realise his or her intentions' (Hay 2002, p.94). This is consistent with the sociological inclusion of cognitive scripts and templates as institutions, as actors may follow a template to guide behaviour but adapt it as they see fit in the circumstances. This in-built mechanism for agency is the cleaver between sociological institutionalism and its normative sibling (Peters 1999); in normative institutionalism the central concept of 'logic of appropriateness' denies actors the opportunity for agency when playing particular roles in particular situations. The acknowledgement of agency reveals 'the double life of institutions as both human products and social forces in their own right (Grafstein 1988, p.578) – or, put another way, they are co-constitutive since actors' behaviour is constrained by institutions on the one hand, but on the other hand institutions are made and changed through behaviour. This reflects the dialectical position in one of the key debates in social science: structure and agency: 'Structures provide the context within which agents act but agents interpret structures and in acting change them, with these 'new' structures becoming the context

within which agents act,' (Marsh 2010, p.213). Thus, institutions provide structures in respect of which actors may exercise agency.

Actors who exercise agency in a bid to disrupt institutions and/or introduce new or changed ones are referred to as institutional entrepreneurs (Hardy & Maguire 2013; Pierson 2004). In sociological institutionalism entrepreneurship is paradoxical, as those actors with the greatest resources and capacity to influence institutions have the least incentive to change arrangements from which they benefit. Rather, it is marginal actors in the organisational field who have the most to gain from change, but who lack the resources, and therefore the capacity, to make it happen (Hardy & Maguire 2013; Lowndes 2005). In the present research the food policy group could be seen as playing an entrepreneurial role vis-à-vis the organisational field of public policy, led by actors who display the analytical, reflective, and creative characteristics of institutional entrepreneurs (Hardy & Maguire 2013). These characteristics resonate with the description of 'special people' in partnerships at the local government level, who build relationships of trust across sector boundaries and, being 'provocative but positive', can 'get other people to do things they would not otherwise do, and enjoy it' (Lowndes & Squires 2012, p.406). They also resonate with the personal attributes of leaders of food policy groups identified in section 3.3.1 above.

Viewed this way, agency is a mechanism for bringing about institutional change in a proactive way, as opposed to reactive change necessitated by circumstances or the external environment. Change has been treated as problematic within new institutionalism due to the historical perspective characterising it as a rare and seismic event caused by exogenous shock that occurs at points of critical juncture, after which institutions become path dependent – that is, the longer they are in place the greater the costs of replacing them (Hay 2002; Peters 2005; John 2012). Thus path dependency is based on punctuated equilibrium and is a concept more suited to explaining stability than change. It may yet hold some explanatory power for the present research in understanding the legacy of the circumstances under which a food policy group was established, as well as the 'way things have always been done' in particular departments – as in the case of planning in Ontario that was identified by Wegener et al (2013) above. Moreover, efforts have been made to introduce incremental change into punctuated equilibrium through punctuated evolution, which proposes that gradual change does occur but it is undetectable until it attains a breaking point to force a new critical juncture (Thelen 1999), and through institutional layering, under which pre-existing institutions are not ousted but new ones simply lie on top in strata (Mahoney & Thelen 2010). Institutional layering has been applied to British food policy by Feindt and Flynn (2009) but its applicability to food policy at the local level has not been tested.

Path dependency poses less of a problem to sociologists than it does to institutional scholars of other disciplines since the main concept used to explain reactive change is isomorphism, whereby institutions of organisations in the same field gradually adapt institutional forms to resemble each other and, in so doing, generate legitimacy (Meyer & Rowan 1977). DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identified three mechanisms behind isomorphism: coercive, where not adapting would lead to sanctions; normative, such as professionalisation; and mimetic, as organisations copy the institutions of others that seem most successfully to achieve their ends. Although the present research takes the institutional matrix as the research arena in lieu of an organisational field, food policy groups can be seen as seeking legitimacy in order to influence public policy. This means that isomorphism could come into play if the means to obtain legitimacy and successfully influence public policy is to professionalise or mimic the institutions of local government.

This section has elucidated what is meant by the term 'institution' and demonstrated that new institutionalism has great explanatory potential for the present research project. The next task is to articulate the research questions.

3.5   Research questions

Section 3.3.5 identified that to date there has been no systematic and coherent exploration of how the context-shaping factors affect a food policy group's capacity to pursue its aims in England. This constitutes a research problem. The objective of this research is to examine how the institutions of English food policy groups and other organisations affect the formers' capacity to pursue their aims, and how the food policy groups work to maximise that capacity.

The primary research question is: How do institutional norms, values and practices affect food policy groups' capacity to pursue their aims?

The four secondary research questions are:

1)   How do the structural organisational aspects of a food policy group affect the ways in which it pursues its aims?
2)   How does the institutional relationship between a food policy group and local government affect how the former pursues its aims?
3)   How do the institutions within the local level context affect how a food policy group pursues its aims?
4)   How do the institutions within the vertical framing affect how a food policy group pursues its aims?

The societal value of this research is that it will provide an evidence base to guide local level food policy groups in adopting the most appropriate and advantageous structural and operational practices so as to maximum their capacity to achieve what they set out to do. This is crucial in order to avoid groups becoming ineffective 'talking shops' where actors discuss the problems relating to food but from which no action points emerge, or the production of ambitious strategies that cannot be implemented, or that are merely public relations documents to cast their city in glow of sustainability and help bring recognition and investment, but which neither seek nor deliver real change (Pierre 2011).

The scientific value is that although new institutionalism has been used in the study of local level governance in the past (Lowndes 2005), it has never before been applied to the study of local level food policy. As food policy groups are atypical entities in local governance, and since food policy is such a complex and contentious area, the research will new yield insights that will contribute to the new institutionalist understandings and practice.

3.6   Summary

This chapter has explored issues of nomenclature and modus operandi of food policy groups, establishing that food policy groups and urban food strategies are two sides of the same coin, both of which involve groups of actors from the public sector and civil society, and ideally the private sector. It has established that success for food policy groups (and wider programmes) can be assessed in terms of whether they have done all that was possible within their particular context, and set out a conceptual framework involving 17 factors that shape the context in which food policy groups operate and their capacity for operating within it. Following a review of literature from international experiences in local food policy to date, the absence of a comprehensive and systematic study of the English context is noted. This constitutes the research problem.

Local food policy groups as entities have been considered as possible policy networks and partnerships. New institutionalism has been proposed as the basis of a theoretical framework for the research, and the suitability of elements of different variants has been discussed with a particular focus on sociological (organisational) institutionalism.

Finally, a set of research questions is articulated for the present research to address. The societal and scientific relevance of the research is demonstrated.

The next chapter sets out the research design and methods for addressing the research questions, and justifies the choices of study design and data collection methods through a review of methodological literature.

4 Research design and methods

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter concluded with the articulation of a set of research questions. It is now necessary to set out the research design and methodological process for answering the questions. This chapter first sets out the research design, made up of seven work stages bound together by logic. The subsequent sections explain each of these stages in turn and justify the choices made with reference to methodological literature. First an explanation is given for the process of identifying papers included in the literature review, out of which the research problem and questions were drawn. Next, rationale is offered for the case study design and the process through which the case studies were selected. The merits and drawbacks of the three data collection methods – document analysis, direct observation, and in-depth interviews – are discussed, with practical guidance obtained from the methodological literature. This is followed by an explanation of the strategies and techniques of data analysis. Finally, consideration is given to ethical aspects of the research project.

4.2 Research design

A research design is the overarching plan, strategy or blueprint for a research project. It is made up of several stages that progress from articulation of the research questions to final conclusions, via the empirical data (Yin 2009). According to Yin (2009, p.27), 'the main purpose of the design is to help avoid the situation in which the evidence does not address the initial research questions. In this sense, a research design deals with a logical and not a logistical problem'. As such, it is not enough simply to set out the operational process for completing the research process but a research design must also justify the rationale for choosing particular procedures and the grounds for validity of the responses to the research questions that they provide (Kumar 2011).

This section deals with the operational plan of the research, which consists of the seven phases represented by the central flow chart in figure 4-1 and explained in the short paragraphs below it. Justification for procedural choices and grounds for validity are handled in sections 4.3 to 4.6.

Figure 4-1 Seven stages of research and their relationship to thesis chapters

Literature review
Ch. 1: Emerging local food policy;
governance
Ch. 3: Food policy groups; measuring
success, conceptualising potential.
New institutionalism

Lit review plus data collection 1
Ch. 2: English local government; food policy
approach; policy domain framing

Study design
Ch. 4: Research design and
methods

Analysis
Ch. 5-9 Case study findings
Ch. 10: Comparison and theoretical
discussion
Ch. 11: Conclusions and reflections

Entire thesis, papers, presentations, lectures

Identification of problem, subject and scope

Development of conceptual and theoretical frameworks

Identification of research questions

Design of study

Definition of methods

Identification of case studies

Data collection

Document analysis

Direct observation

Interviews

Analysis

Outputs

How do institutional norms, values and practices affect food policy groups' capacity to pursue their aims?

S1: How do the structural organisational aspects of a food policy group affect the ways in which it pursues its aims?
S2: How does the institutional relationship between a food policy group and local government affect how the former pursues its aims?
S3: How do the institutions in the local level context affect how a food policy group pursues its aims?
S4: How do the institutions in the vertical framing affect how a food policy group pursues its aims?

London Food Programme
Islington Food Strategy
Manchester Food Futures
Bristol Food Policy Council
Co. Durham Food Partnership

Data collection 2
Ch. 5-9: Case study findings

Source: author

It must be noted that while Yin locates the start of research operations at articulation of the research questions, figure 4-1 begins earlier, with identification of the problem, subject and scope. This is not only to enable the chapter structure of the entire thesis to be depicted in relation to the seven phases, but also because Chapter 2 contains both a review of literature on English local government arrangements and food policy and some initial data collection, because some information was not available in academic literature and therefore had to be obtained from policy documents. In addition, articulation of the research questions usually precedes development of the conceptual and theoretical framework – but in this case an understanding of new institutionalism had to be established in order to make sense of the research questions. In light of these adjustments, starting with the research questions would have entailed an incomplete representation of the research design.

Despite the apparent logical progression between the phases as represented in figure 4-1, the research process is not always linear and there was some overlap and iteration between phases. Where phases are clearly linked or depend upon each other's outcomes, the connections are represented by grey dashed arrows.

The first three stages in the research design involved the literature review and, where necessary, the first part of data collection. The literature review covered four topics: local level and urban food policy, new institutionalism, governance and structures of local government in England, and an overview of English food policy. The process for identifying literature for each topic in the literature review is explained and justified in section 4.3. Details on the supplementary initial data collection (part 1) on English local government, English food policy approach and policy framing are given in conjunction with data collection (part 2) in section 4.5.1. The literature review allowed conceptual and theoretical frameworks to be drawn up and culminated in the articulation of research questions.

Once the research questions and theoretical approach were determined, the next logical phase was to design the study. This involved the decision to use a case study design for the project and the determination of a two-stage process to identify the case studies (see section 4.4). Decisions over data-collection methods were also made in this phase.

For each of the five case studies identified during study design, data collection (part 2) involved desk research (document analysis) and fieldwork (direct observation and interviews) (see section 4.5).

After the data had been collected, the analysis phase involved interpretation of the data for each of the case studies. The first stage of data analysis yielded the findings that are contained in the five case study chapters. A second phase of analysis was then carried out that compared the case studies on the bases of the 17 factors comprising the conceptual framework, and used new

institutionalism as an analytical lens to provide explanations for how they affect the capacity of food policy groups, how they interact, and how their effects can be altered by actor agency. This yielded the discussion in Chapter 10. During the second analytical phase it was necessary to revisit the theoretical framework (as represented in figure 4-1 by the dashed arrow between 'development of conceptual and theoretical frameworks' and 'analysis') due to the iterative application of new institutionalism as it 'worries backwards and forwards between theory and empirical exploration in an iterative fashion,' (Lowndes & Roberts 2013, p.20). Doing so ensured reflexivity over the suitability of the approach and the generation of new theoretical understandings through answering the research questions.

Finally, the output phase involved the writing-up of this entire thesis, including the conclusions contained in Chapter 11, which directly answer the research questions. The output phase will continue for a prolonged period as the researcher submits peer-reviewed papers based on the research and gives presentations and lectures on the findings to a variety of different audiences.

The following sections take each of the research phases in turn (with the exception of outputs) and offers justification for the processes and decisions made, with reference to methodological literature where it helped inform and guide them, in order to support the validity of the conclusions.

4.3   Literature review

This section explains how relevant literature was identified, as well as justification for the inclusion of certain bodies of literature. Literature on four different topics was reviewed: local food policy, new institutionalism, governance and local government in England[45], and the emergence and development of English/UK food policy[46]. For each topic literature was identified via a multi-step process:

1) Search of City University online library. Results were sorted by scanning titles and abstracts and irrelevant papers were excluded.
2) Search of online archives of journals occurring multiple times in stage 1, going back to 1990.
3) Review of publication lists of authors appearing multiple times in stages 1 and 2.
4) References of papers and chapters identified in stages 1-3 were scanned
5) For local food policy groups: identification of relevant non-academic literature from references of papers found in steps 1-4, and Google searches of key words.

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[45] These topics are taken together because often both topics are discussed within the same works. The researcher's interest in governance originated from reviewing the local government literature.

[46] As food policy is such a complex, multifaceted field, the literature review was limited to an overview of the main developments since World War 2, to the exclusion of policy domain-specific literature unless it was indicative of broader shifts (eg approaches to public health).

Details of the search parameters for each body of literature, and the dates when searches were carried out, are set out in table 4-1.

Table 4-1 Literature search dates and parameters

	Local food policy	**New institutionalism**	**Governance/local government**	**English food policy**
Date	October 2011 September 2014	April 2012 October 2014	August - Sept 2011 September 2014	October 2011 September 2014
Library/ database search	City University databases: Academic Research Complete; Ebscohost; JISC Journal Archives; JSTOR; Oxford Journals Archive	City University online library	City University online library	City University online library. Databases: Academic Search Complete; SocIndex; Political Science Complete; Health Policy Reference Centre; GreenFILE; JSTOR
Search terms	'food policy council'; 'food strategy'; 'local food'; 'defensive localism'	'new institutionalism', 'sociological institutionalism', 'organisational institutionalism'	'local government relations, England', 'local government structure, England', 'localism'.	'food policy, England'; 'food policy, UK'
Journals	Local Environment; Critical Public Health; International Planning		Local Government Studies; Urban Studies	Food Policy; British Medical Journal; Environment and Planning C
Authors	Mendes; Morgan; Sonnino		Lowndes; Pierre; Rhodes; Wilson	Barling, Dowler, Lang; Marsden
References scanned	✓	✓	✓	✓
Grey literature	Google: 'food policy council' 'food strategy'	-	Developments traced through emails of Local Government Association, *Local Government Chronicle*, *Guardian* local government	-
Outcome	Academic literature = 36 Local food, defensive localism, sustainable food systems = 20 Grey literature = 13	Academic literature = 26 (search not intended to be exhaustive but sufficient to inform author about theory)	Academic literature = 12. Wilson and Game (2011) provided key points on structural changes.	Academic literature = 24

Source: Author

Some non-academic or 'grey' papers/reports were included in the literature review on local food policy groups. These were deemed admissible because local food policy groups are a relatively new phenomenon and some of the most helpful literature has been published in non-academic milieu. Some of the authors of 'grey' literature are community researchers (or academics publishing in a non-academic milieu) who carried out interview-based research with practitioners and whose findings are secondary sources. Others are practitioners/activists who

drew on their own direct experience of food policy groups, which means their reports are primary sources. Caution was exercised in interpreting both kinds of reports because it cannot be assumed that they were compiled with the same rigour as academic literature. Also, practitioner-activists might be less critical than academics and lack independence, particularly if they have a vested interest in promoting a particular model or process. The 13 reports, their publishers, audiences, purposes, and geographical foci, are set out in Appendix A.

It is also noteworthy that there is a paucity of literature on local food policy groups in England and the UK to date. Of the entire body of academic and 'grey' literature, only five concerned England, while one concerned Wales and one concerned Europe. (Ten were non-geographical, and 32 related to North America (USA and/or Canada, tribal nations.) The decision was taken to include material from developed countries because there is a tendency towards sharing experiences and models, so it was reasoned that there would be common ground on the drivers, visions for the food system, nomenclature and ways of working, and actors involved. Generic institutional factors affecting capacity of food policy groups within a particular context could be identified, even they could not be transferred from place to place.

4.4   Case study design

This section provides the rationale for using a case study design for this research. First, a brief explanation of what constitutes case study research is provided, before setting out the design of the present study and establishing the case boundaries. Elements of a robust case study design are identified from the methodological literature, and explanations given for how these are ensured in the present research. The two-stage process for identifying suitable case studies is described. Finally, two alternative designs that were considered are documented, together with reasons why they were not taken forward.

4.4.1   Multiple holistic case studies

Miller and Salkind (2002, p.162) describe the case study as 'an exploration of a 'bounded system' or a case (or multiple cases), over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information and rich in context'. This study design is suitable for research that addresses questions beginning with 'how' or 'why' that concern social phenomena within a particular social, historical and economic (and sometimes geographical and political) context – and especially where the lines between context and phenomenon are blurred (Yin 2009; Miller & Salkind 2002). Based on these criteria, case study is a suitable design for this project. Not only do all the research questions commence with 'how', but also food policy groups are a phenomenon in contemporary society. As has been established in Chapter 3, they

are highly dependent on their institutional context and the focus of enquiry is the interface between that institutional context and what food policy groups can do.

Yin (2009) proposes four basic models for case studies: holistic single case (single unit of analysis), single case with multiple embedded units of analysis, multiple holistic cases, and multiple cases with embedded units of analysis. The present research most closely resembles the third of these, with five holistic case studies, as shown in figure 4-2. The five cases are shown within the institutional setting of local government in England, which represents the boundary of the study. From the new institutionalist perspective this constitutes a top, shared layer of institutional context. The institutions contained therein are the powers and responsibilities of local government, and central-local government relations – both of which have been subject to recent shifts – which have a bearing on the capabilities of food policy groups. The second layer of institutional context is unique to each case study and constitutes its particular local governance context. The institutions existing within this context also impact the capabilities of food policy groups, such as the local authority structure and leadership model.

This conceptualisation reflects to some extent the four categories of factors affecting what food policy groups can do within their context shown in table 3-1 above – that is, 1) structure and organisation of the food policy group, 2) location and relation vis-à-vis local government, 3) local level (horizontal) context, 4) Multilevel (vertical) context. The rough equivalence of the categories to the contextual layers is indicated in figure 4-2 by corresponding numbers. One clear difference between the two conceptualisations is that table 3-1 also includes operational factors through which the food policy group deals with structures it encounters within its contexts. A second difference is that the table includes multilevel food policy framing and multilevel policy framing/constraints within departments. It is the determination of what the local level can do with respect of these framings that is the principal area of interest.

Even though all the case studies are located within England and therefore collectively illustrate issues stemming from the same central-local government framework, they cannot be considered as 'representative'. This is because each case study is embedded in a unique direct institutional context and therefore represents an unusual or unique set of circumstances that merits investigation. For this reason, the case studies are deemed 'atypical' (Burns 1997). The implications of this for external validity are explored below, in section 4.4.4.

Figure 4-2 Case study design: five holistic cases within their shared institutional setting
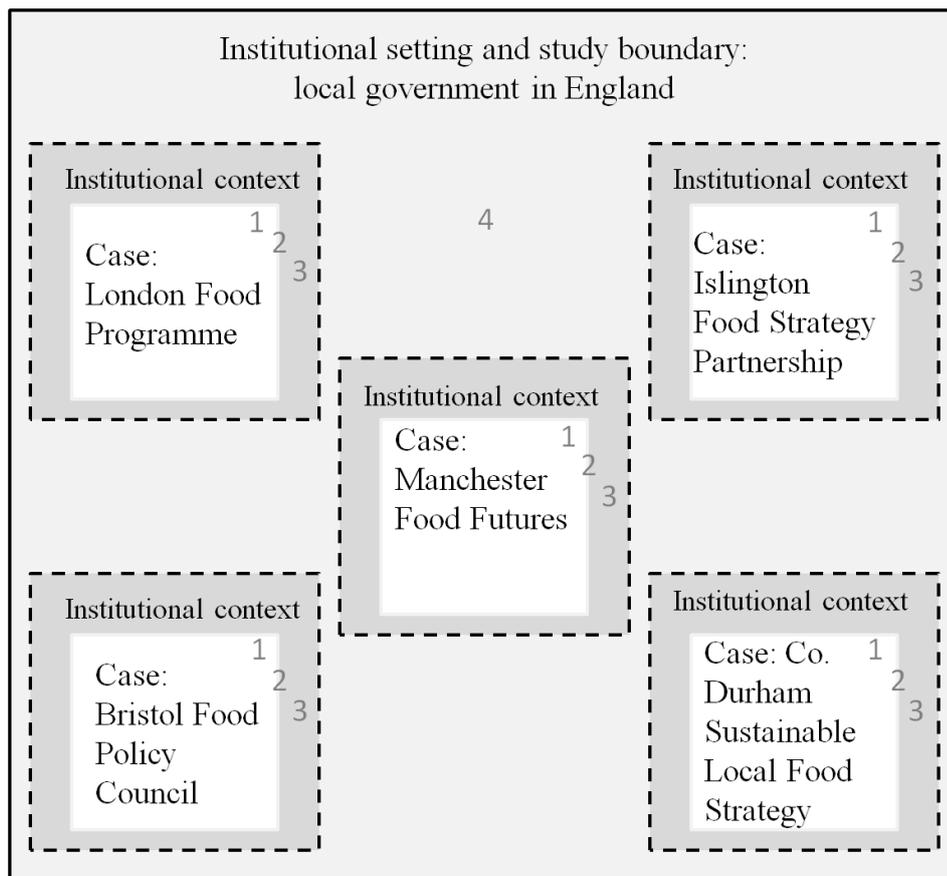
Source: Adapted from Yin 2009

Such a multiple case study design as this is termed as 'collective', with cases purposively selected, described and compared so as to provide insights on an issue (Miller & Salkind 2002). Several safeguards were employed in the purposive selection of the case studies to ensure that they were bounded. Firstly, criteria were drawn up for determining what exactly constitutes a food policy group based on the literature review (see discussions in Chapters 2 and 3), as shown in figure 4-3. Secondly, data collection was time-bound to take place between May 2012 and March 2014. A precise time break down of fieldwork timings by case study is presented in table 4-4[47]. Thirdly, parameters were put in place for data sources that were considered admissible, such as the kinds of documents to be admitted for analysis and actors that were eligible to be interviewed. These parameters are explained in section 4.5 below.

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[47] The second phase of document analysis from January to March 2014 was not initially intended but was carried out as analysis of interview data showed up some gaps in the evidence base that had to be filled in. The intention was to study documents dated no later than July 2013, but in the case of Manchester some major governance changes that were under discussion during the fieldwork period had been clarified and, as such, it was important to consider the outcome of the discussions. In Bristol also the Bristol Food Plan was published in early 2014, so the document review period was extended to take it into account.

Figure 4-3 Criteria for identifying local food policy groups

Does a group of actors meet at regular intervals to discuss food-related issues for a local government area?

NO → NOT LOCAL FOOD POLICY GROUP

YES ↓

Does the group develop policy and/or seek to influence policy decisions relating to food (with possible additional functions)?

NO →

YES ↓

Is there the intention of creating synergies between multiple policy domains related to food?

NO →

YES ↓

Does the group include actors from the public and civil society sectors (and ideally private)?

NO →

YES ↓

LOCAL FOOD POLICY GROUP

Source: author

Figure 4-4 Chronology for research phases four to six

Case study selection part 1 March 2012

↓

Case study selection part 2 May 2012

London	Islington	Manchester	Bristol	Co. Durham

↓

Initial document analysis	May to December 2012			

↓

Meeting observations	May 2012 October 2012 April 2013	October 2012 January 2013	Not possible	January 2013 April 2013	February 2013 May 2013

↓

Interviews	April to July 2013	May to June 2013	July 2013	May to June 2013	July 2013

↓

Initial data analysis	September to December 2013

↓

Second document analysis	January to March 2014

↓

Second data analysis	April to August 2014

Source: author

4.4.2   Alternative case study designs considered

An alternative design was considered in the form of a multiple case study design for three non-London cities/counties/boroughs, plus a single, embedded case study for London and up to three London boroughs. This design was rejected because London borough food strategies are independent of the London Food Strategy, and do not draw their visions, objectives, and action plans from it.

An additional single case study with embedded elements was also considered but not taken forward. At around the same time as the start of this project three civil society organisations, the Soil Association, Sustain, and Food Matters, began collaborating in the Sustainable Food Cities Network and a soft launch took place at a conference in October 2011. However the organisations required funding to develop the network, which was not obtained until March 2013.

It was originally planned to use this new network as the basis of an additional single case study

with embedded elements, in the shape of the six cities that were to receive funding for a food coordinator. The formal launch of the network would have meant that the case is revelatory as the researcher 'has access to a situation previously inaccessible to scientific observation' (Yin 2009, p.49). Given the funding delays, at the time of case study selection cities had not yet applied for funding for a coordinator. Moreover, the follow-up conference, at which the researcher planned to gather questionnaire data from attendees, had not been scheduled and was deemed unlikely to take place before the completion of fieldwork (it eventually took place in March 2014).[48]

4.4.3   Case study selection

The multiple case studies in the final design were selected via a two-step process.

The first step was a systematic search for English local authorities with food policy activities, carried out in March 2012 using internet search engine Google. The search terms were '[local authority] food policy', '[local authority] food plan, '[local authority] food strategy'. If no results were found, a search for the word 'food' was conducted on the homepage of the local authority website. Searches were made for all local authorities in England. The names of local authorities were used instead of city or town names because a condition of selection was that the food policy activity had to have some support from the local authority, so it was reasoned that, even if the activity related to a particular town or city the supporting local authority would be mentioned on the same webpage. Decisions about what exactly constituted a food policy group were based on a set of qualifying criteria set out in figure 4-3. As a result, search results for food policy initiatives that are not supported by a local authority in any way were discarded, as were policies that clearly related to only one policy domain (eg health, school food procurement, local economy).

The first step identified 13 potentially eligible local authority areas: Brighton and Hove, Bradford, Bristol, County Durham, Herefordshire, Islington, Lambeth, London, Manchester, Middlesbrough, Newquay, Plymouth, Sandwell, Sheffield, and St Albans. St Albans was discounted at this stage because there was just one individual at the local authority working on it without a food policy group and as part of a wider job remit, and funding was insecure. Newquay was discounted because the food strategy relates to just one section of the town, the

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[48] Given the initial intention to include the Sustainable Food Cities Network in this research, a secondment with Sustain was arranged on a part-time basis (one or two days a week) between July 2012 and January 2013. Such a secondment was a requirement of the PUREFOOD programme, and although in the event it did not contribute to data collection the experience was nonetheless useful for understanding the work of the NGO alliance and participating in the initiation of the SFCN. The researcher also undertook an additional period of voluntary work with Sustain between September and December 2014, which provided valuable first-hand experience of the SFCN in action.

Newquay Growth Area, and is supported by Cornwall County Council to the exclusion of other parts of the county.

The second step of the selection process involved characterising the 11 remaining local authorities according to their structure, whether they were developing a strategy or engaged in on-going food work/implementation, and the location of the food policy group vis-à-vis local government. This characterisation is illustrated in table 4-2 and the final selection of cases is marked in bold.

Table 4-2 Characterisation of local level food policy activities in England

Local authority	Structure	Strategy stage	Location of group
Bradford	Metropolitan	Implementation	Local authority
Brighton and Hove	Unitary urban	Implementation	External
Bristol	**Unitary urban, Mayor**	**Development**	**External**
County Durham	**Unitary county-wide**	**Development**	**External**
Herefordshire	Unitary county-wide	Implementation	External
Islington	**London borough**	**Implementation**	**Hybrid**
Lambeth	London borough	Development	Unclear
London	**Capital**	**Implementation**	**GLA/environment**
Manchester	**Metropolitan**	**Implementation**	**Local authority, PH**
Plymouth	Unitary urban	Development	External
Sandwell	Metropolitan	Implementation	External
Sheffield	Metropolitan	Implementation	Local authority, health improvement

Source: author

Selection of the cases was made initially in order to ensure maximum variation in local authority structures and leadership types, and following that in order to have a variety of locations vis-à-vis local government and strategy stages (Flyvbjerg 2006). London was selected as the only example of a food policy group/programme in its local authority category – London's structure is *sui generis*. Bristol was chosen because following a referendum a directly-elected Mayor was elected in November 2012, marking it out as a unique case among unitary urban local governments.

Sheffield was initially chosen because it is a northern city with a relatively new food strategy (2011), and unusually the local authority area includes 61% green space, largely national park, which provides for unique urban-rural relations. However on initial contact with the local government representative in October 2012 it was learned that implementation was on hold as the strategy was moving from the Department of Health Improvement to the new Public Health Department in April 2013 as a result of the national restructuring of Primary Care Trusts, and consequently it was likely to be re-written by its new caretakers. This means that while

Sheffield is an interesting case insofar as it shows the effect of policy change and reorganisation at the national level on the viability of local food policy groups, there was no active food policy group at the time. This means it was inappropriate as a case study as it could not be studied in the same way, and to the same extent, as others. Manchester was therefore chosen as a replacement metropolitan case, and was preferred over Sandwell and Bradford as it had recently been the subject of a governance consultation that was expected to yield information about the purposive choice of structure and anticipated future role.

Islington was chosen because it is the home borough of City University and, as the food strategy was adopted in 2010, it had spanned the change in national government. It was also preferable to Lambeth because since a conference in June 2012 organised by Lambeth council and a community group Incredible Edible Lambeth, no firm plans for ongoing food policy activity had been published and there was no solid evidence of a nascent food policy group.

The decision was taken to include a unitary county local authority with a food policy group, as County Durham and Herefordshire include some urban and rural areas and, as such, it was anticipated that rural-urban relations would be a consideration in group structures and operations. County Durham was chosen because it is located in the north of England and so helps redress the north-south balance of the case studies. In addition, it is the only case study where the food policy activity is has a voluntary sector organisation as secretariat.

4.4.4   Ensuring a robust design

Yin sets out four criteria for judging the quality of a research design, and paying close attention to them ensures a solid rebuttal to criticisms that have been levelled at case study as a method. The following paragraphs detail how these four aspects have been taken into consideration.

The first aspect is construct validity in order to avoid subjective judgements in collection and interpretation of data that result from the researcher's impressions (Yin 2009). This means being very clear about what exactly is being studied and how it is being measured by operationalising the research questions through a two-part process of defining the underlying concepts and then relating them to operational measures.

The phrase in the primary research question that must be operationalised is 'capacity to work towards aims'. This means what the food policy group actually can do towards reaching its expressed aims, using the ways and means at its disposal. The operational measures for assessing this are implied in each of the secondary research questions, which concern '*the ways in which* [each of the food policy groups] seeks to pursue its aims' – that is, the approaches and tactics, such as (for example), use of informal networks, responding to consultations, awareness

raising, facilitation, etc. The measurement is simply whether the food policy group uses each approach or tactic, and if not what the reasons are.

A second way to ensure construct validity is the use of multiple sources of evidence in each of the case studies, which allows for potentially subjective impressions from document analysis and meeting observations to be verified in interviews.

The second of Yin's four criteria is internal validity, or 'seeking to establish a causal relationship' (Yin 2009, p.40). Internal validity is relevant to this project as causal inferences are made that an approach or tactic for working towards aims has resulted from a particular institutional arrangement. Such inferences from the data are necessary because it is impossible directly to observe the causal event, but Yin (p.43) advises boosting internal validity in the design stage by anticipating the questions: 'Is the inference correct?'; 'Have all the rival explanations and possibilities been considered?'; Is the evidence convergent?; Does it appear to be airtight?'.

The third criterion is external validity, or 'defining the domain to which a study's findings can be generalised' (Yin 2009, p.40). The view that one cannot generalise from single case studies unless the same study is carried out on the same case repeatedly, under different conditions, has been the source of mistrust of the case study method (Flyvbjerg 2006). Miller and Salkind (2002) state that it is not problematic for researchers using multiple or collective case studies to make claims about generalisation as long as the case studies were selected to be representative – but as seen in section 4.4.1 above the case studies in the present research are not representative. It is precisely the variability of institutional factors within their immediate contexts, and how this impacts the ways in which food policy groups can work, that is being tested. Use of new institutionalism as the theoretical lens allows for the institutional factors to be identified. The effects of institutions – such as local authority structure or leadership style – could be generalised from case to case if they occurred in isolation, in a clinical-like setting, but in reality institutions occur in concert with a number of others that mitigate each others' effects. Moreover, new institutionalism allows us to see how actors exert agency in respect of institutional frameworks, finding ways to alter institutions and to overcome constraints. Since no food policy group has a context with the exact same institutional configuration it would be inappropriate to attempt to generalise the findings from one to any other, although there are likely to be patterns where similarities and divergences can be detected. Thus, the ability to generalise between case studies is not crucial to the validity of this study.

The fourth criterion is reliability, which Yin conflates with ability for the same study to be repeated with the same results. For this project repeatability not assured because the cases studies took place during a particular time period, when particular variables, structures, operations and actors were present. It cannot be assumed that the same conditions will remain

constant or reoccur. However two measures were put in place to boost reliability as far as possible. The first was the formulation of a protocol for each of the case studies with headings 'overview of the case study project', 'field procedures', 'case study questions', 'guide for the case study report' (Yin 2009), which also served to guide the researcher during desk research and fieldwork. The protocol template is contained in Appendix B, and was adapted for each case study only insofar as the overview of each different and to account for any unusual circumstances. The procedures drew on guidance from methodological literature, as discussed in the section 4.5, and from ethical best practice (see section 4.7 and Appendix F).

The second measure to safeguard reliability was the maintenance of case study databases, which ensure a traceable record of evidence in case another researcher should wish to verify the findings, and which served as a tool for the researcher to manage data. These consist of computer files (one per case study) containing copies of all the documents analysed, interview transcripts and coded quotes, and observation notes. For documents, relevant passages were digitally highlighted for ease of reference and a digital annotation was placed on the first page listing the relevant points. In meeting observation notes, key points were summarised at the top of the document and important content was highlighted and annotated. For interviews, the entire transcript of each interview was stored. In addition, a page containing interviewee quotes related to each theme was extracted from NVivo after coding.

4.5 Data collection

Data for this research were collected using three methods: document analysis, direct observation and semi-structured interviews. Not only does this combination of methods help ensure construct validity by allowing for subjective findings to be verified, but the methods also reflect the rules, narratives and practices modes of constraint for institutions that were identified in chapter 3 above (Lowndes & Roberts 2013): formal documents are expected to contain 'rules', observations to show 'practices', and 'narratives' to be expressed during interviews.

The kind of data expected to be harvested from each of the three collection methods, together with broad interview questions, is set out in the protocol in Appendix B.

4.5.1 Document analysis

Identification of documents

As explained in section 4.2 above, data collection part 1 involved analysis of policy documents on governance and local government structure, and on food policy framing in England. The findings from these analyses supplemented information obtained in the review of academic literature.

Policy documents and white papers on governance and local government were identified through Google searches on the terms 'local government relations, England', 'local government structure, England', 'localism'. The initial results were wide ranging but following up references enabled the researcher to identify formal documents and white papers. Policy documents relating to the general approach to food policy were identified through Google searches on 'food policy, England', and for specific policy domains '[domain] policy, England'.

Data collection part 2 concerned the five case studies. First of all (in May-September 2012) documents relating to the local government area of each of the food policy groups were identified through the local authority websites. Generally these were the *Corporate Plan*, the *Sustainable Communities Strategies*, the *Core Plan*, and strategies for specific policy domains. These were analysed for references to food and food-related issues, and any acknowledgement of the food policy group, its work or preferred policy approach. Documents drawn up and/or published by the food policy group – food strategy documents, food charters, food mapping exercises, action plans, progress reports, minutes of previous meetings, terms of reference and any other written material – were accessed via the group's website. Where key documents were not available online, requests for access were made of the group leader. These were analysed to gain an understanding of the framing of food issues, the groups' aims, objectives, priorities and planned actions, and the structures, operations, rules of food policy group.

Additional document analysis concerning the case studies took place after the fieldwork in April-August 2014 and was considered necessary to have a richer picture of controversies and discussions relating to food issues within the local government area. For this exercise, committee meeting minutes where food issues were discussed were identified through local government websites, and the online archives of local newspapers were carried out.

The documents reviewed and referenced for each part of the literature review are listed in Appendix C.

Guiding methodological literature

Criticisms of documentary analysis stem from a tendency to assume documents contain an accurate and truthful record, whereas in fact they have been written for a purpose and with an audience in mind. The researcher is not the intended audience (Yin 2009). For instance, meeting minutes contain information that the secretary considered worthy of recording and are not verbatim records of events but a version of events that the author wished to transmit. Some contentious viewpoints may have been omitted, along with discussions that strayed too far from the agenda. As a result, the researcher sought to identify the underlying objective of each document and, once identified, bore this in mind in interpreting the contents. Statements of fact

were weighed carefully for their veracity. Inferences drawn were considered as clues to be followed up rather than indisputable fact, and where necessary corroboration was sought from other sources.

An additional point is that choices have been made about what documents may be made public or made available to the researcher for the purpose of the study – be it intentionally or through unintentional oversight. The possibility that the body of documents has been edited by someone other than the researcher had to considered; where it was considered likely that a certain document should exist but had not been obtained, the researcher made direct requests to the respective food policy group leader.

The other side of this problem, as Yin (2009) warns, is that researchers can become lost in an overabundance of documentary evidence available from the Internet, not all of which is strictly relevant. In order to avoid this, documents were subject to an initial scan for their relevance by reading the executive summary and/or simply searching for the word 'food'. Media articles were also critically appraised for their relevance; not all articles about food had a bearing on topics concerning the food policy group.

4.5.2   Direct observation

Direct observation was carried out at meetings of each food policy group, with the exception of Manchester Food Futures. It was intended that at least two meetings would be attended for each case study, subject to meeting schedules and the agreement of the food policy group. This method was expected to yield data on the composition of food policy groups, including attendance; practices relating to inviting/accepting new members; practices, processes, decision-making and power dynamics within the food policy groups; current priorities and work plans; and ways of working in practice. These data were also intended to inform design of the interview stage, where corroboration would be sought for any subjective observations.

A list of meetings observed, with dates and locations, is included in Appendix D.

The researcher did not participate in the meetings beyond (if invited) providing a verbal summary of the research project and inviting questions. The observation practiced for this project fell short of true ethnography as the researcher was immersed in the community of the meeting for an average of only around two hours – while true ethnographers are immersed for weeks. Nonetheless, considering the kind of data that was sought, there are clear touch points with the definition of ethnography as 'to observe systematically and record actions and interactions, routines and rituals, and dialogue and exchange amongst the members or inhabitants' (Nicholls et al. 2014, p.244).

The method was chosen because it allows the researcher to develop a 'written photograph', using all five senses; in addition to listening to discussion topics the researcher was be able to check for non-verbal expressions of feelings, who interacts with whom and in what ways, and time allocation for certain activities (Yin 2009). While a weakness of direct observation is that it is inherently subjective (Nicholls et al. 2014), the researcher sought to minimise the impact of this by being reflective as to how her own expectations and reactions to proceedings coloured her experience. The researcher took notes during the meetings, and followed each meeting with a period of quiet reflection during which she took supplementary notes on the event from memory – a system that also improved data reliability. Both these, and the notes taken in situ, were written up on the same day. Finally, corroboration of subjective data was sought in the interview stage.

A weakness of the overt direct observation practiced for this study is the risk that actors behave differently when they know they are under observation (Yin 2009; Nicholls et al. 2014). This drawback was deemed to have minimal effect for this research as the actors are professional individuals who come together for a limited time to advance certain objectives and are likely to recognise that changing their behaviour would impair the meeting's outcome. In addition, as the researcher attended more than one meeting of each group the actors were expected to become accustomed to her presence.

4.5.3   Interviews

For each of the five multiple case studies in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with actors in the food policy group to obtain narrative data on actors' opinions, experiences and observations, including historical recollections, of rules and practices relating to local level food policy. In addition the interviews were to corroborate any subjective observations from the food policy group meetings. Between four and six interviews were conducted for each case study. Actors were chosen so as to have representation of sectors: wherever possible the intention was to have at least one public sector interviewee, one civil society interviewee, and one private sector interviewee – however where no private sector actors were involved in the food policy group the latter was not possible. If possible, an additional interview was held with another actor for each sector in order to reduce the risk of assuming narratives expressed by one actor apply across an entire sector. Interviewees were purposively selected after observation of meetings, so as to be sure to include those who appeared to be particularly active and engaged. It was reasoned that randomised selection of interviewees would have risked uneven representation of the sectors, and if less engaged actors were interviewed this could have impaired ability to corroborate subjective data from direct observation.

A table listing the interviewees by their sector, the mode and location of the interview, and the short code used to link evidence in the discussion to the relevant interview transcript, is included in Appendix E.

In-depth interviews have been criticised as an over-used data collection method in a so-called 'interview society', where the format is all-pervasive in the media (Yeo et al. 2014). This means there is a danger that the method is used in research for which it is not ideal. Yeo et al also counsel the researcher to be reflective over their own position and behaviour, and to bear in mind that different kinds of interviewer-interviewee relationships are appropriate in different scenarios. In this project interviews were considered crucial in order to obtain narratives of actors who are personally involved in food policy groups – that is, their understandings and representations of rules and practices. Interviewees were participating in a professional or quasi-professional capacity and, as a result, the researcher conducted the interviews in an earnest and professional manner.

Using semi-structured interviews enabled some standardised questions to all subjects, but this method was chosen over simply administering a survey questionnaire because it gives flexibility for probing on particular points so as to obtain amplification, explanation or clarification, to understand consequences and impacts, and to challenge inconsistencies (Yeo et al. 2014). The expected result was greater depth and subtlety in the findings. Care was also taken to ask open questions so as to avoid introducing bias in the responses, particularly where the intention was to confirm subjective observations (Yin 2009; Kumar 2011).

Wherever possible interviews were carried out face-to-face, ideally at the interviewee's place of work. In several cases the interviewee's location and schedule did not permit this, so the interviews took place at another location or by telephone. Irvine et al (2009) state that there is no intrinsic superiority to interview modes, but that face-to-face interviews allow for the development of an emotional bond. Such a bond was not deemed necessary for this project, although face-to-face interviewing does add an extra dimension of communication, such as facial expressions and other body language, that supplement the meaning of the spoken word.

Accuracy in data collection was ensured through an audio recording of the interviews, which was transcribed afterwards.

4.6   Data analysis

Data analysis was conducted on written forms of data collected – that is, documents, transcripts of interview recordings, and written notes from meetings observed. The researcher transcribed all recordings and made notes herself, both to protect confidentiality and so as to be as familiar as possible with the content. The analytical method was content analysis, which involves

consideration of both the content and the context of documents, and drawing substantive interpretations of what they *say* – as opposed to constructivist interpretation of what it *does*, which is the object of discourse analysis (Spencer et al. 2014). The purpose of content analysis is to identify and treat themes, and to consider how they relate to, and are affected by, certain variables (Robson 2002).

According to Yin (2009), data analysis comprises an overarching analytic strategy that serves as a guide for drawing out and expressing a story from the data, and one or more analysis techniques that are applied to it. For this project, application of the analytic strategy yielded the first stage of analysis, and application of the analysis technique yielded the second, richer stage.

The principal analytic strategy was testing the theoretical proposition that the configuration of institutional factors within the contexts of food policy groups impacts the ways in which they can work. This informed the decision of what exactly constitutes useful data: the researcher sought to identify from the sources content pertaining to the expression, exercise, interpretation of institutions – or, norms, practices, and ways of working. The second analytic strategy for this project, used in conjunction with the first, was case description. The case description was made up of the four locations or dimensions in which institutions are expected to occur (table 3-1). Thus, to have a comprehensive description of each of the case studies – and ultimately be able to answer the research questions – it was necessary to ensure that data were obtained on the structure and organisation of the food policy group, location/relation vis-à-vis local government, local level context, and multilevel context.

To draw out the data, a coding framework was used that was based on *a priori* themes developed from the literature review – that is, the 17 factors identified in table 3.1. To avoid over-coding the researcher remained reflexive and regularly reviewed the coding framework to ensure that the coding labels were capturing the kind of information they were intended to, as well as to ensure no additional institutional material was overlooked that did not fall into the framework. A computer-assisted programme (NVivo 10) was used to code data and aid initial analysis. The benefits of this approach are the ability to process the data more quickly than is possible with hand-coding, and reduced risk of human error. A caveat is that computers lack the capacity to 'read' texts as human beings do, and to recognise nuances in complex expressions and syntax (Krippendorff 2013). Thus, NVivo was not regarded as a substitute for rigorous document analysis but as support tool to aid organisation. Coding the data – whether by hand or computer assisted – is only the first step in analysis, capable of yielding a description of each case that at best constitutes journalism. Chapters 5-9 are case descriptions that present the findings up to this point in the analysis.

The second stage of analysis is to apply analytical techniques and run the data through the medium of abstract concepts in order to generate new theory (Strauss 1987). The main

analytical technique used in this project was explanation building to identify the causal links between patterns in the coded data and the theoretical proposition, and the abstract concept through which the data are run is new institutionalism. Yin (2009) describes explanation building as an iterative process that begins with an initial theoretical statement about policy or behaviour that is then tested against an initial case, revised if necessary, then tested against subsequent cases, and so on. For this research, however, explanations cannot be built cumulatively by adjusting the theoretical gradually against each case because what is being tested is the variability of institutional factors within their immediate contexts, and how this impacts what food policy groups can do. Since the institutional contexts and variables at play in each case are different, it would be impossible to reach a refined version that holds true for all. As a result, explanation building involved comparing the case studies on the grounds of the *a priori* factors and testing the theoretical statement against the diversity that is detected in institutional arrangements.

4.7   Ethical considerations

Participants in this study experienced no risks greater than those they encounter in their daily lives. Interviewees were actors with a seat on a local food policy group, who are employed in the public, private, or civil society sectors, interviewed either at their workplace, at City University, or in a mutually agreed public setting. They were interviewed on issues relating to their professional, not their personal, lives.

Because it was thought possible that some interviewees' opinions would conflict with others', anonymity and confidentiality of data were considered to be the most important ethical issues in this research. Given that many of the interviewees would be known to each other in what is still a relatively small field, maintaining anonymity while providing a nuanced analysis of the data was expected to prove challenging. These issues were discussed with interviewees in advance of the interview.

Informed consent was obtained from all interview participants. Informed consent involves providing participants with relevant information regarding the aims and scope of the project. Contributions made by participants remained confidential, and data were made anonymous and stored securely.

In the case of meetings and conferences at which direct observation took place, a potential ethical issue arose in the need to ensure all participants were aware and agreed to be observed. The researcher sought written informed consent from the organiser or chair of the meeting in advance, and requested that the researcher's presence be noted in the agenda and verbally established by the chair, with the possibility for non-agreement to be expressed by participants.

Another concern related to health and safety issues during the interviews. For face-to-face interviews, the researcher was to ensure that the interview location, arrival and departure plans were known to a family member or colleague. This was to ensure the safe travel and return of the researcher.

Ethical approval for the research project was obtained from the research ethics committee at City University. The application for ethical approval from City University's Senate Research Ethics Committee is provided in Appendix F.

4.8   Summary

This chapter has set out the design and logic of the research project in detail, including the case study structure and has dealt with a range of safeguards intended to ensure the study is robust and is capable of answering the research questions. Justifications drawn from the methodological literature have been provided for decisions relating to the study design stages. Details have been provided on how the data were to be analysed.

The next five chapters set out the findings of each of the five sub-case studies in descriptive form, and representing the results of the first stage of data analysis. The first case study to be dealt with is the London Food Programme, which is housed within the Greater London Authority and under the auspices of the Mayor of the UK capital.

5   The London Food Programme

5.1   Introduction

This chapter describes the findings of the case study on the London Food Programme (LFP), including both Greater London Authority (GLA)-based and independent entities, between May 2012 and March 2014.

The chapter describes first the Greater London context, and then provides a brief history of the LFP and its current structures, objectives, priorities, and ways of working. The second part of the chapter describes how the structures of the LFP and its relationship with the GLA, affect the ways in which it seeks to influence policy. Finally, the chapter describes how the LFP is affected by the multilevel governance context – both horizontally at the local level and vertical, through multilevel framing.

5.2   Context and background

5.2.1   Greater London context

Greater London is made up of the 32 London boroughs and the City of London, each of which has its own local authority. The GLA is the top-tier administrative body and is led by the directly-elected Mayor, currently Conservative Boris Johnson. The Mayor is held to account by the 25 elected members of the London Assembly. The Mayor of London has limited powers compared with his counterparts in other world cities. He has strategic direction of policing, fire, and transport services, and strategic responsibility for planning, housing, waste, climate change, energy, culture and tourism. He has a non-strategic duty to improve health and reduce health inequalities[49], and a duty to promote economic and social development, skills, and environmental improvement. Responsibility for other services and policy domains that are usually handled at the local level lies with the boroughs[50]. This division of power means the Mayor relies on advocacy and persuasion to influence policy within the boroughs.

London has a reputation as an affluent, multicultural city. It took centre stage as the host city of the 2012 Olympic Games, in preparation for which over £50m was pumped into the capital's infrastructure[51] (DCMS 2012). Nonetheless, there are huge socio-economic and health inequalities between and within the 33 boroughs[52]. Some 28 per cent of Londoners live in

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[49] The Mayor chairs the London Health Board

[50] Public health, schools, social services, waste, roads, parks, council tax, businesses and licensing, housing, and environmental health

[51] The total Public Sector Funding Package (PSFP) for the Games totalled £9.298bn, of which £33m was for improving the overall 'look' of London and the UK and £23m for city operations.

[52] Average life expectancy for males varies between 81.2 in Richmond-Upon-Thames to 76.5 in Newham, and for females from 85.6 to 81.4 respectively (ONS 2014c).

poverty and unemployment hovers around the national average at 7 per cent[53]; amongst Londoners in the 16-24 age group unemployment is at 25 per cent (NPI & Trust for London 2013). Between 2009/10 and 2013/14 central government funding for services delivered in the 33 boroughs was reduced by 33 per cent (£2.7 billion) in real terms[54] and, although each borough dealt differently with the cuts, generally-speaking they have had to reduce discretionary services and contract out more delivery to the community and voluntary sector. Both officers and Councillors have expressed fears that the limits of efficiency have been reached (Fitzgerald et al. 2013).

Figure 5-1 Map of Greater London
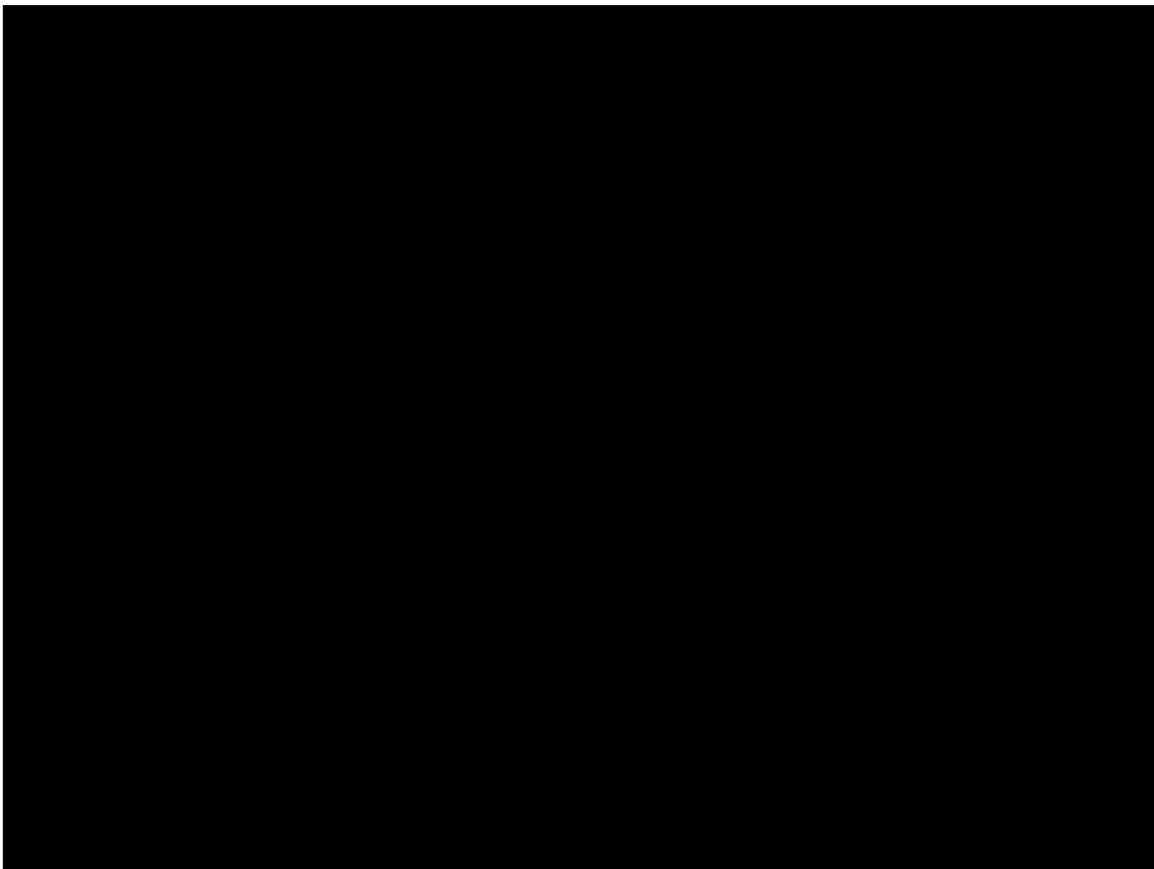
Source: Office for National Statistics, contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2015.

The rioting that took place across London in August 2011 had an overnight impact on the Mayor's priorities. Subsequently, he sought to address youth unemployment through mentoring and apprenticeship schemes, schemes to help ex-offenders into the workforce, and promoting

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[53] In the first six months of 2014 UK unemployment was at 6.6% of the economically active population, down from 7.2% in the second half of 2013 and from 7.8% during the same period of 2013 (ONS 2014b).

[54] i.e. taking account of inflation

the London Living Wage[55] (Johnson 2011). The Mayor's 2020 Vision is built around ensuring growth in the city's economy and attracting business through investment in infrastructure, such as homes and the transport system, and in education and training (Johnson 2013a).

5.2.2   The London Food Programme

The LFP[56] is a GLA programme and its core budget comes from the GLA. It is led by the Mayor's food advisor, who is appointed by the Mayor, with day-to-day coordination by the GLA Food Team consisting of two officers. The officers sit within the Business and Economy team[57], the manager of which oversees administrative aspects of the LFP. The London Food Board, meanwhile, is an advisory board to the LFP and consists of 36 individuals[58] who are appointed by the Mayor's food advisor (who chairs it) on the basis of experience and expertise of food issues in London. They include representatives from civil society groups, a broad range of food businesses, trade organisations, boroughs, and an academic (see table 5-1)[59].

The London Food Board was established in 2004 by former Mayor Ken Livingstone and originally sat within the London Development Agency (LDA), the now-defunct economic development organisation for Greater London. Although the London Food Commission existed under the Greater London Council (GLC) during Livingstone's leadership[60], it was Green Party London Assembly member Jenny Jones who approached him to form the new London Food Board following the establishment of the GLA and his (re-) election in 2000. Jenny Jones served as the first Chair. *The Mayor's Food Strategy: Healthy and sustainable food for London*, was published in 2006 (LDA 2006) with the input of civil society alliance Sustain, which runs London Food Link[61]. The strategy covered the then-Mayoral priorities of health, equality, and sustainable development, and identified five broad objectives around health, the environment, food culture, the economy, and food security; and six key action areas on commercial vibrancy, consumer engagement, public procurement, regional links, healthy schools, reduction in food waste and litter. The implementation plan, published the following year (LDA 2007), identified

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[55] The Living Wage is the independently-set hourly pre-tax wage needed to meet the cost of living. It is an instrument that helps address economic aspects of food poverty. The London Living Wage in 2015 is £9.15, although employers are only legally obliged to pay the National Minimum Wage of £6.50.

[56] Also known as the GLA Food Programme.

[57] As of early 2013; prior to this the officers sat within the Environment team.

[58] Membership as listed on the LFP website in March 2014.

[59] Together the LFP and the London Food Board are sometimes referred to as 'London Food' (GLA n.d.).

[60] Until abolition of the GLC by Margaret Thatcher.

[61] London Food Link is a network of organisations and individuals helping to transform food in London.

six public and civil society organisations responsible for delivery[62]. The original budget for delivery was £3.8 million over the three financial years to March 2009 (LDA, 2007).

Table 5-1 Membership of the London Food Board

Job title (where given)	Department or organisation	Sector
Director	Sainsbury's	Private
Policy director	Sustain	Civil society
Head of Communications	Covent Garden Market Authority	
Chief executive	Garden Organic	Civil society
Director	Growing Communities	Civil society
Director	Food cycle	Civil society
Managing director	Divine Chocolate	Private
Professor	City University London	Academia
Director	Greenwich Cooperative Development Agency	Civil society
Director	Royal Academy of Culinary Arts	Professional association
Owner	Café Spice Namaste	Private
Food Grower		Private
One Planet Food Manager	Bio-Regional	Civil society
Owner	The Olive Grows	Private
Director	School Food Matters	Civil society
Development manager	National Association of British Market Authorities	Trade association
Public health manager	Regional Public Health Group	Public
College Principal and Chief Executive	Capel Manor College	Academia/training
Founding Partner	Russell Partnership	Consultancy
Author and food waste expert		Consultancy
Food Policy manager	Chartered Institute of Environmental Health	Professional association
Chief Executive Officer	Community Food Enterprise	Civil society
Catering Manager	London Borough of Havering	Public
	London Farmers Markets	Private
London campaigner	Friends of the Earth	Civil society
Chief Executive	Fare Share	Civil society
Sales Director	Surya Foods	Private
Lead member for Environment	London Borough of Waltham Forest	Public
Councillor	London Borough of Bexley	Public
Director of Product Integrity	Fairtrade Foundation	Civil society
	Thornton's Budgens	Private
Head of Health	GLA	Public
Restauranteur		Private
Food Chain Advisor	National Union of Farmers	Trade Union
Managing Director	Sustainable Restaurants Association	Trade Association
Chief Executive	TCA Consulting	Consultancy

(Source: GLA n.d.)

Following his election in 2008, Boris Johnson retained the LFP, as the food strategy and its delivery became known at this stage, and appointed former newspaper editor Rosie Boycott as

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[62] The six organisations were the LDA, Sustain/London Food Link, Government Office for London, Regional Public Health Group for London, Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency, and London Councils. These organisations each had a seat on the board, which raises questions about how effectively the Board could hold partners to account (LDA, 2007:9).

his food advisor and Chair of the London Food Board. In 2009 the LFP moved from the LDA to City Hall 'in order to maximise stakeholder engagement and the profile of the programme across London' (GLA 2009, p.2) – and with it funding until March 2012[63]. The strategy was not re-written but the Board membership was refreshed and an external consultancy reviewed its structure. As a result, a London Food Board Executive was established to provide leadership, monitoring, and communications, while the full London Food Board was to discuss priorities and activities, disseminate information, and participate in thematic implementation groups.

A new implementation plan was developed for 2011-2013 that reconfirmed the five themes in the strategy but aimed to refocus delivery in the wake of the economic recession, climate concern, spending cuts and NHS reform (GLA 2011). However this implementation plan was published online only after March 2013, once its validity had expired, because the shift in Mayoral priorities after the London riots of August 2011 rendered it obsolete overnight. Instead, the LFP's activities were kept flexible so it could respond to emerging needs.

In 2013 another structural change abolished the Executive, which was seen by its own members to have no clear role (observation notes, September 2012), and gave clearer focus to the full Board. The implementation groups for working up and spinning off projects for the LFP to fund were reduced from four to three (Communities and Citizens, Business and Commerce, and Boroughs)[64], with their Chairs to meet quarterly to discuss cross-cutting themes (figure 5-3). Also in 2013 the GLA food team moved from the Environment to the Business and Economy team within the GLA, as the latter was a better fit with priorities. The GLA Food Programme budget was set at £1.35m for the three years up to 2015. This is significantly less than the original LDA three-year budget of £3.8m, but it is supplemented out of other budgets, including £3.2m funded via the Outer London Fund and the Mayor's Regeneration Fund (GLA, 2012).

The modus operandi of the LFP under Rosie Boycott is a combination of seeking policy influence and supporting projects. Although the 2011 *Implementation Plan* was not enacted, the document did provide criteria for projects that may be supported by defining 'good food for London' as safe, secure, healthy, fair, profitable, sustainable, enjoyable and accessible to all. It set out principles that supported projects should use, promote or facilitate, and examples as shown in table 5-2 (GLA 2011, pp.9–11). This filled a gap in the original strategy and implementation plan (LDA 2006; LDA 2007), which pursued 'healthy and sustainable' food without defining it.

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[63] The sum transferred from the LDA to the GLA was £4.8m.

[64] An implementation group on public procurement was abolished due to the completion of a project that was its main activity, and because public procurement is a cross-cutting theme for the remaining groups.

Figure 5-2 Timeline of the London Food Programme
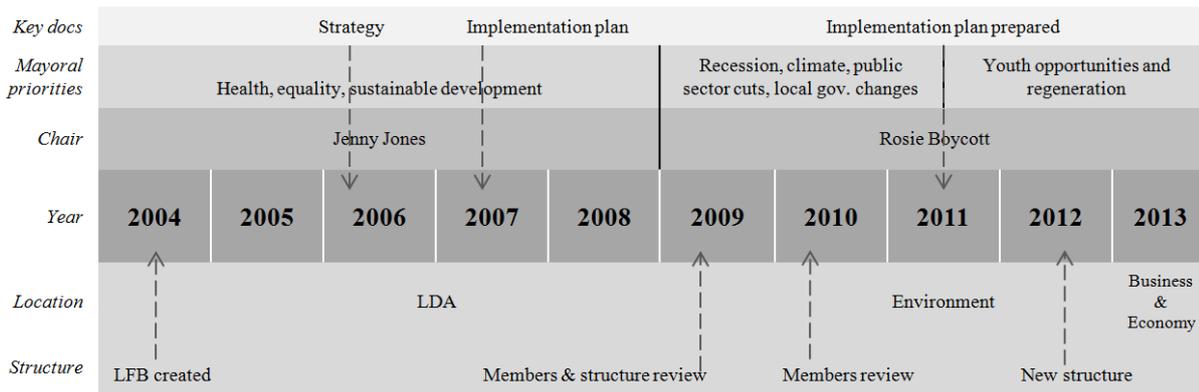
(Source: author compiled)

Figure 5-3 The London Food Programme and Board within the local governance context
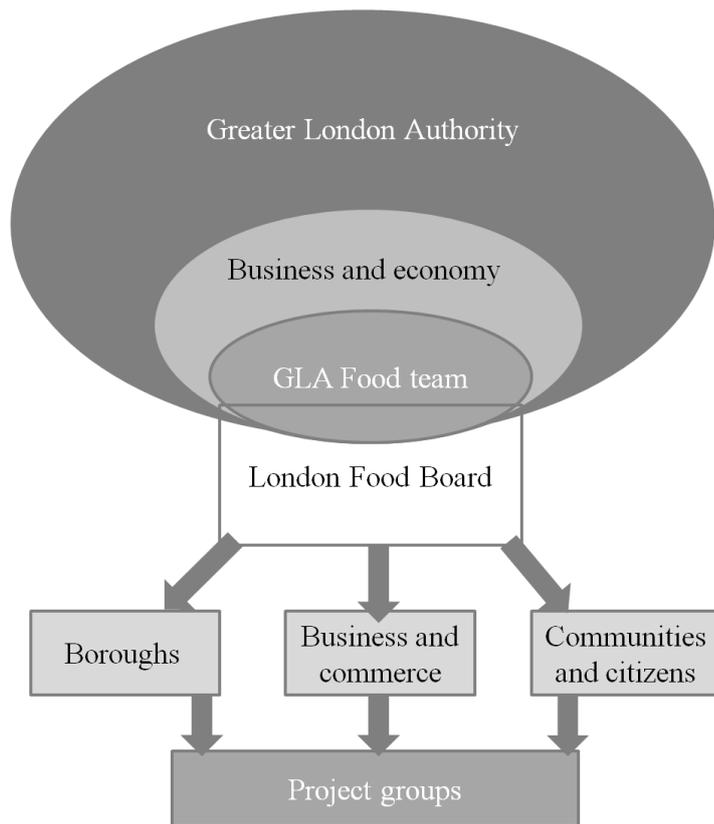
(Source: adapted from GLA 2012a)

Table 5-2 Examples of healthy and sustainable food

Objectives for projects	Criteria or examples
Healthier food	• Promoting fruit, vegetables, wholegrains • Less saturated fat, salt, sugar, fewer unnecessary additives • Healthier cooking oils • Appropriate portions • Easy-to-understand nutrition and calorie info
Safe food	• Traceability and safe handling through food chain, including certification schemes • Or, at least robust and effective food safety standard
Sustainable farming practices	• Minimum benchmarks (eg Red Tractor) • More to meet high environmental standards (eg organic, Leaf, Rainforest Alliance) • Reduces greenhouse gas emissions • Encourages soil fertility, minimal artificial input • Supports wildlife • Promotes accredited/certified produce
British local and seasonal	• Particularly field-grown crops to high environmental standards
Reduced environmental impact /ethical considerations of livestock	• Promoting grass or home-grown feed • Efficient carcass use • Help farmers with high environmental protection standards and welfare (eg RSPCA Freedom Foods) • Consumption of plant-based foods
Demonstrably sustainable fish	• Includes Marine Stewardship Council certified • Excludes endangered species, unsustainable methods
Minimal waste	• At all stages of production and consumption • Unavoidable waste to composting or energy recovery schemes
Minimal resource use	• Particularly energy, fossil fuels, water, and avoidable packaging • At all stages of production and waste disposal
Economically viable	• Supports vibrant food economy
Skills for good food	• Workforce able to grow, distribute, process, cook, trade, and serve healthy & sustainable food
Fair	• Decent working conditions, fair treatment of workers in UK and abroad (includes Fair trade) • Sharing benefits of trading more equitably through supply chain • Prompt payment • Implementation of London Living Wage
Inclusive	• Good proportion of food from smaller, local, diverse enterprise • Helping overcome barriers to market entry • Promoting diverse and vibrant retail
Accessible	• Balances affordability principles so the disadvantaged can enjoy good food • Attention to structural and economic barriers to healthy, affordable, sustainable diets
Individual and community engagement	• Engagement with healthy and sustainable food • Engagement with enjoyment of food growing, cooking, eating together

(Source: GLA 2011)

The entities that make up the LFP have different functions (table 5-3). Formal power lies with the Mayor and the GLA over projects to be endorsed and receive funding, although in reality the Chair makes many decisions. London Food Board members have no real power, but the Board is the Chair's advisory committee, with members to develop, implement and evaluate project work via the implementation and project groups. Delivery is usually by partner organisations.

Table 5-3 Purpose, responsibilities, and powers of entities of the London Food Programme

Structure	Actors & reporting	Purpose & responsibilities	Powers
Mayor and GLA			Retain right to make final decisions on policies & LFP projects
Chair	Paid individual appointed by, and answerable, to Mayor	• Works with Board on recommendations to GLA, advises on policy development • Ambassador of LFP and strategy • Update board on work & meetings	Appoints board; monitors member performance
GLA Food Team	Officers employed by GLA; answerable to Director of Paid Service	• Secretariat of London Food Board • Responsible for delivery of LFP • Supports Board and imp. groups by coordination and info on LFP and secretariat activities	
London Food Board	36 members, appointed by chair	• Advises Chair and GLA on delivery of strategy • Works to develop activities & policies to support healthy, sustainable food system via: • Thought- and debate leadership • Facilitating partnerships • Supporting projects & orgs • Leading by example • Monitoring/evaluating effectiveness of interventions	'Power' to recommend initiatives and policies to the chair
Chairs group	Chairs of 3 groups	• Focus on cross-cutting themes	
Implementation groups	Each group chaired by a member of Board; groups to have own terms of reference and work plans	• Help drive and create opportunities to pursue board priorities • Develop, test, incubate projects & policies for board • Make recommendations to board on policies and projects for LFP • Support work of GLA-funded projects and report to board on performance and impact • Lead Board in thought leadership, facilitating partnerships & collaborations, monitoring/evaluating activities	
Project-specific groups		• Develop & implement priority projects	

(Source: GLA 2012f; GLA 2012a; GLA 2011)

Crucially, work in connection with the LFP does not stop at the policies and projects explicitly supported by the Mayor and the GLA budget. Rather, the LFP's objectives are also advanced by board members through their own organisations, in leading by example, and through their own advocacy and promotional work. This is officially acknowledged:

> 'Such work is supported through affiliation to the London Food Board, in spirit of openness and collaboration, and in pursuit of the aims of the London Food Strategy, recognising that significant improvements to London's food system must be achieved through concerted effort if we are to overcome the considerable challenges that face our food system,' (GLA n.d.).

5.3 Enablers and barriers

5.3.1 Structures and operations

The formal home of the LFP within the GLA provides it with status, since it is under the auspices of the Mayor and its overall mission has his explicit support: 'If you've got the approval of the Mayor then the world's your oyster because you've got the voice, you've got the position, you've got the authority almost to be able to make things happen […],' (L-Private1). The most obvious way in which association with the Mayor can 'make things happen' is through formal support and funding of projects, but Mayoral approval also makes projects more attractive to potential partners – both other GLA departments or entities and external organisations – which in turn enables supplementary funding or delivery capacity. There are downsides to the LFP's GLA location, however. To receive Mayoral support and funding a project's objectives must fit with his political preferences or priorities – it is necessary to 'give unto Caesar' in order to ensure ongoing support, and therefore be able to apply long-term, consistent solutions (L-Private1). This means the Mayoral agenda shapes the ideological environment of LFP, and consequently the top-line themes and objectives of projects that are developed with a view to formal support. Moreover, food-related activities and emphasis are vulnerable to change in Mayoral priorities: 'You can put lots of work into something and actually it might fall on stony ground because that individual has got other priorities or doesn't quite play to the shorter term agenda at that time,' (L-Private1). The shelving of the 2011 implementation plan when priorities shifted following the London riots demonstrates this.

That said, the independent elements of the LFP mitigate the constraints from the Mayor's agenda, as Board members can pursue work that is not a Mayoral priority through their own organisations and other funding channels. This enables actors to circumvent structural barriers. A second mitigating mechanism is the canny framing of food issues so that they speak to the current priorities:

'Food can be dressed up as lots of different agendas. Your core beliefs and your core principles stay the same but it could be a jobs agenda, it can be a green space agenda, it can be a health agenda, according to what are the priorities at the time. It does not mean you are changing what you are trying to do, it just means whoever is seeing that as a priority understands food through their own lens' (L-CS2).

There are also constraints to the public messages that can be sent out by the LFP in the Mayor's name, as the LFP does not own the communication channels but formal communications must be channelled via the GLA press office, which is accountable to the Mayor and his political interests. This can lead to last-minute decisions to withdraw a press release if the Mayor's focus is elsewhere, or the alteration of key messages: 'Putting it into a press office that doesn't actually care about the food agenda means they will tend to go with an agenda that is really warped and difficult,' (L-CS2). This interviewee cited as an example the press release on the launch of the Capital Growth project to create 2012 new growing spaces in London by 2012 (GLA 2008), which they felt over-emphasised roof gardens in a bid to generate more coverage. The press office also refers to the LFP as 'Mayor of London Boris Johnson's', which renders it vulnerable to a future Mayor disassociating from their predecessor's legacy (L-CS2). Again, however, London Food Board members can mitigate the problem by being unofficial conduits for politically-awkward messages. For example, there was nervousness about the Mayor being seen to rank London boroughs on food performance, so the first edition of the annual *Good Food for London* report was published by Sustain with no funding from the GLA food budget (Sustain 2011)[65].

Beyond the GLA and mayoral support, the department in which the LFP resides, and how closely it is integrated with others, affects how easily it can pursue its aims via supported means. Between 2004 and 2009 the LFP was part of the LDA and had a large budget on paper, but spending decisions had to be approved by LDA managers who were bound to numerical targets and struggled to see the connections between policy domains (L-CS2). The 2009 move into the heart of the GLA was arranged so as to have a stronger, more direct link with the Mayor and brought potential to explore connections with more entities under the GLA banner. The full range of cooperation opportunities within the GLA was presented to the London Food Board Executive by the GLA food officers in September 2012[66]. The Chair has successfully tapped

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[65] Although Rosie Boycott is mentioned as having been involved in compiling the first *Good Food For London* report, it contains no statement from her. By the third edition, however, since the report had not unleashed negative reactions but rather helped engage some boroughs over food, the Mayor's logo was included and Rosie Boycott penned a prominent foreword on the first page (Sustain 2013).

[66] i.e. support services, the Urban Greening team, the Climate Change team, the Sustainable Development team, the Health team, Team London, the London Plan team, the Waste team, Regeneration, and the London Assembly (GLA 2012b).

budgets of other departments and initiatives under the banner of the GLA through internal networking and raising awareness of the connectivity of food across policy domains. This compensates for the fact that the food team's budget is smaller under the GLA than it was under the LDA, so the core budget can be reserved for other topics. For example, the FoodSave project draws minimally on the food budget since it is also part funded by the London Waste and Recycling Board and the European Regeneration Development Fund (GLA n.d.). Internal partnerships help ingrain food issues in the culture of the GLA by pointing out food aspects of other teams' work and involving a wider pool of actors in projects, thereby influencing through action rather than just advocacy.

The most recent shift of the food team within the GLA, from Environment to Business and Economy, was arranged as there were already synergies between its work and the focus areas of Business and Economy, such as the London Living Wage, procurement, innovation in jobs, and growth (GLA n.d.). The London Enterprise Panel's *Jobs and Growth Plan for London* (LEP 2013) refers to the partnership between the London Food Board and Triados bank as an example of an innovative public-private model for finance and business support. These synergies stem from the LFP framing work in terms of the Mayor's priorities, which currently are business and economy-oriented. It remains to be seen how far this location will continue to colour the activities that the LFP undertakes in the future (L-CS2), potentially causing environmental and health projects fall by the wayside (L-CS1).

This chapter now turns to the composition of the London Food Board and the relations between actors and sectors. With 36 members from across the food system, the Board has a broad knowledge base with much potential for mutual learning and information sharing, which is helpful for providing thought-leadership and recommending creative ideas to the Chair (L-Private 1). However while a number of actors are specialists in a particular area, relatively few have overview or the ability to implement systems change in how food is served or stocked on shelves:

> 'What can it actually achieve when you have got one person who is talking about bees, and is only interested in bees, somebody else talking about food waste and only interested in food waste, somebody else talking about planting and growing and that is all they are interested in? […] You have got to get to the likes of […], the service providers, and people like [retailer], the people who can do something about these things,' (Pub1).

As the Chair appoints Board members, its composition shows she considers its role first and foremost in relation to her own mandate – that is, as a repository of knowledge to inform her

decisions on the formal, supported elements of the LFP. Members are expected to follow best practice (for example, businesses are expected to pay the London Living Wage, a key commitment to combat food poverty), but any potential to effect real food systems change is a happy by-product.

Another area of under-representation is the 33 London boroughs. There are only two borough Councillors and one officer on the London Food Board, and only the officer attends the Boroughs implementation group meetings, which were described as 'this slightly odd thing where people get together and talk about what the boroughs should do but they don't have anyone there who is actually going to go away and do it,' (L-CS2). The problem of borough engagement was raised repeatedly at Board meetings (GLA 2012b; GLA 2012d; GLA 2012e) and historically there have been unfruitful efforts to bring in more Councillors[67]. This will be discussed in more detail in the next section on multilevel framing, but for now it is pertinent to acknowledge the lack of actors who can either advocate for food issues to be embedded in policy or directly implement change in the boroughs.

How far the board membership shares a sense of purpose and understanding requires consideration, both in terms of what actors understand by 'healthy and sustainable food' and in terms of their own role and mandate. The definition of sustainable food was drawn up following a consultation by a civil society group with other members of the London Food Board and intended to 'make sure we are all singing from similar hymn sheets. Not the same, similar' (L-CS2). Although its inclusion in the 2011 *Implementation Plan* (GLA 2011) enshrines it as formal, the door for amendments is left ajar: 'We will need to keep our work under review to ensure that the approaches that we support are in line with current scientific thinking and good practice' (GLA 2011, p.9). Acceptance that there will be disagreements was reinforced in the Chair's introduction: 'Not everyone will agree with our definition: no matter, we welcome the debate' (GLA 2011, p.6). Recognition of diverse views is particularly important given the emphasis on partnership working, as excessively rigid definitions could exclude potential partners that feel unable to subscribe to them.

As for Board members' role and mandate, some do not fully grasp the limitations in respect of the formal, supported elements of the LFP. One interviewee drew the distinction thus: 'The Food Programme itself has money and can give it out. The London Food Board has had very little relationship at all with saying what those projects should be [...] They think they have, but

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[67] The potential for London Councils, the organisation that promotes the interests of the 33 boroughs, to provide a route for more borough engagement has been raised on several occasions (GLA 2012d; GLA 2012e; GLA 2012b), and although one of the Councillor members is also a representative on London Council no evidence was seen of any concrete partnership.

it isn't really like that in reality […] I still think that discussions happen in the London Food Board as if we have any power,' (L-CS2).

A potential impact of London Food Board members misunderstanding their role and mandate is that meetings will become 'talking shops' (L-CS2 and L-Private1), a term for discussions that do not result in action points but give participants the false impression of achievement because they have aired their views. In such scenarios attendees assume others will take action and, if none materialises, the result can be disillusion and disengagement. Another impact is some actors' tendency to impose restriction on what they can and cannot say and do, either as a result of restrictions within their own organisation or because they absorb the constraints of the formal elements of the LFP. This seriously impairs the built-in agency mechanism identified above. An interviewee recalled an actor from a public sector agency claiming 'we cannot say that', to which they responded: 'Who is we? We are London Food Board? We can say what the hell we like, we don't even have to speak as one voice, we can just dispute about things. Always bring into the room your purpose, don't bring in your restrictions. What is your purpose? It's to get healthy and sustainable food to everybody,' (L-CS2).

One cause of this misunderstanding is lack of communication within the LFP and Board, particularly with new members who are added on an ad hoc basis. None of the interviewees made reference to the *Terms of Reference* (GLA 2012f) that set out roles and responsibilities, but one remarked, 'I feel like every Board member almost needs an induction into the baseline. This is what we understand as this, and these are our key criteria, and this is the information behind this, so there is a bit of equality,' (L-CS1). New members also have different levels of understanding about the food system, the role of the London Food Board, and its history. For instance, a new member suggested that the solution to food poverty is more widespread consumer education, but it was pointed out that some fellow members have 15 years' experience in this area and have observed it to make a relatively small impact on food poverty figures. However, the same person was not paying the London Living Wage (observation notes, October 2012).

Another cause of mission confusion identified by two interviewees is the lack of transparency in decision-making:

> 'Stuff happens that I am not aware of at all and I just think, where's the strategy, where's the transparency, where's the decision-making? And if I think that and I am really involved, I know that there are people that are on the Food Board who don't quite understand. Because you don't understand how the decisions are made,' (L-CS1).

'I think you would have to be fairly well ingrained in the London Food Board and close to it over a number of years to be able to piece all the bits of the jigsaw together and understand how it makes the whole. If you had come in at a cursory level it would be very difficult to say, how is this not more than just a random set of activity, to the outsider looking in,' (L-Private1).

Communication of the activities of the LFP were recognised as inadequate in September 2012 (GLA 2012b), prompting the 2013 restructuring of the Board and establishment of regular meetings between the implementation group chairs[68]. The London Food website was revamped to contain details of current and recent projects and a more complete archive of meeting minutes[69], in a bid to improve external communications. Prior to this the lack of information and absence of active implementation plan meant it was difficult for anyone not directly involved in the LFP to find up-to-date information on activities and discussions taking place. Poor external communications is also a likely cause of misunderstanding about the role and powers of the London Food Board even within the GLA. For instance, the London Assembly's report *A Zero Hunger City: tackling food poverty in London* (London Assembly 2013a) explicitly called upon the London Food Board – as opposed to the LFP – to address food poverty, putting the onus on an entity that can only recommend and advise. The misunderstanding was unfortunate, but in effect it gave the LFP a green light to take action (observation notes, April 2013).

One reason for the opacity that neither the new structure nor the revamped website have any impact upon is the leadership style of the Chair. The two Chairs to date have been respective appointees of the two Mayors, and they have different approaches. Jenny Jones, as a politician, was very structured and methodological, and London Food Board Chair was only one of the many hats she wore. Rosie Boycott, on the other hand, works exclusively on food and, with her background in media, has an opportunistic, project-led way of working that is 'brilliant, but a bit wild,' (L-CS1). This means there is a lack of stability, and the lack of a written implementation plan can make Board members feel rudderless and unable to follow progress or logic. On the other hand, Rosie Boycott's approach also brings flexibility to respond to emerging issues, and she has shown herself to be unconstrained by the historical roots of the LFP by altering structures in response to changing agendas and to overcome barriers. In terms of personal attributes, Rosie Boycott has political savvy, passion, motivation, and a lot of contacts; she has an instinct for identifying important issues, playing the media game and using her status and voice for influence; and she is also not prepared to be constrained by any one, narrow public

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[68] At the time of the interviews (May 2013) the chairs had only met once and a second meeting had been cancelled, so it was not possible to judge the efficacy of this group

[69] Minutes from the implementation groups are not published and, as of 2nd January 2014, minutes from the most recent board meeting were absent.

sector agenda such as implementing the Department of Health's anti-obesity strategy. Rosie Boycott's networking skills and wide contact base are useful tools for influencing policy through informal means as much as formal, and she actively builds contacts with individuals who hold political influence, such as the authors of the *School Food Plan* (Dimbleby & Vincent 2013) who were directly networked with the government's Education Secretary and, as a result, close collaboration was possible in influencing food and education policy at the national level (observation notes, 25th October 2012). In the words of one interviewee, 'if you were to write up a diagram or a list of the things that you needed in order to get London Food Strategy to work, a figure like Rosie is essential,' (L-CS2).

The need to maintain close network links with other Mayoral Commissions and national government departments is recognised in the *Terms of Reference* (GLA 2012f). An example of how links facilitate policy influence is the close working relationship between the LFP and the Mayoral 2012 Commission to develop food standards for the London Olympics. Rosie Boycott had a seat on the Food Advisory Board of the London Olympic Games Organising Committee (LOGOC), as did Sustain, which carried out the five-year work programme to secure health and sustainability standards and ran the Food Legacy 2012 programme to ensure lessons are retained for other sporting and cultural events. These actors won important commitments on Fairtrade, animal welfare, sustainable fish, environmental standards for farming, British provenance and healthier eating schemes (London 2012 2009) – even though the other actors on the Food Advisory Board included corporate sponsors with different outlooks and objectives. This demonstrates the potential for actors to represent the values and aims of the London Food Board in other policy networks they are part of. The achievements indicated that, while corporate sponsors' resources carried considerable weight, the informational resources of the LFP/Board actors and their legitimacy were not inconsiderate. What is more, while a Sustain member who is also on the London Food Board participated in the Food Advisory Group, the organisation's non-GLA status meant it could also be independently critical of the influence of corporate sponsors on unhealthy eating through the products they sell (Clark & Brownell 2012).

The need to secure resources – particularly financial and work capacity – is a key reason for partnership working, as the LFP's core budget is inadequate to fund all the supported projects in their entirety and the two full time GLA officers have limited coordination capacity. An example is delivery of a project on food poverty by Sustain: in order to pay a dedicated project officer, a bid to a charitable trust was prepared to supplement an initial catalyst sum pledged from the GLA food budget. This arrangement also brings joint governance, as the GLA's contribution 'would mean they would have a stake in it but also they wouldn't have to be responsible for all the outputs so you could detach it a bit from the politics' (L-CS2).

Consequently, there is at once a degree of operational independence and an accountability structure for the funding, and for ensuring a fit with the LFP's objectives.

A final word on partnerships is that there is an enthusiasm for inviting private sector partners to participate in projects. For instance, there was a desire to seek engagement from banks in the Urban Food Routes project in order to secure more funding[70], and retailers ASDA, Morrison's, B&Q were cited as possible partners to approach for a project around child poverty (GLA 2012c), none of whom are represented on the London Food Board. If they are prepared to be partners they would bring valuable financial or other material resources, and sponsorship from the private sector is very much part of Boris Johnson's Mayoral philosophy: the so-called 'Boris bikes' he introduced are sponsored by Barclay's bank, and the cable car over the Thames by Emirates airlines. The idea of private sector partners indicates acceptance that big business may be part of the solution in the broadly-framed pursuit of sustainable and healthy food, at least through their corporate social responsibility programmes.

Having explored factors affecting the LFP's capacity that stem from its own structural set up and modus operandi, this chapter now turns to factors within the multilevel governance context – both in the immediate context of Greater London and at the national level.

5.3.2 Multilevel framing

The LFP's activities are framed by the organisational structure of Greater London and the distribution of powers and responsibilities between the GLA and the boroughs. Where the Mayor has direct powers there is a straightforward route for incorporating food issues into the overarching vision for Greater London, such as with adoption of a Mayoral objective to make London a 'Zero-hunger City' by 2020 (Johnson 2013b) following the London Assembly's report on food poverty (London Assembly 2013a). His support of the broad food agenda means he is predisposed to heed his food advisor in drawing up new strategies and policies. For example, the *Mayor's London Plan* (Mayor of London 2011), the overarching planning strategy with which boroughs' *Local Development Frameworks* must be in general conformity, includes a vision that all Londoners have access to good quality and healthy food (p. 25) and a specific policy on food growing spaces (policy 7.22). Also, because all GLA entities and locations[71] are within the Mayor's direct sphere of influence it has been possible to implement directly a healthy and sustainable food procurement commitment for all catering operations (Sustain 2010) and to enforce the London Living Wage within the GLA and as a condition of suppliers' contracts (GLA Economics 2013).

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[70] Urban Food Routes is a project to provide business advice to small enterprises, and benefit the community. At the time of the fieldwork Triados bank was already committed to this project

[71] i.e. City Hall, Transport for London, London Fire Brigade, and London Metropolitan Police

In policy areas over which the boroughs have responsibility and the Mayor has no direct powers, however, the potential to influence is hampered by being one step removed from policy making. The boroughs are under no obligation to act in line with Mayoral preferences or to respond to recommendations from any GLA entity and the majority of boroughs are not involved in governance of the LFP.

One possible explanation for low borough engagement is the political tension that is intrinsic within the Greater London structure – in particular between the GLA and non-Conservative-led boroughs that are unwilling or unable to get on board with flagship agenda topics of a Conservative Mayor and are less likely to respond to letters signed by him (L-Pub1, L-CS1). This idea finds support in the academic literature on governance of London with the observation that 'London government remains dominated by party politics and party considerations,' (Copus 2013, p.805), but it is not borne out in the political leadership of the three boroughs that are represented on the LPF: Bromley is Conservative, but Waltham Forest is Labour and in Havering no party has overall control. Rather, the borough actors joined the LFP out of personal interest or relevance to their job. Consequently, Havering is an example of good practice over public procurement and Waltham Forest over use of planning regulations to curb unhealthy takeaways near schools, but without wholesale adoption of the food agenda in either borough. Indeed the leadership of Havering reportedly has remained wedded to a free trade, neoliberal approach to food provisioning (L-Pub1, L-CS2). Bromley, meanwhile, ranked last out of all 33 boroughs in the 2013 *Good Food for London* report (Sustain 2013), adhering to none of the five ranking criteria[72].

The Mayor and the GLA are supposed to work 'in partnership' with the boroughs and there are mechanisms in place for partnership working over regeneration and transport, for instance, where the Mayor leverages the extent of his powers and aims to influence beyond their limits (GLA n.d.; GLA n.d.). When it comes to food, however, partnership working is impeded by lack of understanding on both sides:

> 'It would be really good if boroughs understood the London Food Strategy, understood how they implement it at the local level – but then the food strategy would have to really understand the role of the local borough and how it supports it and what is done at a London Mayor level and what can be done at a local level, and where there can be partnership and support, and where the local borough is trying to achieve something how the GLA helps it, and vice versa,' (L-CS1).

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[72] Community food growing, Food for Life in schools, Fairtrade food, sustainable fish, animal welfare, Healthy Catering Commitment

The indication is that the LFP is still getting to grips with the split of powers and responsibilities within Greater London, while the boroughs regard the LFP as a strange beast that does not fit neatly with existing partnership or line management mechanisms. Boroughs do not have any one person who is responsible for all facets of food, which means there is a mismatch between the multi-faceted nature of food and siloism in the boroughs. Trying to engage each of 33 boroughs over all food issues simultaneously is a massive undertaking. Recognition of this has led to a new approach that seeks engagement over individual food issues, with only relevant officers and Councillors invited to thematic meetings around planning, school food, public health, and the launch of the *Takeaways Toolkit* (GLA and CIEH 2012)[73] (L-CS2).

One might expect there to be a higher degree of engagement with the LFP by boroughs that have their own food strategy or multi-sector food partnership[74]. It is not the intention that borough-level food partnerships should be in the thrall of the LFP as direct implementers, not least as the GLA cannot require them to fall in step; rather, they can bring together the sectors, identify links and local action, secure funding for pilot programmes, help commission services, and feed up to the LFP (Sustain 2013). Even so, the absence of any borough with a food partnership/strategy from the London Food Board is a missed opportunity for mutual engagement. This is explored further in the next chapter.

One final point regarding borough engagement is the tendency for boroughs that have adopted best practice in a particular area to work cooperatively with others, so that they help lift performance more widely. One mechanism for this is the sharing of best practice, such as in the LFP's support of the *Takeaways Toolkit*, which provided a number of examples of how boroughs could utilise their existing powers to counter unhealthy food environment (GLA and CIEH 2012). Another is in joining forces over service provision, which in some cases has become an imperative due to cuts to services in the current national political and economic context meaning non-statutory food-related services tend come lower down on a council's agenda (L-Pub1). For example, several boroughs have cancelled their 'Meals on Wheels' services to elderly and housebound residents, with anecdotal evidence that some have given former recipients take-away menus instead, yet Havering and six others have joined together to retain the service across all their areas (Sustain 2013).

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[73] *The Takeaways Toolkit* was produced by the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and supported by the Mayor. It sets out mechanisms available to boroughs to curb proliferation of takeaway outlets around schools and playgrounds.

[74] For instance, Islington, Lambeth, Lewisham, Southwark, and Hackney are known to have active food partnerships as of July 2014.

Having looked towards the local and the relations between the Greater London-level LFP and the boroughs, this chapter now looks outward to relations with the regional, national, and international levels. Such is the size and governance structure of Greater London, it can be conceived of as a region in its own right – indeed Greater London had its own Regional Development Agency, the now defunct LDA. The only project identified with a specific connection to the South East region was the appointment of business development managers in wholesale markets during 2010 to promote the provision of more regionally-produced food (GLA n.d.)[75]. There are no actors on the LFP whose remit covers the South East specifically, and no evidence of joint working with the LEP.

Relations with the national level are more intriguing, not least because London, as the UK capital, plays a special role in the economy and politics of the country. There is caution over the LFP being seen to contradict national government policy, which stems from the current Mayor being a member of the Conservative Party that led the Coalition government during the study period. In one sense the LFP and Board can be viewed as a poster child for the localism agenda as projects and programmes for social good are delivered by non-public sector organisations at the local level. However there is a tension between this ideal and the preferences of some members, who would prefer concerted food policy to be handed down from national or local government and struggle with the implications of localism. For example, the devolution of school meal services to individual schools creates more work for project officers and campaigners in terms of building contacts, seeking to influence, and tracking standards, compared with when meals are provided by a local authority for all state-run schools in their area, and there is concern over the standards of food in Academies and Free Schools that are exempt from national nutrition standards (UK Government 2008).

At the same time, London's capital status means it is uniquely positioned to influence the national level. The Chair has contacts and networks at the national level with which she liaises, and as do some other Board members (L-Private1). These individual-based mechanisms of influence were seen as particularly important under the Coalition government, which tended to operate via networked contacts[76]. Nonetheless, London can be a powerful test case for new policies and projects. For example, after the School Food Plan (Dimbleby & Vincent 2013) recommended universal free school meals in all primary schools, national government announced free meals for all children up to the age of 7; London went a step further with a pilot for free school meals for all primary school children, up to the age of 11, in three boroughs.

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[75] This pilot project succeeded in bringing £20 million of new UK fruit and vegetables business into London that year, and was commended by Defra's Fruit and Vegetable Task Force. Since late 2010 it has been delivered by the National Farmers Union.

[76] There is anecdotal evidence to support this as Henry Dimbleby and John Vincent were commissioned to write the School Food Plan after meeting Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Education, on holiday.

Another example is the project to encourage food sector apprenticeships, which has given a food focus to the local interpretation of a national priority to build youth skills and experience. Finally, the London 2012 food standards, in which the LFP and board were heavily involved, has raised the expectations for healthy and sustainable food provisioning by caterers in London and at sporting and cultural events nationwide – and through the Food Legacy programme the standards have been used as a template for international sporting events too, such as the Sochi Winter Olympics and the World Cup in Rio de Janeiro in 2014.

In conclusion, the LFP does not set out to contradict or enter into conflict with the national level over food policy. National constraints over particular policy areas are neither lamented or disputed in any formal sense – although they may be flagged up within the four walls of a London Food Board meeting[77] and Board members, wearing their own organisations' hats, are free to be openly critical of government policy[78]. Rather, the LFP takes a project-based approach to improving on the national policy baseline and seeks to be a powerful test case for best practice that could inform national policy in the future. This means that the mechanism for shifting food policy and practice is on 'showing by doing' rather than 'telling'.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has provided a rich description of how both structural and operational factors affect the ways in which the LFP seeks to exert influence over food policy.

It has shown that the crucial mechanisms of the LFP are policy influence, which exploits as far as possible the connection with the GLA and the Mayor, and activities carried out through informal elements of the programme, as non-GLA actors exercise agency to overcome structural barriers. Networks and partnerships are vital to both of these and they are leveraged as much as possible. However, gaps in the London Food Board membership, poor knowledge by members of their role, and constraints from being a Mayoral/GLA progamme serve as barriers.

The next chapter describes findings from the case study on the Islington Food Strategy Partnership steering group, one of few food policy groups to exist at the London borough level.

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[77] Interviewees were openly critical of a number of national level policies that impede the work of the LFP, eg: the effect of welfare reforms on food poverty; minimal voluntary sustainability standards for public sector bodies; the overall approach to corporates which relies on corporate social responsibility in lieu of mandatory reporting on waste and procurement; and the failure of national farming policy to address environmental impact.

[78] For example Sustain, through its own organisation, actively campaigns to change national policy, eg through exchanges of letters with Defra requesting sustainable fish standards in schools, and to request national Food For Life standards be mandatory; and over food labelling, advertising and education through the Children's Food Campaign (L-CS2).

Table 5-4 Summary of factors affecting the London Food Programme

Factors	Effect on local food group
Structure and organisation of food policy group	
Structural	
Members/composition	Broad representation of food system means good knowledge base.
	Lack of boroughs & other implementers
Consultants/advisors	London Food Board members are Chair's consultants
History, origins	Unconstrained by history, structures changed as needed.
	Ability to re-frame food agenda to suit priorities
Resources	More control of the budget than under LDA, but GLA funding still restricted to Mayor's agenda. Extra resources from partners
Operational	
Membership grounds	Chosen for informational resources not implementation
Prog. management & leadership	Chair is energetic, responsive to issues, but 'wild' style hard to follow.
	Closeness to Mayor is risky
	Crucial double-act between public and civil society sectors
	Some members don't understand role of Board
Location, relation vis-à-vis local government	
Structural	
Location	GLA/Mayoral status brings legitimacy, status but supported projects must adhere to Mayor's agenda.
	Non-ownership of communication channels affects message/media.
	Possible Catch 22 in Business & Economy
Mandate/ legitimacy	Advisory, but strong take-up where Mayor has powers. Otherwise must use persuasion/advocacy
Operational	
Partnerships and collaborations	Networking key to partnerships, brings resources
	Broad sustainability definitions are inclusive.
Local level context	
Structural	
Local level powers	Mayoral structure means direct influence in his policy area, but lacks direct powers in boroughs
Political environ	Mayor is very business friendly
	Re-framing to priorities of the Mayor, in response to post-riots local context
	Possible resistance of non-Conservative boroughs to Mayor-supported ideas?
Admin/management Ways of working	No food line-management structures in boroughs for partnership working
Operational	
Understanding levers & language	General lack of understanding of LFP by boroughs, and vice versa
Multilevel context	
Structural	
ML food framing	Caution over being seen to contradict national policy
Policy framings by dept	Localism agenda makes coordination harder, eg school food
Operational	
Partnerships/mediation through levels	Actors use national level networks
	Act as test case/leading by showing what is possible

Source: Author

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6 Islington Food Strategy Partnership

6.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings of the case study on the Islington Food Strategy Partnership, including all groups of actors and entities, between May 2012 and March 2014.

First the general context of the borough is described, followed by a brief history of the Islington Food Strategy, its implementing Food Partnership and the Steering Group. The second part of the chapter describes the location and relationship of the Food Strategy project to Islington Council, and perceptions thereof, and the structural make-up of the Steering Group. The final section deals with the multilevel governance context of the Islington Food Strategy, first horizontally within the local authority level and then vertically, considering framing and mediation through the levels.

6.2 Context and background

6.2.1 London Borough of Islington context

Islington is one of 33 boroughs[79] that make up Greater London. Although it is the second smallest borough area-wise, it is densely populated with around 200,000 residents. The population is ethnically diverse and skewed towards young adults in their 20s and 30s. Great inequalities exist within the borough, with very wealthy areas sitting alongside areas of poverty and deprivation and a 'missing middle' of middle-income households (LBI 2011d). Some 44 per cent of residents live in social housing and, despite the wealthy enclaves, Islington is the eighth most deprived local authority area in the UK (LBI & NHS Islington 2010a).

Islington Council, also known as London Borough of Islington (LBI), operates under a Leader and Cabinet model and has a Labour majority[80]. LBI is responsible for all local services that are usually delivered by unitary local authorities with the exception of fire, police, and public transport, which are managed at GLA level, and waste, for which it cooperates with six other boroughs in the North London Waste Authority Area. The planning strategy – *Core Strategy* (LBI 2011d) – and all planning decisions must be in line with the GLA's *London Plan* (Mayor of London 2011). Islington has a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which brings together the local authority and other public sector bodies, the private sector, and the community and voluntary sector, and which published its *Sustainable Community Strategy* in early 2008 (ISP 2008). The Islington Fairness Commission was set up in June 2010 in light of the inequalities in

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[79] Strictly speaking 32 boroughs plus the City of London, but all are local authority areas.

[80] As of the May 2010 elections

Islington. Its final report was published in 2011 (The Islington Fairness Commission 2011) and informed the council's *Corporate Plan* (LBI 2012) and the work of the LSP.

Like other local authorities in England, Islington Council has been hit hard by public spending cuts imposed by central government since 2010. In order to meet national budget constraints between April 2011 and March 2015 Islington Council reduced net spending by £127m (Watts & Houston 2014); in the 2014-15 budget proposals Children's Services saw cuts of £312,000, environment and regeneration of £3.8m, finance and resources of £2.9m, and housing and adult social services of £1.3m. However the majority of savings have been achieved through efficiencies and joint procurement, so that actual cuts have accounted for only 20 per cent, mostly through staff reductions. In the 2010-11 financial year (in which the food strategy was adopted), for instance, staff numbers were reduced by 114, including 65 from the Environment and Regeneration department (Cornwell 2010).

6.2.2   The Islington Food Strategy Partnership

The *Islington Food Strategy* (LBI & NHS Islington 2010b) was published in February 2010 following its adoption by Islington Council and NHS Islington, and accompanied by the *Action Plan* (IFP 2010) that was prepared in tandem to provide detail on delivery. The strategy attests to the borough's longstanding activity around food, and one public sector interviewee (I-Pub1) referred to earlier strategies of which no documentary evidence remains. The current strategy was intended to draw together existing work and provide strategic coordination for actors to work together more effectively and to extend efforts towards affordability and accessibility of healthy and environmentally and socially sustainable food. The original impetus for the strategy came from the Public Health team but its development floundered due to departmental reorganisations and personnel changes. It only took off when the Sustainability team was able to dedicate a budget (of undisclosed sum) in 2009, and therefore Sustainability was the original lead team (I-Pub2). However in 2010-11 the Sustainability team fell victim to the local authority cuts and most of its number was made redundant. An Environmental Health Officer became the council lead and Steering Group secretary, a role they carry out as part of their paid employment and which therefore represents in-kind support from the council. An officer from the Public Health team also assumed a leader-like role in the Steering Group.

The *Food Strategy* (LBI & NHS Islington 2010b) and *Action Plan* (IFP 2010) are explicit statements of Islington Council's intention to act around food issues. The overall aim of the strategy is 'to ensure that healthy, environmentally and socially sustainable food is affordable and accessible to all' (LBI & NHS Islington 2010b, p.4). It recognises three inter-related and overlapping themes – health, poverty, and the environment – which provide a framework for

considering the multiple impacts of food issues in Islington. The *Strategy* also contains 10 key objectives: promoting a healthy diet; making healthy food accessible; making healthy food affordable; promoting safer food; reducing our carbon footprint; promoting local food; promoting ethical food; reducing food waste; celebrating food and diversity; reducing inequalities in health.

The *Action Plan* expands these objectives into action areas, and for each sets out specific actions, resources, measurable outcomes, timescales, and the lead individual. As the strategy is supposed to bring together existing work around food, many activities relate to existing projects. In most cases the work is to be carried out through the relevant council department or by non-Council Partnership members through their own organisations. It was anticipated that the *Action Plan* would be reviewed and updated every few years, but the original 2010 plan remains the complete, formal version that is available online[81] while working versions, scaled back in response to reshuffles and redundancies within the local authority and changing personnel at partner organisations, are circulated between Steering Group members. The impact of the reshuffles is that some responsibilities have been re-assigned. For instance, while efforts have been made to keep the sustainability action areas alive since the disbanding of that team, for some there is no one with the knowledge or expertise to advance them, such as for areas under the objectives 'reducing our environmental footprint'[82], 'promotion of local food', and 'promotion of ethical food'.

The *Food Strategy* contains an acknowledgement that it cannot be delivered by any actor in isolation but that it will be implemented by the statutory, voluntary, and business sectors together, with progress overseen by a Food Strategy Partnership made up of actors from organisations across these sectors (LBI & NHS Islington 2010b). The aims and objectives of the Partnership are stated in the *Terms of Reference*[83], which are set out in table 6-1. Although termed 'objectives', the objectives of the Partnership are much more generic than those of the *Food Strategy* and the *Action Plan*, and could more appropriately be termed functions. In table 6-1 they are grouped into six categories: programme management, recommending and lobbying, external communications, knowledge hub, facilitation, and issue identification. The verbs that demonstrate the function are italicised and those with more than one verb are spread across multiple columns.

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[81] As of 20th February 2014

[82] Wording differs between 'carbon footprint' in the *Islington Food Strategy* and 'environmental footprint' in the *Action Plan*.

[83] The *Terms of Reference* were received late in the research project in 2014, but came with assurances that the aims and objectives of the Partnership had not altered. This recent version contains detailed description of the role of the chair, but as this was redacted after the fieldwork period it is not taken into account.

Table 6-1 Aim and objectives of the Islington Food Strategy Partnership

AIM

A partnership that would work strategically to improve access to, take up and raise the profile of healthy, environmentally and socially sustainable affordable food for all in Islington by fostering partnerships, linking existing initiatives and developing new ones.

OBJECTIVES

Programme management	Recommending & lobbying	External communications	Knowledge hub	Facilitation	Issue identification
Develop a joint strategy and action plan for Islington. Review these [objectives] at regular intervals	*Make recommendations* on programmes & initiatives to improve access, take up of & raise the profile of healthy, environmentally & socially sustainable, affordable food for all in Islington. Have *campaigning & lobbying* role to *pass information & advice up* to London Food, NHS, GLA & other policy making bodies.	*Link* ongoing initiatives & *support* them to ensure maximum benefit for Islington. Produce newsletter to *disseminate* information beyond food strategy partnership. *Promote* clear, consistent, good messages on both health and sustainable aspects of food. *Communicate* Partnership's work as widely as possible within Borough, regionally & nationally, as relevant		Work in partnership to *maximise* & ensure best use of resources. This will include identifying & writing joint funding bids for benefit of Islington's people. *Support* delivery of Local Area Agreements and other targets related to food.	*Use local evidence* on health & social inequalities to ensure that work targets those at most need & to *identify* the barriers to participation.

(Source: Islington Food Partnership 2014)

Despite this apparently clear mandate, the Partnership is large and amorphous and consists of anybody who is interested in any type of food activity in Islington, from the managers of food businesses, to voluntary groups, to gardening clubs, etc. The Partnership does not meet on a regular basis but a one-day event was held in 2010 to launch the *Food Strategy*[84]. The Partnership's main communications tool is a bi-monthly email newsletter sent out by the council lead, detailing activities, updates, and opportunities. This means that it is extremely difficult for an outsider to monitor the performance of the Food Partnership either in implementing specific points in the *Strategy* and the *Action Plan* or in fulfilling the more general functions. Rather, the Steering Group performs this monitoring role and operates as a coordinating hub for activity.

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[84] During the research period the possibility of hosting a half-day conference was discussed. This conference finally took place in November 2014, after the end of the fieldwork period.

The Steering Group meets four times a year, either in a meeting room on LBI premises or at an external location, and is a more cohesive, defined group of actors that could be studied.

The Steering Group has no formal, written mandate and is not mentioned in the *Terms of Reference*, but its mission was described by an interviewee as keeping 'the *Action Plan* being actioned', 'giving the strategy some direction', and 'being prepared to put some time and work into [it] – even if not delivering the bits of the projects themselves, just liaising with the people that were delivering it and feeding back to the central group to make sure the action plan is on target,' (I-Pub2). In this way the Steering Group is a nexus for communications and activities for the whole partnership. Two ground rules to Steering Group membership were verbally communicated: that members 'do need to be prepared to do a little bit above and beyond just coming to the meetings'; and respect 'each-others' principles and promoting each other's activities' (I-Pub2).

The Steering Group membership consists of public sector actors from Environmental Health, Street Trading, Planning, Recycling, and NHS (Public Health and Healthy Schools), three actors from charities/civil society groups, one actor from a social enterprise, and an academic chair (table 6-2). The Steering Group has strong ties to the council via the council lead and the fact that the *Food Strategy* has been adopted by both the council and NHS, but non-council members are meant to be equal partners in the implementation with responsibility for some actions. Moreover an independent, academic chair is intended to demonstrate that the group has one foot outside the council.

Table 6-2 Membership of the Steering Group of the Islington Food Partnership

Organisation or department	Sector
City University London (Chair)	Academic
LBI, Environmental Health (secretary)	Public
NHS Islington	Public
NHS/LBI Islington Healthy Schools Team	Public
LBI, Recycling	Public
LBI, Street trading	Public
LBI, Planning	Public
Manor Gardens Welfare Trust	Civil society
Central Street Cookery School	Civil society
Groundworks	Civil society
The Garden Classroom	Private (social enterprise)

Sources: Observation notes 22nd October 2012; 14th January 2013; personal correspondence with council

Figure 6-1 The entities involved in the Islington Food Strategy Partnership
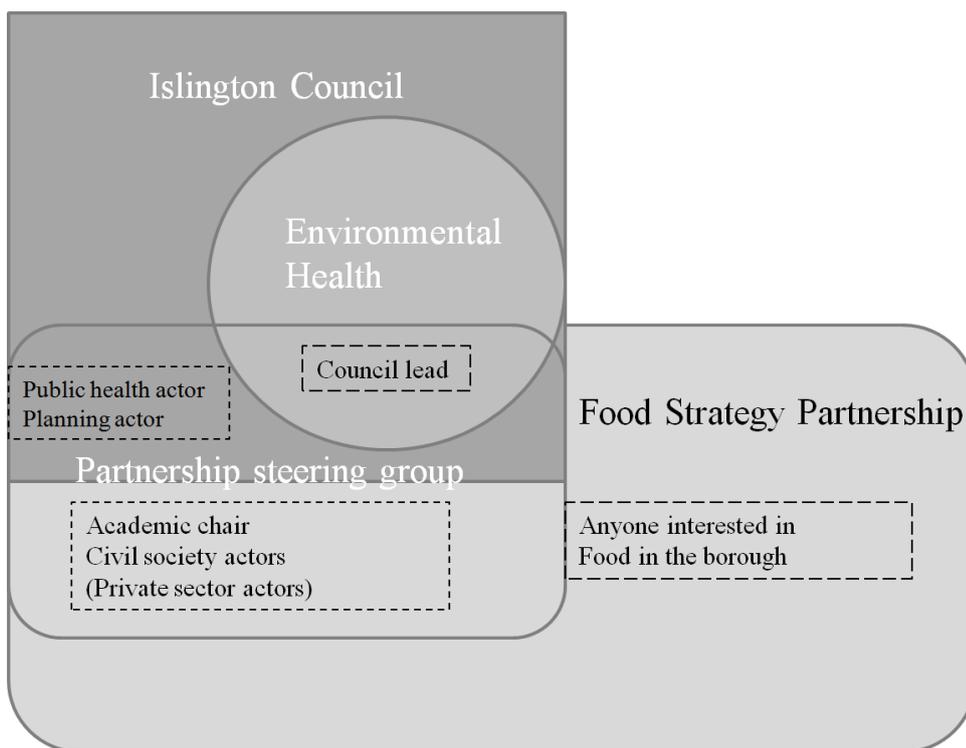
Source: Author

6.3 Enablers and barriers

6.3.1 Structures and operations

The initial development of the *Food Strategy* was funded by Islington Council and the finished document and its *Action Plan* were adopted by Islington Council and NHS Islington. Nonetheless, the Food Strategy Partnership and the Steering Group are intended to straddle the public, civil society and private sectors so that ownership and implementation is shared (LBI & NHS Islington 2010b). This means that the body of work is understood to have half-in-half-out status. While there can be benefits to both the formal and the independent aspects, in practice it fails to capitalise on them as a result of lack of awareness of the *Food Strategy* within the Council, and misunderstanding on the part of non-public sector actors of their part to play.

Considering first the issues within Islington Council, as has already been noted Islington has a long history of food work that the *Food Strategy* programme seeks to bring together. However according to one interviewee, having the *Food Strategy* adopted was not in order to secure political support for ongoing policy work or legitimacy to open more doors – although its adoption brings a certain guarantee of longevity since it would be difficult for the local authority to back-track and remove its support entirely (though the nature of support may change) (I-

Pub2). Rather, the primary motivation was to secure resources for delivery: 'The idea was that if the elected members adopted it then they have to follow their mouth with their money – not necessarily a huge amount, but just the officer time, or administrative support, or meeting rooms, or that kind of thing, would be easier to gain access to if both public health, the PCT and the council adopted it, (I-Pub2)'.

The in-kind resources beyond the initial development budget have continued to be available, but awareness of the existence of the *Food Strategy* within the Council as the centre piece of Islington's work around food has waned – even at a time when the local government climate favours food issues on the policy agenda, as will be demonstrated in the next section. Rather, the council lead is 'one man band' (I-Private1) who continually seeks political support from selected Councillors over piecemeal matters, such as to validate funding bids or to be the face of a campaign on behalf of the Council. This is required since the *Food Strategy* is not sufficiently engrained into the political fabric of the council for there to be automatic high level political support for every issue and activity, nor a clear route or mechanism to obtain it. Moreover, there are no Councillors on the Steering Group, and no senior public sector staff, such as department leads and directors, but rather mid-ranking officers. This means that awareness of the *Islington Food Strategy* within the Council is issue-dependent, and although public sector actors on the Steering Group do exercise agency admirably within their department or in fostering cross-departmental connections they lack the weight to represent directly the group's objectives through the political echelons.

Lack of awareness of the *Food Strategy* within the local authority was demonstrated during Sustain's research for the *Good Food for London* report (Sustain 2011) when several Councillors and department leads (such as Catering and Green Spaces) responded independently to request for information without coordination with the Steering Group, and even the service head of the Council lead forwarded it to the wrong person (I-Pub1, I-Pub2). This episode was taken as a strong reason for renewed awareness-raising activities about the *Islington Food Strategy* within the local authority in a bid to bridge the critical gaps over food between departments and services.

As for the independence of the Food Strategy Partnership, the intention is to ensure that a spectrum of organisations within Islington, from all sectors, are actively engaged and pursuing the objectives through their own organisations, and working in partnership with each other and with the Council. This means that despite the 'top down' inception of the *Islington Food Strategy* from within the Council, it is designed to support and harness 'bottom up' activity throughout Islington's communities. However while this official governance rhetoric is communicated by some actors (especially public sector), there is strong evidence both from

meeting observations and from interviews that the half-in-half-out status is not recognised by non-public sector actors (I-CS1, I-CS2). Rather, it is seen as sitting wholly within, and being driven by, the Council. Part of the reason for this (besides the top-down origins and the adoption) is that the vast majority of majority of actions in the *Action Plan* are to be fulfilled by council departments as part of their own work plans; at the time of the fieldwork there were no active actions for civil society or the private sector. Moreover, the Council lead plays a dominant secretarial role in the Steering Group, arranging the meetings, circulating minutes, sending out the newsletter and actively seeking political support for the work of the Strategy from Councillors. This individual was observed to be the primary mover and shaker, while the academic chair, who is supposed to embody the programme's independence, was less visible.

The effect of this misunderstanding about the status of the *Food Strategy* and its Partnership is lack of engagement and alienation of civil society actors. This was experienced directly by the researcher in the difficulty in securing interview participants from this sector, as several individuals (who nonetheless attended Steering Group meetings) declined on the grounds that they did not feel sufficiently involved or knowledgeable about the project. Moreover during the fieldwork period the council lead repeatedly asked for civil society actors to take on some of the action areas that they had been caretaking since the demise of the Sustainability team but no-one volunteered[85] (observation notes, 14th January 2013, I- Pub2). Yet, at the same time, there was an expressed desire on the part of some civil society actors to become more involved. This apparent contradiction demonstrates a tension between the kind of contribution that is being asked of civil society and that which they are prepared for, which is contributing to the fulfilment of the food agenda through their own organisations, in ways that are relevant to their core jobs (I-CS1) or which leverage the resources they can offer (I-CS2). While care-taking of action areas does not mean the lead actor doing all the work themselves, it does entail gathering of information. Given the dominance of council-based actions, this would require well-developed networks into the Council, which civil society lacks. As a result, they 'are not quite sure what is required of them or what they could do,' (I-Pub2) and resist the expectation that they can shoehorn themselves into existing action areas that were not written with their capabilities in mind. It may well be helpful to carry out a review of the current group's role and capabilities to ensure they are an appropriate fit for the current members (many of whom joined after the *Food Strategy* had been written). Such a review would inform a new set of appropriate actions and boost engagement in the longer term. As one interviewee recognised, 'a lot of work goes into formulating the strategies and often that is the most useful point and the process of getting to the strategy is often more helpful than the actual end product because often these things sit on a shelf somewhere,' (I-CS1).

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[85] Members did not volunteer to take on responsibility when the whole group was asked, but some agreed to job-share an action area when they were asked by name.

If non-public sector actors are unable or unprepared actively to contribute to implementation of the *Islington Food Strategy* and the *Action Plan*, this raises the question of why they attend the Steering Group meetings at all. One said that their main motivation was to glean information for their organisation (I-Private1); another described the Steering Group as 'a platform for various sectors to provide what they offer' and expressed frustration that there was no take up of the service they were offering (I-CS2). Evidently there is a desire to benefit from the Food Partnership's knowledge brokerage function – and indeed the fulfilment of this function is a source of some pride: 'The biggest single achievement is bringing people together to at least consider how different areas of food work impacted on different areas of food work, and how other funding or experience or information should be shared,' (I-Pub2).

The invitation of guest speakers to Steering Group meetings, usually drawn from the Partnership to present on a pertinent topic and their organisation's work, is a knowledge brokerage mechanism for keeping members up to date on current issues and activities outside of the Council. For example, at one of the meetings observed a guest speaker from civil society alliance Sustain presented the *Good Food for London* report (Sustain 2012) in which Islington was the best performing borough and suggested ways in which it could improve its performance further (observation notes 22nd October 2012). At another, a representative from civil society organisation Shine discussed food poverty and sought policy ideas on how the local authority might tackle it (observation notes 14th January 2013). In this way there is openness to considering new food issues and discussion as a means of educating the Steering Group so that they may highlight issues to the wider Food Strategy Partnership to help inform its work.

The utility of invited speakers notwithstanding, the knowledge brokerage function of the Steering Group could be further improved by having a broader Steering Group membership on a permanent basis to represent the full breadth and scope of the voluntary and community sector around food in the borough. Efforts have been made to engage more organisations from the wider Food Partnership in the Steering Group, such as by asking members each bringing a guest to one meeting – although this was not a great success as none of the guests came to the next meeting (observation notes 14th January 2013). The compilation of a catalogue of food activities within the borough, carried out by a student intern during summer 2012, is another effort to foster more citizen participation and to map useful networks, and the very process of contacting participants for information serves to remind them of the existence of the strategy.

Besides the slim civil society representation it is remarkable that, with the exception of a social enterprise actor, the private sector is entirely absent from the Steering Group – even though the *Food Strategy* requires that the Partnership be made up of 'organisations from the statutory,

voluntary, and business sectors' (LBI & NHS Islington 2010b, p.5). The omission means that there is no representation across the food chain and the meetings are lacking the full spectrum of perspectives (I-CS1, I-Pub2). Moreover, as businesses are important agents of change in the food provisioning environment via the products they choose to procure, stock, supply, and serve, the Partnership is unable effectively to influence people's eating habits or address sourcing issues (I-Private1). This has not always been the case, however, as some businesses were involved at the outset:

> 'When I look back at the businesses we had in the start they had quite an intense involvement in the development of the framework and then they dropped out, so whether for them it was too much commitment too early on, and really, saying that out loud to somebody else makes me thing we should have gone back and found out why, or try and cast our net wider with the current strategy [...] And so other businesses perhaps – although when we do other business events, with the town centre management group, we are always plugging the *Food Strategy* there, and perhaps it's just not to the right businesses,' (I-Pub2).

It is unfortunate that the reasons for business disengagement were not captured by the remaining Steering Group members, but the idea of casting the net wider in order to catch 'the right businesses' suggests there was a incompatibility between aims and values or some other fundamental mismatch that was an intransigent barrier.

The terms upon which individual actors become members of the Steering Group are informal and fluid, with no designated seats for particular organisations or kinds of actors and no formal membership list. Some of the current actors had asked to join (eg I-Private1), others have inherited the position from a colleague or predecessor (eg I-CS1), and others found out about the Steering Group through events or a specific piece of work and had been encouraged to join by existing members (eg I-Pub2). This means the door is always open to people who can actively contribute, but as no formal commitment is called for the informality can also be a barrier to membership longevity and consistency: indeed, some of the same individuals did not attend both of the meetings observed by the researcher[86], and at one of the meetings it was apparent that the chair did not know everyone in the room (observation notes, 14 January 2013).

The utility of inviting speakers from the wider Partnership to lead discussion on specific topics by the Steering Group has been discussed above, but more attention is needed on the task of tracking *Action Plan* implementation, which forms part of each meeting. At the meeting observed in January 2013, only a few points on the *Action Plan* were discussed, relating to food

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[86] In some cases different people were present from the same organisation/department

waste, food safety, and public health[87]. In all three of these action areas the lead was taken by a public sector actor who reported on activities from within the relevant council department[88]. The practice of reporting on *Action Plan* progress and other public sector schemes falls under the knowledge hub remit of the Steering Group meetings, as it involves sharing information about recent happenings – or lack thereof. However it was admitted that 'at a lot of meetings there is a lot of talk and not that much action,' (I-CS1), which means the Steering Group is teetering dangerously on the line between knowledge brokerage and being a 'talking shop', not least since neither of the above-mentioned discussions (led by Shine and Sustain) yielded concrete action points and it was not clear whether the speaker would make use of ideas shared by their audience. Moreover, while there was an action point tabled between the two meetings observed for all actors to research venue options for a half-day Partnership event, no-one did so – to the frustration of the Council lead (observation notes, January 2013).

However there is a second function behind reporting on *Action Plan* beyond just talking – that is, progress updates serve as a tool for holding to account actors who are meant to be implementing action areas. The vast majority of actions and measurable outcomes in the *Action Plan* are to be delivered 'within existing resources' and were written into other plans or strategies, either independently or as part of the co-evolution of the *Food Strategy* with several other strategic documents under development at the same time. Consequently, any results from them are not stand-alone results of the food strategy group but rather they are influenced by the food strategy group. For instance, the roll-out of food waste collection services to 10,000 additional households (observation notes, January 2013) happened not just because of its inclusion within the *Action Plan*, but because it was written into the plans of the waste team. However, the active follow-up of the Steering Group can help ensure issues remain within departmental plans and do not drop off the agenda over time; a phone call once a quarter from a Steering Group member seeking an update can ensure an action remains current. As one actor said of the Healthy Catering Commitment, which evolved from Eat Smart Islington[89], 'I don't think there would have been so much pressure to keep it going through its different incarnations if it had not already been down as an action point in the *Food Strategy Action Plan*,' (Pub2).

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[87] The discussion formed the latter part of the meeting, and only pressing matters were discussed due to lack of time. It was acknowledged that reporting on the *Action Plan* had dropped off in recent meetings.

[88] The discussion on food waste noted the expansion of collection services to 10,000 new homes, promotion of composting schemes, and the risk that ring-fenced funding cold be siphoned off. The food safety discussion focused on educating new businesses rather than focusing solely on poor performers. With regard to children's food centres and healthy food, new guidance was noted on the provision of three hours of cooking lessons.

[89] Award schemes to promote provision of healthy food at catering establishments. Establishing Eat Smart Islington awards was written into the *Food Strategy* but was supplanted by the Healthier Catering Commitment, a scheme that Islington helped establish (with other boroughs and the Chartered Institute for Environmental Health) to recognise catering businesses that show commitment to reducing saturated fat and salt in foods, offering healthier options, and serving smaller portions on request (CIEH n.d.).

This section has so far focused on the knowledge brokerage and communications functions of the Steering Group, but it is necessary also to acknowledge the behind the scenes agency on behalf of the *Food Strategy's* aims and objectives, which is carried out by some (public sector) actors and mostly involves ongoing advocacy for consideration of food issues. For instance, one actor played a liaison role with Islington Council's Income Maximisation (IMAX) team[90] to promote sharing of information and to ensure that a consistent message was being sent out on food poverty across departments (I-Pub1). Moreover, specific projects can help promote integration between policy domains, such as the Hearty Lives[91] project that has 'indoctrinated' healthy food messages in other teams through social marketing – for instance, it has secured a commitment from Green Spaces and Libraries that they will use only businesses that have made the Healthier Catering Commitment for events (observation notes, 14th January 2013). This intention to build connections between departments is testament to how the *Food Strategy* work is not constrained by the home department of its current Council lead (Environmental Health), even if the original funding under the now-defunct Sustainability team 'really coloured the lay-out of the *Food Strategy* and the framework because it changed how it was written,' (I-Pub2).

Finally, although awareness of the *Food Strategy* within the Council has fluctuated, there has nonetheless been an intention of integrating its aims and objectives into strategies and plans for particular policy domains within the borough via a 'twinning arrangement' (I-Pub2). Twinning arrangements have come about through council officers involved in the Steering Group advocating for the *Food Strategy* within their home departments. The result has been explicit consideration of food issues on the plans and strategies of several departments and service areas: the *Food Strategy* is referred to in the *Health Inequalities strategy* (LBI & NHS Islington 2010a) and the *Biodiversity strategy* (LBI 2013c). The *ProActive Islington Strategy* (LBI & NHS 2012) on physical activity mentions the importance of healthy diet. The *Development Management Policy* 4.3 and forthcoming *Supplementary Planning Document* on location and concentration of uses includes measures on unhealthy food takeaways near schools and playgrounds (LBI 2013b) – although this latter inclusion is also attributable to the report of the Islington Fairness Commission (The Islington Fairness Commission 2011).

Having dealt with factors affecting the Food Strategy Partnership's capacity that are related to the group's location vis-à-vis local government and its structure and organisation, the next

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[90] The Income Maximisation (IMAX) team is responsible for advising benefits recipients on their entitlements, to ensure that the most vulnerable can access the full range of supports available in their situation. The IMAX team helped 4,712 residents claim £4.3m in unclaimed benefits in 2012-13.

[91] Hearty Lives Islington is a 3-year, £100,000 project funded by the British Heart Foundation and delivered mainly by the Environmental Health team with the aim of reducing inequalities relating to heart health. It has three work strands: the Healthy Catering Commitment, workplace health, and community engagement.

section considers contextual factors, first at the local, horizontal level and then through multilevel, vertical framing.

6.3.2   Multilevel framing

Development of the *Islington Food Strategy* straddled a period of transition in the local context of Islington. The Sustainability team secured funding for the work and was the initial lead, but by 2010 – the year of adoption – sustainability as a top-line priority was on the wane. In the same year Labour won majority council leadership (replacing the minority Liberal Democrat lead), the economic crisis worsened, and the Islington Fairness Commission was initiated.

Despite these shifts, the sustainability focus during the development of the *Food Strategy* provided a positive environment and impetus for getting it off the ground:

> 'Islington had this Sustainability division which was the biggest in its country and had a real dynamic group of people, and there was there was political favour and there was funding at the time and there was a lot of exciting work to happen because of that. And so I think it's probably a very positive thing in terms of its origins and probably a lot less limitations than it would have been than if it was created now,' (I-Private1).

Although the primary reason for the dissolution of Sustainability was a local authority context that has been beset by stringent budget cuts, that Sustainability was axed – rather than another team – demonstrates how sustainability is regarded as expendable in tough times. During the fieldwork period there was an emerging need to re-write the strategy for better alignment with dominant issues in the borough and to re-engage current actors, or to introduce a process of continual monitoring by a critical friend who could recommend incremental amendments that would prevent a need for wholesale re-writing later on. Even though one of the three framing themes of the *Food Strategy* is poverty, alongside health and the environment, one interviewee still felt it was not prominent enough considering the new environment:

> 'The strategy is great but it is possibly out of date because of the changed economic climate so maybe it needs to be realigned to the council's strategic priorities [...] Because obviously when you talk about food strategy, when you hear about food banks and food deserts and people unable to feed themselves and the basics, clearly it is really topical, it's something that is really important but I don't think – none of that has been factored in because it was developed in a really different climate and a different set of circumstances,' (I-CS1).

That said, the final report of the Islington Fairness Commission (The Islington Fairness Commission 2011) recognises food issues as both a marker of inequalities and as a means of addressing them, and includes several food-related recommendations that also featured in the *Action Plan*, such as commending food growing projects for re-claiming and protecting public spaces, and the need to address proliferation of fast food takeaways near schools. The Fairness Enquiry heavily influenced the *Islington Corporate Plan* (LBI 2012), which has written in the need to address proliferation of fast food takeaways near schools through supplementary planning guidance, thus contributing to a supportive environment for implementing the *Action Plan* and for the *Development Management Policy* (DM4.3) on concentration of uses, which is discussed in more detail below.

The lack of direct involvement in the *Islington Food Strategy* on the part of the borough's political leadership, identified above, should in not be construed as a hostile environment for food policy. On the contrary, Islington has some progressive policies in place around food, such as universal free school meals for primary school children[92], provision of breakfast clubs, advocacy for school food suppliers to pay the London Living Wage (Dougan 2014), and reduced-cost allotments to promote food growing (LBI 2011b; LBI 2011c). There is no evidence that these policies came about as a result of the *Food Strategy* project, but rather the *Food Strategy* is a mechanism for bringing together the strands, monitoring progress, and giving accountability to ensure momentum within the departments. Moreover, there is a strong possibility that certain political actors have advanced the food agenda, even if they are not directly involved in the *Food Strategy* Steering Group. Notably, the policy of free school meals for primary school children was introduced when Richard Watts was Executive Member for Children and Families. Watts, who formerly ran the Children's Food Campaign at Sustain, has since become Leader of the Council[93].

It must also be highlighted that the Labour administration in Islington has sought to remain true to political commitments around food, in spite of the economic and welfare policy under the Coalition government impacting the local governance context. For instance, the Council remained committed to providing free school meals for all primary school children but reduced the cost by £900,000 in 2013-14 by combining procurement with neighbouring borough Camden (Watts 2013). Indeed, the universal free school meals policy is flagged under 'immediate, practical support' to reduce the impact of changes to the welfare system, with fears

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[92] Following the free school meals pilot and subsequent roll out cross the borough, school meals take up increased in primary schools from 62 per cent to 82 per cent in 2010/11. A request was made for data-gathering frameworks to be put in place to measure the effect on free school meals and health, weight, well-bring, behaviour, concentration, performance and attainment (Morphitis 2012).

[93] Watts became Leader of the Council in October 2013, but as this occurred after the fieldwork period (observations and interviews) it is not possible to comment on any direct impact for the *Islington Food Strategy* project.

that families of some 400 Islington children will face the choice between feeding their children or paying their rent (Dean 2012). There has also been commitment, in the form of a Council motion, that the need to make savings through tender processes should not result in closure of lunch clubs for smaller, more vulnerable, locally- or culturally-specific groups or residents, and that older residents should be engaged in new contracting arrangements (LBI 2011a)[94].

Turning next to the Greater London context, the *Islington Food Strategy* document cites the *London Food Strategy* (LDA 2007) as providing the regional policy context but there is no explicit reference to its aims, objectives or priorities and, as such, Islington's strategy does not attempt to implement or enact that of Greater London. Nonetheless, there was a tendency on the part of civil society actors to assume that the *Islington Food Strategy* and the *London Food Strategy* must necessarily be closely aligned, even if they are unaware of the details: 'I am sure there is alignment there and I don't know the details and to what extent it would be aligned, but I am sure the links are there,' (I-CS1); 'I can imagine that Islington is like a sub-set, so whatever comes from the London government, they probably set the agendas,' (I-CS2). The latter remark in particular betrays an over-assumption of the powers of the Mayor of London and the degree to which the boroughs must keep in step – whereas in actual fact the boroughs are only bound to be in general compliance with the Mayor's planning strategy. Meanwhile, blame for the lack of coordination was laid with the LFP, and in particular the absence of an implementation plan so that it was not possible for the Islington group to identify synergies: 'I think, the GLA, the food strategy it kind of got off to a flying start and then stopped a bit,' (I-Pub2). This impression is at odds with findings discussed in the previous chapter, which showed not only that implementation work related to the *London Food Strategy* is active but also that the London Food Board wishes to engage more with boroughs.

Although the *Islington Food Strategy* is not framed or dictated to by the GLA level, there is nonetheless an intention to feed into the LFP any 'wider' issues that the Islington group comes across (I-Pub2). Examples of 'feeding in' are the Steering Group's contribution to the London Assembly consultation on food poverty (London Assembly 2013b), and the willingness of an officer from LBI to attend the London Assembly meeting and represent the group's views. Islington was also involved in drawing up a framework for the Healthier Catering Commitment, together with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and actors from other boroughs – although the LFP reportedly was not terribly interested in this project until it came to asking councils to sign up, at which point it wanted to be involved and was able to provide some funding for materials and host a launch workshop at City Hall: 'It kind of felt like joining in

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[94] The cancellation of the Meals on Wheels food delivery service to elderly residents is reportedly not a cost-cutting measure but dwindling take-up led the Council to investigate more user-appropriate meal provisioning (Marshall 2012)

because it was going to look good,' (I-Pub2). Clearly, then, any links between the Islington and the London *Food Strategies* are informal, infrequent, and opportunistic. Although one member of Islington's Steering Group does also sit on the London Food Board's Boroughs implementation group, this actor was said to represent their employing organisation, rather than the Islington Food Strategy (I-Pub1), which represents a missed opportunity and means that potential channels of mutual support and complementary projects are unexplored.

In terms of national food policy framing, the *Islington Food Strategy* cites related national policies as *Healthy Weight, Healthy Lives* (HM Government 2008), *the National Child Measurement Programme* (HSIC n.d.), *Food Matters* (Cabinet Office 2008), the '*Sustainable Food and Farming Strategy*'[95] (Curry et al. 2002), and the *Sustainable Schools Strategy* (DCSF 2008). All of these are understood to have been broadly in keeping with the objectives and action areas of the *Islington Food Strategy*, but no explicit enablers are identified and the *Food Strategy* is not presented as a means to implement or enact them at the borough level. Rather, the *Action Plan* includes a number of national-level enablers that can be leveraged to help Islington meet its food objectives, which can be broadly divided into three categories. The first category is a small number of national-level policies to be implemented or maximised within Islington to help meet its objectives: S106 agreements (food-related training), Healthy Start vouchers for young and low-income families, and food diversity lessons within the school curriculum (at the time under Personal, Social, and Health Education). The second is national level public health campaigns that can be leveraged as instruments to advance certain action areas (eg the Change 4 Life diet and physical activity programme, the 5-a-day fruit and vegetables campaign, the Food Standards Agency's Eatwell Plate). The third is civil society-run programmes that can provide frameworks and benchmarks for achievements (eg Fairtrade, UNICEF's breastfeeding friendly award, and the Food for Life scheme).

While the *Action Plan* thus seizes upon a variety of enablers to help it advance its aims, there is no recognition of any specific policy barriers. No policy barriers to specific action areas were identified during the Steering Group meetings either, and actors were wholly focused on food issues as they are manifested and addressed within their local area, rather than throughout the multiple governance levels. The only policy contained within the *Action Plan* that conflicts with national level policy is that of universal free school meals for all primary school children – but although this policy is not mirrored at the national level[96] it cannot block Islington from implementing this measure within its own jurisdiction. However, a barrier to Islington's

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[95] Correct title: *Food and farming: a sustainable future*

[96] Plans to introduce universal free school meals nationally from September 2014 only apply to the first two years of schooling. In October 2013 Islington Council carried a motion to lobby national government to extend the offer to all primary school years (LBI 2013a).

planning policy preferences, which impact on food establishments, was identified through document analysis: The planning policies in question are *Development Management Policy* (DM4.3) on concentration of uses is intended to curb proliferation of undesirable and unhealthy establishments, including hot food takeaways, near schools; and other policies (eg DM4.1) that strive to protect small businesses. Since the adoption of these policies in June 2013 the new *National Planning Policy Framework* (DCLG 2012) has come into force and effectively negates them by no longer requiring business owners to obtain permission for premises change of use. To counter this, Islington's Executive adopted non-imminent directions to remove new powers and reinstate planning permission, but the policies are vulnerable as the Secretary of State has the power to remove the directions. A *Supplementary Planning Document* is being produced to give planning officers advice on betting shops, pay day loan companies, and takeaways. This was expected to be adopted in spring 2015, but is not legally binding (Sullivan 2014).

6.4   Summary

This chapter has described the structural and operational factors that affect the capacity of the Islington Food Strategy Partnership – or rather, its Steering Group – to fulfil its functions. The most visible functions of the Food Partnership relate to communications, be it knowledge brokerage between actors and entities involved in the Partnership (which is highly prized) or external communications. With regard to the former, there is a danger that, without action points and the willingness of actors from all sectors to fulfil them, Steering Group meetings could become 'talking shops'. In terms of external communications, Islington Council is progressive on food issues and, as a result, the local context is amenable – however there is a lack of awareness of the *Food Strategy* as an existing coordinative mechanism which opens up the risk of dislocation. The chapter has identified a need to re-visit the *Food Strategy*, not only so as to build awareness within the Council but also to ensure the priorities are appropriate in the current climate, and to re-engage the membership in the key issues and their role in addressing them.

A second important mechanism is the exercise of agency by individual actors. It is the public sector actors who are seen to exercise the most agency on behalf of the *Food Strategy*, seeking political support over issues and integration of food policy into strategies and plans of various departments. Misunderstanding by civil society members of the Steering Group as to the location and ownership of the *Food Strategy* project results in impaired engagement and, with it, reduced potential for active contributions to pursing the *Food Strategy*'s aims and objectives.

The next chapter describes findings from the case study on Manchester Food Futures. Like Islington, Manchester's food policy group was initiated by a top-down process. Moreover, Manchester City Council is one local authority of several operating under a shared regional or sub-regional level that is gaining power and importance.

Table 6-3 Summary of factors affecting the Islington Food Strategy Partnership

Factors	Effect on local food group
Structure and organisation of food policy group	
Structural	
Members/composition	Good representation of public sector domains but lack of Councillors or senior officers means awareness of *Food Strategy* is reduced
	Almost no business representation so missing perspective; unable directly to impact food availability or sourcing
	Limited civil society representation on Steering Group and poor engagement impairs knowledge brokerage function
Consultants/advisors	-
History, origins	Top-down initiative means civil society sees it as council-owned
	Initially driven by Sustainability when it was a local government priority, but disbanding left 'orphaned' action areas that other actors care-take.
Resources	Adoption to obtain in-kind resource; most actions funded under other projects
Operational	
Membership grounds	Fluid, informal membership terms, so it is inclusive but too easy to disengage
Programme leadership & management	Council lead is main agent for gaining political support but high visibility adds to Council-owned impression; chair not visible or critical enough
	Knowledge brokerage function is very important and main achievement, but risk of becoming a talking shop if no clear actions
	Agency by public actors aids integration into departments' strategies/plans
Location, relation vis-à-vis local government	
Structural	
Location	Half-in-half-out status intended to foster co-governance, but perceived by civil society as being a Council-driven initiative which hinders engagement
Mandate/ legitimacy	Adoption by Council and NHS was intended to secure resources; adoption makes it hard for council to back-track
	Support from Councillors sought on issue basis
Operational	
Partnerships and collaborations	Intended to promote partnership-working between Council and civil society, and between organisations – but not much evidence
	Interest in knowledge-brokerage, hearing issues & opportunities
Local level context	
Structural	
Local level powers	See comment re planning under 'policy framings'
Political environ	Context/priorities changed since Food Strategy developed. Need for re-focus?
	Local authority is progressive on food issues
	LBI seeks to reduce negative impact from national austerity, welfare changes
Admin/management Ways of working	Council lead seeks support from Councillors on issue-basis, no formal mechanism for automatic political support or for referring issues
Operational	
Levers and language	Non-council actors lack networks to seek updates on LBI-led action areas
Multilevel context	
Structural	
ML food framing	Not framed by GLA Food Programme – though assumed to be by some
Policy framings by dept	Planning restrictions on fast food near schools can by overruled under NPPF
	Goes further than national level on universal free school meals – for all primary school children not just first two years
Operational	
Partnerships/mediation through levels	Potential for links with GLA in feeding in work, but under-exploited
	Strategy draws on national programmes that could advance objectives but does not recognise barriers

Source: author

7 Food Futures Manchester

7.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings of the case study on the Manchester Food Futures programme, including all groups and entities, between May 2012 and March 2014. Much of this period coincided with a period of reflection following consultation on its governance structures, as well as a hiatus in Council-led activity due to the absence of the programme manager. The new structure and mandate was finalised towards the end of the study period.

First, the chapter describes the socio-economic and historical context of Manchester, and then sets out details of the public sector-led inception of Food Futures, its evolution, and current structures, aims and objectives. Next, the chapter turns to structural and operational factors affecting Food Futures' capacity, before turning to the multilevel governance context, within MCC, within the Greater Manchester sub region, and in relation to the national approach on food policy.

7.2 Context and background

7.2.1 The Manchester context

Manchester is a city and metropolitan borough in the North West of England, at the heart of the Greater Manchester conurbation. It built its fortunes in textile manufacturing and was the crucible of the 19th century industrial revolution, but decline throughout the 20th century led to high levels of unemployment and deprivation and a shrinking population. Since the 1990s – particularly after the 1996 IRA bomb that devastated the city centre – Manchester has seen considerable investment and regeneration. It has an international reputation for sports, with two world class football teams and having hosted the XVII Commonwealth Games in 2002. The University of Manchester is the largest in the UK, with a strong research reputation. The development of a knowledge economy and the service sector, the presence of foreign-owned firms like Etihad and Aegis, and the UK headquarters of Kellogg's and The Cooperative Group, have contributed to a steady rise in GVA for Manchester South[97] to £34.8bn in 2013, up 3.8 per cent on the previous year (ONS 2013). Manchester's ethnically-diverse population was over 503,000 in 2011, an increase of 19 per cent since 2001 (Townsend & Westcott 2012; MCC 2014a). Yet despite its reinvention and signs of revival, inequalities persist within the community; in 2010 Manchester ranked 4th in the Department for Communities and Local Government's index of most deprived districts in England (DCLG 2011).

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[97] No Gross Value Added (GVA) data are available for Manchester alone; Manchester South comprises Manchester, Salford, Stockport, Tameside, and Trafford.

Manchester City Council (MCC) has a leader and cabinet model, with a Labour leader and majority[98]. The city's vision, *The Manchester Way* (The Manchester Partnership 2006), drawn up by the Manchester Partnership (the LSP)[99], aims for Manchester to regain its World City status based on the knowledge- and green economies. Meanwhile, since 2010 there has been pressure to show value for money for council programmes and services in the wake of national cuts to public services. MCC enforced cuts of £80m for the two years 2013/14 and 2014/15, on top of £170m cuts in 2011/12 and 2012/13, while council tax rose by 3.7% (MCC 2013f).

Manchester is a major economic driver for Greater Manchester, but as employment and resources flow across the administrative boundaries its fortunes are intrinsically connected to those of neighbouring local authorities[100]. Since the demise of the regional government structures for the North West[101], Greater Manchester has risen in significance as a city region[102]. The Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) was formed in 2011[103], combining voluntary collaboration between local authorities with statutory functions over economic development, regeneration and transport, while the pre-existing Association of Greater Manchester Authorities (AGMA) is the voice of the local authorities in partnership with GMCA. The GMCA and AGMA boards can form joint committees, commissions and agencies, such as the Greater Manchester Low Carbon Hub, the Greater Manchester Interim Health and Wellbeing Board, the Planning & Housing Commission, the Transport for Greater Manchester Committee, and Manchester Family/Centres of Excellence (GMCA & AGMA n.d.)

The Greater Manchester Strategy (GMCA & AGMA 2013; AGMA 2009) is the sustainable community strategy for the whole of Greater Manchester. The original 2009 strategy (AGMA 2009) was key to negotiations with national government over establishing the GMCA and the private sector-led LEP, and for securing the City Deal of bespoke funding arrangements[104]. The

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[98] Labour has held a majority of seats in Manchester since 1974, when it was reconstituted as a metropolitan borough

[99] Until 2014 direction of the community strategy was provided by *The Manchester Board*, but this has been replaced by a high-level multi-sector group called the *Manchester Leaders Forum*, which is to meet twice a year to address key issues related to refreshing the strategy for 2015 and beyond.

[100] Greater Manchester is comprised of ten local authority areas: Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan, Manchester and Salford.

[101] The Government Office for the Northwest closed on 31st March 2011. The Northwest Region Development Agency (NWDA) closed on 31st March 2012.

[102] Greater Manchester is commonly referred to a as city region, or as a sub region of the Northwest.

[103] The GMCA model is enabled by the *Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Act 2009*.

[104] The Greater Manchester City Deal was launched in 2012 following negotiations with government, and includes a mechanism to earn back a proportion of tax revenues from infrastructure investment, an Investment Framework for aligning core economic development funds, a City Apprenticeships and Skills Hub, a Business Growth Hub, development of Manchester as a 'beacon of high value inward investment', a Low Carbon Hub, a housing investment fund, and transport proposals.

2013 update (GMCA & AGMA 2013) retains the vision of sustainable economic growth[105] but recognises that means to achieve it have been affected by the economy. It emphasises connectivity in the sub-region, public service efficiency, working with Whitehall, the voluntary sector and social enterprises on new ways of working, and the growth capacity of businesses.

Figure 7-1 Map showing Manchester and its location within Greater Manchester
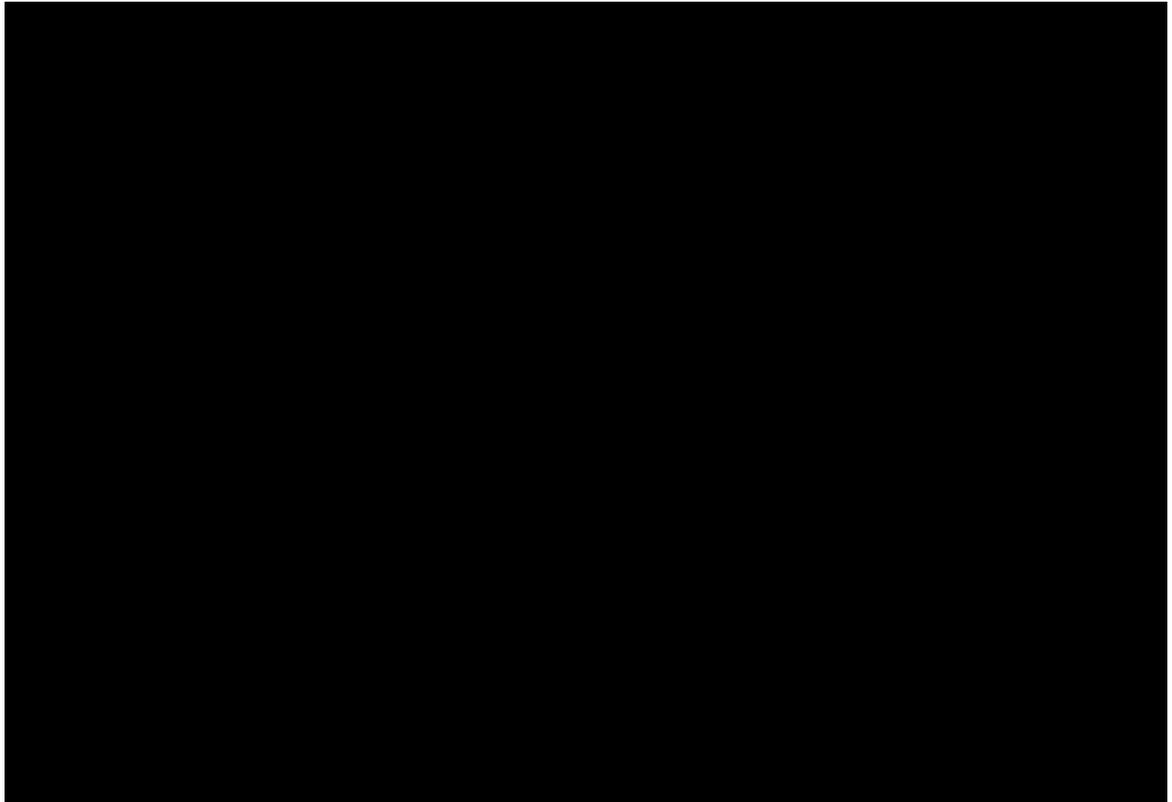
Source: Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2015

7.2.2 Manchester Food Futures

Food Futures was born out of an informal public sector collaboration between Manchester NHS and MCC when, in 2003, the NHS was developing a public health strategy on food and nutrition and the MCC was developing a healthy and sustainable procurement policy for school meals and wholesale markets (Raiswell & Cox 2012). An inaugural seminar was held the following year and a core annual budget was secured from the Manchester Public Health *Choosing Health* budget[106]. Supplementary funding has been secured for specific projects, such as £44,000 from

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[105] 'By 2020 the Manchester city region will have pioneered a new model for sustainable economic growth based around a more connected, talented and greener city region where all our residents are able to contribute to and benefit from sustained prosperity and enjoy a good quality of life', (AGMA 2009).

[106] The core budget was £86,000 in 2012, and £70,000 in 2013/14 (MCC 2013c). Funding details for other years could not be sourced. The *Choosing Health* budget was merged into the MCC's public health budget following the incorporation of the Primary Care Trust in April 2013.

the Food Standards Agency for work on salt reduction[107], £45,000 from Generations Together[108] for projects that enable intergenerational transfer of food skills, and £60,000 Carbon Reserve Funding from MCC.

The Food Futures Manchester Strategy (Food Futures 2007), launched in 2007, sets out a vision underscored by six core values (figure 7-2) and five strategic aims that are synergistic with the themes of the *Manchester Community Strategy* (The Manchester Partnership 2006). The strategic aims are: to improve the health of the people of Manchester; to protect the local and global environment; to strengthen the local economy; to build stronger and more sustainable communities; and to promote culinary diversity and the enjoyment of good food across the city. A strategic analysis, combined with consultation with e-bulletin recipients and findings from a conference in May 2006, yielded initial action areas, objectives and priorities that informed implementation in the early years.

Food Futures is led out of MCC's Public Health department but intended to have the engagement of other local government departments and non-public sector organisations. Its mission is to implement the strategy. The modus operandi is a combination of seeking policy influence within MCC departments and project work, some of which is carried out by Food Futures staff and some by civil society organisations. The approach combines identifying and responding to community needs, drawing on complementary work streams within the public sector (such as, for instance, the *Healthy Weight Strategy* (Ashton et al. 2010) and the *Climate Change Action Plan* (MCC 2009), and building and sharing an evidence base (Raiswell & Cox 2012).

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[107] This grant preceded the change in the Food Standards Agency's roles and responsibilities in 2010, when it lost its public health function.

[108] A cross-departmental government initiative that ran from 2009 to 2011 to enable 12 local authorities in England to develop intergenerational programmes to be incorporated into mainstream services.

Figure 7-2 The values and vision of the Manchester Food Futures Strategy

Values

1) Everyone in Manchester has the right to good food.

2) Good food is enjoyable, safe, nutritious, and environmentally sustainable

3) Food should be produced and traded ethically and fairly

4) The shorter the food chain between farm and fork the better for food producers, consumers, and the environment

5) Food is important to our ability to participate in society

6) People have the right to information & opportunities to develop skills, understanding & knowledge they need to choose good food.

Vision

'Our vision is a city with a culture of good food.

Access to affordable fresh food will be at the heart of local communities.

Local food production and distribution will be common place, supporting the local environment, health and improving neighbourliness and participation in the community.

The public sector, private sector, and communities will work in partnership to improve diet and nutrition in the city, and to reduce the environmental impact of the food consumed here.

Manchester will be a place where people choose a healthy and well balanced diet; where people can enjoy a wide variety of food at its best, whether at home or eating out; and where food preparation is safe and hygienic wherever and whenever people eat'.

(Source: Food Futures 2007, arranged by author to show connections)

Food Futures is comprised of several entities, each with a different location in respect of MCC and the local level governance context (figure 7-3). At the time of the fieldwork these were:

- A public health consultant to provide leadership and executive decision-making, and a programme manager to coordinate work[109]. Both employed in MCC Public Health team.

- The Food Futures Board, made up of heads of service and strategic leads of MCC departments and chaired by a Councillor. It meets every six months and its role is to influence plans and strategies within MCC (see table 7-1 for membership).

- The Food Futures Steering Group, made up of actors from MCC, the health service, and community and voluntary groups working around food. Its role is to harness enthusiasm, come up with innovations, drive activity, identify issues for the board, and make spending decisions (see table 7-2 for membership).

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[109] Previously the team included a full time project officer, but this role was eliminated due to council cuts.

- Thematic sub-groups made up of MCC officers and civil society actors to plan and implement actions or run projects. One sub-group, the Sustainable Food Steering Group, reports into both Food Futures and the Environmental Strategy team[110].

- The Food Futures Forum is a wider group of anyone interested in food issues in Manchester, convened every 6 to 12 months for a thematic conference and workshop.

- The Email Reference Group of around 500 people who receive the e-bulletin on local and national food news and activities[111].

- An Expert Advisory Panel of academics, mainly from outside Manchester, met in 2012 and made recommendations to increase Food Futures' impact[112].

Figure 7-3 The entities of Manchester Food Futures
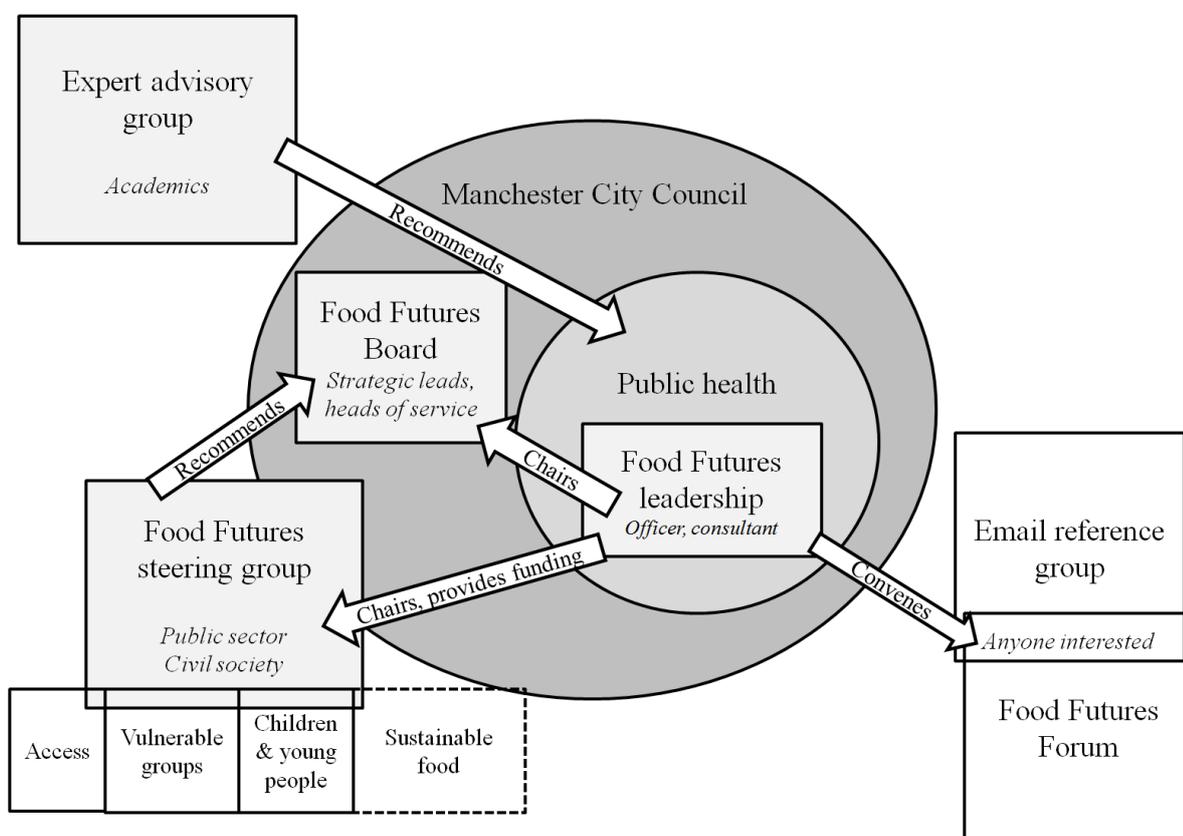
Source: author

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[110] This group came about as a result of 14 sustainable food actions in *Manchester A Certain Future* (MCC 2009), which launched sustainable food into a high priority position for the city, and led to development of the *Manchester Sustainable Food Delivery Plan 2011-2020* (Sustainable Food Steering Group 2011).

[111] Usual frequency of the e-bulletin is bi-monthly, but there are no issues from 2014 in the online archive.

[112] The recommendations report was made available to the researcher for information purposes with the request that the information be treated sensitively. Therefore, the contents of the report has provided background only for the research project, unless also reported in publically available documents.

The structure in figure 7-3 has not been stable throughout the existence of *Food Futures*. Firstly, the *Food Futures Forum* came into existence only in 2012 in response to the finding from a Master's research project that actors wanted a less formal face-to-face setting than the Board or the Steering Group, but that nonetheless brought together a wide slate of actors (M-Pub1; Ouma 2011). Secondly, up until around 2009 the Board included civil society and the private sector alongside MCC actors but this model was seen to be ineffective at driving forward work as members tended to talk about their own interests rather than working to a common agenda. Consequently, the Board was reconfigured and assigned a new mission of holding to account MCC and NHS services and encouraging them to take work forward within their own services (M-Pub1). Finally, the Expert Advisory Panel was convened in 2012 'to provide external challenge and advice to the programme in scaling up our efforts to deliver healthy, sustainable food for Manchester' (Cox & Raiswell 2012, p.2). Given that the Board included only public sector actors, a key recommendation of the panel was that an independent governance structure should be established for sustainable food policy, research and delivery that reaches across the public, private, civil society sectors and the Universities, in order to ensure wider ownership of the agenda (Food Futures 2013d). The shaded area in table 7-2 shows the first non-public sector actors to sit on the Board since the restructuring.

Table 7-1 Membership of the Food Futures Board as of November 2013[113]

Department/organisation	Sector
Corporate Services, MCC	Public
Councillor (elected member) – MCC	Public
Environmental Strategy (*Manchester A Certain Future*), MCC	Public
Public Health Manchester, MCC	Public
Regeneration, MCC	Public
Food Standards Agency North	Public
School of Mechanical Civil and Aerospace Engineering	Academic/training
Independent Consultant	Independent consultant
Feeding Manchester	Civil society (but a multi-sector project)
Emerge Manchester (previously Fareshare NW)	Civil society
Shlurp (soup bar)	Private
Steady State Manchester	Civil society
Small World Consulting	Consultant
Emerge Manchester (Fareshare NW)	Civil society
Manchester Food & Drink Festival	Private

(Source: Food Futures 2013d; Food Futures 2013e; Food Futures 2014b)

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[113] Requests for a membership list at the start of the fieldwork period were not fulfilled. The list in table 7-1 is surmised from three sets of meeting minutes in late 2013 and early 2014, however discussions over changes to the governance structure were already underway and, as a result, actors from non-public sector organisations were also in attendance. These are indicated with grey shading.

Table 7-2 Membership of the Food Futures Steering Group as of November 2013[114]

Job title (where given)	Department/organisation	Sector
	Environmental Strategy, MCC	Public
	Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation	Civil society
	Public Health Manchester, Manchester City Council	Public
Regeneration Manager	East Manchester Regeneration Team, MCC	Public
Senior Manager	Manchester Mental Health and Social Care Trust	Public
Food Futures Programme Manager	Public Health Manchester, MCC	Public
Parish Development Office	Manchester Diocese and Commissioner – Greater Manchester Poverty Commission	Civil society
Public Health Consultant (chair)	Public Health Manchester	Public
Community Dietician Team Leader	Community Nutrition Service (Central Manchester)	Public
Manager	Wholesale Business & Services, MCC	Public
Development Manager	Adults Directorate, MCC	Public
Public Health Manchester Programme Officer	Public Health Manchester, MCC	Public
Environmental Strategy Lead	Environmental Strategy, MCC	Public
Nutritionist	Corporate Services, MCC	Public
Health Improvement Specialist	MCR Healthy Schools Programme	Public
Health & Social Care Manager	Wai Yin Chinese Women's Society	Civil society
Development Worker	Manchester Alliance for Community Care	Civil society
Business Services Manager	Manchester Markets, MCC	Public
Wholesale Market Manager	Manchester Markets, MCC	Public
Environmental Strategy Officer	Environmental Strategy, MCC	Public
Neighbourhood Manager	Neighbourhood Services, MCC	Public
Healthy Prisons Co-ordinator	Public Health Development Service	Public
	Health and Well-being CVS Representative	Civil society

(Source: Food Futures 2014c; Food Futures 2013f; Food Futures 2013c; Food Futures 2012a; Food Futures 2012b)

This recommendation, together with engagement over best practice advocated by the national Sustainable Food Cities Network (SFCN), led to reflection throughout 2013 over the need to alter governance structures. A development session was held in November 2013 between existing and some potential new board members (Food Futures 2013d), and discussions continued in two subsequent Board meetings (Food Futures 2013e; Food Futures 2014a). Discussions were also held over a new set of priorities informed by three complementary exercises: a reflection exercise guided by the Sustainable Food Cities Network (SFCN) themes, the *Sustainable Food In Manchester* report commissioned from Small World Consulting

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[114] The list in table 7-2 is surmised from five sets of meeting minutes between late 2012 and early 2014; there were no meetings in the early part of 2013. Not all actors listed attended every meeting.

(Berners-Lee et al. 2013), and discussions at a Food Futures Forum. The priorities determined through this process are public procurement, food poverty, and economic benefits of sustainable food growing (including links to employment opportunities, takeaways and health) (Food Futures 2013e).

Greater clarity on the Food Futures structures, as well as MCC's ongoing commitment, emerged in January 2014 with a Council motion that welcomed the establishment of a new *Food Board* and made commitments to work towards Sustainable Food City status, reducing food waste, alleviating food poverty, supporting sustainable food procurement, investigating options to attract hi-tech sustainable food growing investments, and developing a policy on healthy takeaways (MCC 2014c). A new remit for the Board was set out in *Terms of Reference* drafted in February 2014 (Food Futures 2014a):

1. Identify and select priorities in accordance with local needs and drawing on available research evidence;
2. Set a work programme to deliver the priorities identified;
3. Delegate specific tasks and programmes to task groups, and oversee the progress made;
4. Influence and advocate for national, regional and local policies that support development of healthy, sustainable, resilient food systems;
5. Lead by example and promote knowledge, skills and action in sustainable food within Board members own organisations and communities.

Membership of the Board was to be expanded to a target of 24 seats from across the sectors, with representation of food production, wholesale, business development, MCC (including public health), catering, retail, academia, community/social enterprise, health service, training. Reporting mechanisms have been introduced to 'appropriate governance and partnership structures that provide strategic leadership within the City e.g. Health and Wellbeing Board, *Manchester: A Certain Future* Steering Group, Council overview and scrutiny committees' (Food Futures 2014a). This last point is significant because the Food Futures strategy had envisaged accountability to the Manchester Partnership but formal links were never forged (M-Pub1) and the Board had struggled with where it reports up to (M-Pub2).

The clarity provided by the motion came too late for the current research project to assess the impact of the changes. Moreover, data collected from interviews relates to the pre-restructure era. Nonetheless, the changes are noted here as they demonstrate that the outcomes of reflection have been taken on board. They also demonstrate the difficulty of studying local level food policy at a time of rapid evolution in response to lessons learned.

7.3 Enablers and barriers

7.3.1 Structures and operations

Food Futures is funded by and led out of MCC and, as such, is regarded as a MCC programme despite the involvement of civil society in the Steering Group. There are several advantages to this. Firstly the Council – or rather, the public sector leaders who work for the Council – have more power and capability to 'make things happen' (M-CS2) than civil society actors, in terms of public policy change. Secondly, the close connection with MCC brings Food Futures credibility at a time when food policy groups are not the norm at the local government level in England, and within a governance context that is relatively conformist and unused to pioneering policy approaches. If Food Futures were located outside council structures it would be perceived as 'a bit more off the wall' (M-Pub2) and, as a result, be less able to exert influence over local policy. Thirdly, the MCC location enables network connections into and within MCC to be leveraged by non-public sector actors in a way that would be far more difficult if its home were external. For instance, Food Futures provided a platform for civil society organisation Fareshare Northwest/Emerge Manchester to enter into a partnership with Manchester Markets to capture and redistribute food waste from the wholesale market (M-CS1).

The Board's mission to influence food-related plans and strategies of MCC departments and services has been a useful vehicle for Food Futures' influence throughout the local authority. For example, the Regeneration representative has been an active member of the Board for several years (M-Pub1), during which there has been increasing attention to neighbourhood food environments in *Strategic Regeneration Frameworks* (SRFs). Take-up of the Food Futures objectives and seeking their integration into plans does not occur in all policy domains, however. The policy leads who attend Board meetings already recognise the relevance of food and are open to integrating supportive policy, while the unconverted do not attend. Moreover, the turnover of officers (through job changes or retirement) can mean support for Food Futures disappears from a department overnight if a successor lacks the will. As one interviewee put it: 'A lot of the successes have relied upon the individual involved and the individual's drive, rather than the structures that we work within,' (M-Pub1).

What is more, while lead officers' support is useful for infusing food considerations through the local authority, the real power to adopt policy lies with Councillors. The Board is chaired by a Councillor who can leverage a certain amount of political power, for example in bringing the successful motion before the Council in January 2014 (MCC 2014c). The motion is a formal re-statement of commitment to Food Futures and would enable Food Futures to hold the Council to account if necessary. However the motion was a one-off event, and as the Board's Chair is not

part of the Council Executive his influence over the political leadership of MCC on a continuous basis cannot be assumed.

One downside of Food Futures' MCC location identified by Ouma (2011), is a lack of transparency as the information that can be shared publicly on council-led activities (for instance via the e-bulletin) is subject to confidentiality and ethical codes. Another is that local authority has had dominant ownership of Food Futures' agenda, partly as a result of the programme's MCC base and partly as the Food Futures Board has included only public sector actors since 2009, with no civil society or private sector representation[115]. Discussions following the advice of the Expert Panel centred on attracting actors from other sectors and encouraging them to contribute more to the agenda, rather than merely attending meetings where the agenda had been pre-determined. This may mitigate the unbalanced agenda, but without the need to deracinate Food Futures from MCC.

As for the Food Futures Steering Group, its powers and capabilities *vis-à-vis* to the Board are limited. It can raise community needs and issues that are identified via an evidence base but it cannot direct how they are addressed – or indeed whether they are addressed at all. For example, an interviewee (M-CS1) recalled tension over making available more land for food growing, as civil society actors felt the imperative identified by the Steering Group was ignored by the Board due to pressure from the Council to use land for purposes with measurable returns[116,117]. Thus, a Food Futures agenda that had been drawn-up through multi-sector input was stymied by contradictory priorities of MCC and accountability of the Board, as the Board members prioritised their allegiance to MCC's overarching high-level agenda over their responsibility to respond to the advice of the Steering Group. The present research was unable to ascertain whether the restructured Board would resolve this tension.

The above example notwithstanding, sectoral differences tend to be more keenly felt in the Food Futures Forum than within the Board and Steering Group. This is because the Forum includes a wider pool of actors who are not necessarily fully engaged with the Food Futures vision. Rather, for some Food Futures is not radical enough and the long timescale, as well as bureaucracy and formal constraints along the way, are a source of friction with the public sector (M-Pub1, M-

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[115] This was the case during the fieldwork period, until the development of the new Terms of Reference (Food Futures 2014a).

[116] The interviewee did not specify what the other purposes were, but they could reasonably be surmised to be development based.

[117] This example was anecdotal and is taken to be historical because there has been recent welcome on the part of the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee of increasing participation in food growing schemes via council-owned and private land (MCC 2013e). Similarly the Economy Scrutiny Committee was to consider the poverty and economic aspects of sustainable food growing following a report on the work of the new Food Board to be prepared for early 2015 (MCC 2014b).

CS2). A public sector interviewee acknowledged the importance of challenging the Food Futures programme: 'We are spending public money and we need to be challenged, I don't have a problem with that at all. But I think sometimes it's not conducive to working well together really,' (M-Pub1).

The flip side of this conflict potential is how far non-public sector actors exercise agency in order to overcome the structural constraints of Food Futures' 'home' within MCC structures – that is, the long timescales, bureaucracy, and the MCC agenda. Food Futures Forum has been a fertile ground for partnerships between different groups and sectors that are 'developing quite strong lobbying groups to do the things that the council can't do, and that is lobby the government over changes in policy,' (M-CS1). An example of this is the momentum for multi-sector campaigns on food poverty and its perceived causes, which arose out of networking at the Food Futures Forum on food poverty in late 2012. As for Steering Group members, the constraints encountered during the fieldwork meant it was not possible to observe first hand any demonstrations of agency during, or reported during, Food Futures meetings. However there is documentary evidence that civil society organisation Steady State Manchester, which has a seat on the new Food Futures Board, actively engaged with the MCC's Economic Scrutiny Committee over its economic model to propose that food be recognised for its contribution to the local economy, that supply chains for food provided by the council and its contract partners be investigated with a view to increasing the quantities produced within 50 miles, and that council-owned land be offered rent-free for food growing (MCC 2013a). In this way Steady State Manchester has forged networks into the council that prepared the way for greater discussion on sustainable food.

One actor who is crucial for progressing activity is the Food Futures programme manager. While this individual's active input and relaxed, informal style is credited (Ouma 2011), their role in driving and steering projects requires examination. One interviewee described their role as, 'to keep us on track, keep things moving along, make sure we don't get stuck on particular issues, to bring new ideas forward, introduce new partners,' (M-Pub2). This indicates a primary role of facilitation, while all actors take forward the Food Futures agenda through their own departments and organisations, coming to the management team for help and guidance. However in practice this has happened rarely, such as when a MCC regeneration officer organised a neighbourhood workshop on food poverty under their own steam but sought advice from the programme manager on the agenda (M-Pub1). More often the programme manager has instigated and driven activities, meaning that if this individual is absent or were to leave their post implementation could be impaired. Indeed, during the programme manager's absence in early 2013 no steering group meetings were held and, although funded projects continued, no new activities were initiated.

Although Food Futures has a core budget, there has always been a need to seek supplementary resources from elsewhere. One way of doing this this has been to tap resources from other departments to deliver work that would contribute to those agendas, thereby drawing on complementary workstreams and demonstrating the utility of food policy in action. However, in the climate of budget cuts it is 'much more difficult to identify any slack in any budgets at all' (M-Pub1). The lack of available money within the public sector was presented as one argument in favour of a more independent structure for Food Futures which could allow the private and third sectors independently to seek resources for delivery (M-Pub1). Ouma (2011) also identified sponsorship and other forms of partnership with the private sector as a means of securing resources in the future, but advised caution in case their ideologies run contrary to the core values of Food Futures. This raises an important point about involvement of the private sector (or rather its absence), which must be addressed.

At the time of the fieldwork the private sector was the most glaring gap in Food Futures governance. Some interviewees identified Manchester Markets as filling the gap within the Steering Group (M-CS1, M-CS2) but the market traders it represents make up a very limited part of the private sector, and Manchester Markets itself sits within the structures of MCC. Another pointed to Food Futures' connections to the commercial operator Manchester Food and Drink Festival as a way in which the private sector is connected to the wider programme (M-Pub1), however this commercial outfit's main business is an event that takes place once a year and not on a constant basis. Although it runs the Truly Good Food accreditation scheme, no accredited business had been drawn into Food Futures structures as they see no benefits for themselves[118].

The absence of a retailer presented a conundrum given their power in the food system:

> 'Most of the food that is consumed comes from supermarkets [...] so all the things that you can do are only scratching the surface [if they are not engaged]. But then, I suppose the alternative argument to that is, is that the model we want to support anyway? And there is always that balance between trying to engage with supermarkets and trying to get them to shift. Because a small shift in what they do will have a massive impact. Or do we say, they are so far removed from a sustainable food system that we might want to see, do we actually want to spend time trying to slightly shift a system we don't like?' (M-Pub1).

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[118] Manchester Food Festival's involvement with Food Futures extends to sponsorship of a gala dinner and a Food Futures healthy and sustainable eating award, running community food projects and other events, and the development of a low carbon menu.

In fact the Co-op retailer[119] previously held a seat on the Board (when it was cross-sector) but its participation was limited: 'They used to come and sort of sit there, and we'd talk at them, and then they'd go. So they sort of wanted to be involved but for whatever reason they were not involved,' (M-Pub1). The barriers to the Co-op's engagement, and the reason they withdrew, were never established, but it is notoriously difficult to engage the retail sector as no actor in a large supermarket operates at the local scale with flexibility to depart from the corporate line – while small supermarkets have no time to spare away from their business to attend meetings (M-Pub2).

The aborted Points for Life scheme[120], in which Food Futures was involved alongside Public Health Manchester, Manchester NHS, and several private sector companies, is an example of institutional differences between the public and private sectors: 'We kept saying, you can't do this, and you can't do that, and we would suggest you did this, and did that, and did the other. But we weren't taken much notice of. It wasn't the Council at the time that wasn't listening, it was the private people involved, which is why I am saying, it's difficult isn't it, when you are working with people who are in competition with each other?' (M-Pub2).

One way to work around the tensions with the commercial sector could be through an intermediary body such as the Chamber of Commerce, as an 'interpreter with the retail sector [...] who have a foot in both camps, if you like, who could help us with that relationship building,' (M-CS2). The differences do not just come down to linguistics however, as use of the term 'interpreter' suggests, but to differences in what are considered appropriate courses of action – and potentially also different motivations (i.e. serving the public versus a bottom line of profit). This means that an intermediary would need actively to establish common ground rather than just interpret frames of meaning. Another way to gain traction with the private sector is to work with companies on their own terms. For instance, Tesco's activities in the Werneth area of Manchester, where it pledged to employ only long-term unemployed local people and those with learning difficulties, shows that, even if supermarkets cannot engage in the big questions over the food system, they do get involved in local communities at the branch level through corporate social responsibility programmes (M-CS2). It may be that the food poverty agenda will be a useful hook for engaging supermarkets in Food Futures, not just at store level but systematically, such as in partnership with food waste organisation Fareshare. Indeed, there is

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[119] The Co-op is part of the Cooperative Group, which has its headquarters in Manchester

[120] Points4Life was a loyalty card initiative funded by the Department of Health's Healthy Town's programme to promote healthy lifestyles. Food Futures was involved but it was not a Food Futures initiative. The reasons for its failure include withdrawal of the private sector operator due to funding uncertainty and the investment needed to establish the infrastructure, the change in government which meant the Healthy Towns programme faced uncertainty, and disagreement over appropriate awards for healthy practices (NHS Manchester 2011).

already a precedent for the private sector involvement in food poverty initiatives (albeit one in which Food Futures is not directly involved) as breakfast cereal manufacturer Kellogg's partnered with local newspaper *Manchester Evening News* over its campaign (Kelloggs & Manchester Evening News 2013).

7.3.2 Multi-level framing

As already noted, Food Futures has achieved varying degrees of success in its bid to influence the plans and strategies of MCC departments through actors' networks, but in relation to top-line priorities for much of its existence Food Futures has been perceived as the 'softer side of the work the council does', 'a little bit namby pamby' (M-Pub2), and something that was 'quite nice to do, but was probably quite low down on the agenda so [...] got messed around a little bit' (CS2). Major infrastructure programmes to bolster the local economy, such as the airport and the High Speed 2 train line to London, topped the council agenda in recent years. As food poverty, and poverty in general, re-emerged as priorities from 2011, Food Futures has gained status within MCC: there is 'an opportunity there for Food Futures to put itself on the map and be more of a beacon for really good practice,' (M-Pub2). This culminated in the carrying of the Council motion on food poverty in early 2014.

Meanwhile, the operating environment of Food Futures has changed as a consequence of national welfare policy, which has resulted in reduced income for some of the poorest people and longer wait times for accessing benefits. The MCC executive agreed that '...the government's recent and intended reforms to benefits and welfare were likely to worsen child and family poverty in the city, affecting already impoverished and hard-pressed families the most,' (MCC 2013b, p.3). One interviewee said actors involved in Food Futures are 'very live to what is going on [in national level policy], but live it as it affects Manchester,' (M-Pub1); another could not 'think of a policy at the moment [...] that this particular government has introduced that isn't going to have an impact on people's poverty. And that includes food,' (M-CS2). Food Future's agenda has altered in order to respond to these changes in the external environment – the Council motion sets out a new set of priorities for Food Futures based on current needs. However the strategic aims remain unchanged, indicating reframing of existing priorities to match the new governance context.

Nonetheless, despite the new respect for Food Futures and the motion, MCC's need to respond to budget cuts under the Coalition government affected Food Futures in practical terms. As mentioned above, cuts and the pressure to show value for money mean there is less surplus in the departments so it is harder to draw on complementary workstreams, and non-statutory services have been reduced. For example, a 17 per cent reduction in the Directorate for Adults'

funding voluntary and community sector budget cuts (MCC 2011) led to plans by Adult Social Care to remove subsidies for cafes and luncheon clubs (M-CS2) [121], causing some voluntary schemes to close and pushing more vulnerable people towards remaining services[122]. A food bank run by the Wai-Yin Chinese Women's Society had to close temporarily in 2013 as it was overwhelmed by new demand from families, having previously served individuals struggling with alcohol and drug dependency (Food Futures 2013c).

Structural tensions between Manchester and Greater Manchester also have an impact on the ability of Food Futures to work towards its aims. Food Futures is funded for work within Manchester city only and is therefore limited by the administrative and political boundary – yet socio-economic circumstances of the Greater Manchester sub-region impinge on those of Manchester City, and vice versa (M-CS2). One interviewee explained: 'We need to make sure that we are not putting our energies into something that is regional to the detriment of supporting, doing stuff on the ground in the city. But I would say that we definitely do need to connect with Greater Manchester work,' (M-Pub1). The same interviewee admitted that navigating Greater Manchester structures has always been challenging, and is even more so now as, with the dissolution of the North West regional administrative layer[123], the Greater Manchester sub-region has been imbued with more power. There has been a change in how Greater Manchester structures relate to MCC over different issues, and Food Futures must learn how to identify synergies and navigate this complexity.

One tactic to enable cross-border issues and agendas to be taken into consideration and to join up actors and agencies operating at different scales and within different boundaries is actor exchange, whereby an actor from a Greater Manchester body is involved in Food Futures and a Food Futures representative is present in a Greater Manchester forum. To this end, Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisation has a seat on the Food Futures Steering Group, and Food Futures has a seat on the Greater Manchester Poverty Action Group[124]. Another tactic is to explore sub-regional policy framing and identify the areas of activity that are appropriate – and easiest – to coordinate at each level so as to avoid duplications and tensions. Three areas in which there is activity at both Manchester city and Greater Manchester levels, and where close

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[121] Organisations providing meal services for elderly Black, Minority and Ethnic groups are amongst the long list of voluntary groups to have been affected by social care budget cuts, with a saving of £292,710 proposed by cutting back on such services.

[122] Although voluntary schemes may have other funding sources, in many cases the Council provides the lion's share, meaning that they cannot continue if it is withdrawn.

[123] In the past it was possible to identify synergies in food-related policy via a Department of Health and Northwest Development Agency-led body called the North West Food and Health Taskforce, which included agri-food and supply chain actors and published a Northwest Food and Health Action Plan (NW Food and Health Taskforce 2007).

[124] Formed in the wake of the *Greater Manchester Poverty Commission report*.

coordination is therefore advisable, are food poverty, environment policy, and health and wellbeing.

Greater Manchester has been the key level for drawing attention to the problem of food poverty, in particular through the *Greater Manchester Poverty Commission report* (GMPC 2013) which recommended a more sustainable approach to food poverty than relying on food banks, including social enterprise models for diverting food waste, bulk buying, training and education, identifying priority areas, and access to fruit and vegetables. The authors of this report have communicated their findings and concerns at the national level, with the Bishop of Manchester being one of 27 senior clergy to sign an open letter to the Prime Minister on food poverty in early 2014[125] (Beattie 2014; Walker 2014). Local newspaper *The Manchester Evening News* has run a major editorial campaign on food poverty (M.E.N. 2012b; M.E.N. 2012a). Within its territorial boundaries Food Futures has also produced a resource detailing emergency food services (Food Futures 2013b), however its involvement in the Greater Manchester Poverty Action Group gave rise to the possibility of a building owned by Manchester Diocese being used for storage of surplus food awaiting redistribution[126]. In terms of policy response, Food Futures facilitated a prominent position for food poverty in the *Family Poverty Strategy* (Manchester Partnership 2013), which lays down a challenge to the several *Strategic Regeneration Frameworks* (SFR) covering different parts of the city to prioritise 'access to cheap, healthy and nutritious food in areas of highest family poverty' (p.46). One interviewee attested to a shift in thinking about food access due to rising poverty: 'When we originally started looking at food access we were looking much more from a geographical and transport aspect, and how those things affect people's ability to access healthy food. Actually now we are starting to look much more at how poverty is affecting people in their ability to make good food choices for themselves,' (M-Pub2).

In environmental policy there are fairly clear lines between MCC and Greater Manchester structures. At the MCC level there is already a strong synergy between Food Futures and the Climate Change agenda: *Manchester, A Certain Future (MACF)* (MCC 2009) contains explicit actions regarding the food system[127] and led to the development of the *Sustainable Food Action Plan* that sits between Food Futures and the Environment department (Sustainable Food Steering Group 2011). The 2013 update of *MACF* (MACF Steering Group 2013) was produced

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[125] Former Bishop of Manchester Nigel McCullock was one of the Commissioners of the Greater Manchester Poverty Commission. The open letter to the Prime Minister was signed by his successor David Walker.

[126] This use was not secured as of March 2014 due to competing interest in the building

[127] Including food waste, organic food growing in gardens, allotments, green roofs, and community spaces, building capacity of regional growers and the supply chain for public procurement, social enterprises for urban agriculture and market gardening, and a food quality mark for restaurants and catering operations

in light of the rising importance of Greater Manchester and the economic crisis, and acknowledges the need for MCC's climate strategy to fit with Greater Manchester's. Food Futures is explicitly mentioned alongside a 'significant increase in food-related activity since 2009'.

At the Greater Manchester level, meanwhile, there is an intention to develop a *GM Sustainable Food Strategy* by 2015 under the Sustainable Consumption and Production work stream of the Greater Manchester Low Carbon Hub[128], whose board is responsible for delivery of the *Greater Manchester Climate Strategy* (MCC 2009). While there is no firm indication of synergies or complementarities between the GM strategy and the work of Food Futures, the *Climate Change Strategy* provides a broader sub-regional framing on food that looks to regional interconnections in the food supply chain rather than specifically creating links between healthy diets and sustainability, supporting local businesses, and reducing risks to future food security. This is consistent with the recognition that it would make more sense to consider food production and supply chain issues from a regional perspective (M-Pub1), not least as food growers and producers tend to be located within the Greater Manchester area rather than the city (Ouma 2011). That said, the *GM Sustainable Food Strategy* is being developed by a limited pool of public sector actors and there has been a parallel civil society-led initiative called Feeding Manchester which has held three meetings a year since 2010, bringing together a wide range of food actors also to develop a sub-regional sustainable food strategy (Food Futures 2013a). Clearly there is dislocation between the sectors at Greater Manchester level for parallel and discrete 'top-down' and 'bottom-up' strategies to be developed at the same time. The problem has been acknowledged and an initial meeting held over potential alignment (MCC 2013g).

The MCC Health and Wellbeing Board (HWB) was set up in 2013 as a thematic partnership under the Manchester Partnership and comprises the most senior leaders from the main organisations involved in improving health care in the city – that is, Children's and Adult Services, three Clinical Commissioning Groups, and four NHS trusts. The *Health and Wellbeing strategy* (Manchester Health and Wellbeing Board 2013) is considered part of Manchester's overall community strategy[129]. Specific references to food in its key priorities[130] are: reducing levels of obesity, diet and healthy weight, and wages to afford a healthy diet. The Greater Manchester Health and Wellbeing Board, also set up in 2013[131], is intended to work closely with the local HWBs and to recognise their subsidiarity whilst providing leadership on

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[128] Formerly the Environment Commission, the Low Carbon Hub was formed at GMCA/AGMA level as part of the City Deal proposal

[129] The community strategy, *The Manchester Way* (The Manchester Partnership 2006) envisages Manchester as an engine of growth and a world class competitive city.

[130] Key priorities were identified via the *Joint Strategic Needs Assessment*

[131] Replaced the *Greater Manchester Health Commission*

issues of health and social care reform and other GM-wide health and wellbeing priorities as set out in the revised *Greater Manchester Strategy*[132] (MCC 2013c). As of September 2013 integration over health between Greater Manchester and MMC had reportedly not worked well in its initial stages (MCC 2013d). An interviewee remarked that health at the GM level 'has got a lot of teething problems, she says biting her lip' (M-CS1), which may bode badly for feeding up elements of the food agenda. However a protocol for work between the Greater Manchester HWB and local HWBs has since been established, and it has been acknowledged that the MCC HWB needs to become an active respondent to its GM counterpart early on so as to have the best chance of influencing the agenda (MCC 2013d).

Turning next to the national framing of Food futures, the current gap in food policy at the national level is considered with ambivalence. On the one hand Food Futures is 'below the radar' since it does not have to report on any national indicators. This allows it to be tailored to local needs, and is aided by the localism agenda under which local areas are encouraged to deal with local-level issues themselves (albeit with fewer resources). On the other hand, having a national agenda would provide direction, possibly funding, and a framework for joining with other cities to instigate change on a larger scale.

The flip side of national framing – or lack thereof – is the desirability of Food Futures to have an influence on policy at the national level as well as the local level. While there is a stated desire for Food Futures to play a role in lobbying nationally, it would not do so in isolation since, being a MCC-led programme, it is beholden to the political position of the Council. Rather, it may get involved in lobbying as part of a consortium of statutory and non-statutory agencies. An example of this kind of multi-sector lobbying is the campaign over the connection between food poverty and welfare reform, which has led to the direct confrontation of politicians (M.E.N. 2012c). Moreover, national lobbying can have more of an impact if cities and other places with local level food policy initiatives join forces. The national Sustainable Food Cities Network is a useful platform for this. Stockport is one of the six cities receiving funding for a Sustainable Food City officer under the national Sustainable Food Cities Network, so the national network can facilitate collaboration across Greater Manchester.

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[132] Priorities include not only redressing the balance between reactive health interventions and prevention, but also addressing fragmentation in health care, such as through the Healthier Together programme of hospital service reform.

Table 7-3 Summary of factors affecting Manchester Food Futures

Factors	Effect on local food group
Structure and organisation of food policy group	
Structural	
Members/composition	Representation from MCC departments on Board, but no other sectors (until recently) means MCC-owned agenda
	Absent private sector (until recently); reasons for private sector withdrawal unknown. Conundrum over desirability of large company involvement
	Greater Manchester actor aids coordination
Consultants/advisors	Academics in Expert Group provide governance recommendations
History, origins	Top down, originated from informal public sector cooperation. Changed structures several times in bid for relevance, better working
Resources	Core funding, but ability to tap other departments' budgets is impaired by economy. Possibility of private sector funding?
Operational	
Membership grounds	Invited to designated seats
Programme leadership & management	Programme manager makes things happen, but over-reliance on them to drive initiatives. Work progress is vulnerable to absence
	Influence in MCC is reliant on dept leads; disappears with personnel change
Location, relation vis-à-vis local government	
Structural	
Location	MCC location opens doors, brings credibility, enables internal network use
	Public Health base does not exclude other policy areas
	Downsides are lack of transparency, bureaucracy, speed, lobbying restrictions
Mandate/ legitimacy	Motion is re-statement of MCC commitment in new climate; provides mandate for work; would allow MCC to be held to account
	Limited powers of steering group – can't force issues to be addressed
Operational	
Partnerships and collaborations	Use of board members' networks, act as agents of Food Futures in council
	Food Futures Forum is useful for forming partnerships
Local level context	
Structural	
Local level powers	Food Futures funded only for Manchester city, risk of dislocation
	Gaining importance of GM structures means potential complementary work
Political environ.	Economic climate changed nature of work, Food Futures agenda has shifted
	Local climate/rising food poverty has raised profile of Food Futures, taken more seriously
Admin/management	Coordination with GM structures is problematic, structures still evolving. Eg, teething problems over Health and Wellbeing Boards
Ways of working	Two GM food strategies risks confusion/conflict
Operational	
Levers & language	Not identified as issue as Food Futures is embedded in MCC culture
Multilevel context	
Structural	
ML food framing	Lack of national framework to provide direction
Policy framings by dept	No national food policy means it's below radar, can address local needs
	Useful GM-level framing over food poverty, environment
Operational	
Partnerships/mediation through levels	Food Futures would not lobby national government alone but in consortium
	Forum is helpful for breeding ground for government lobbying that formal elements of Food Futures cannot do

Source: author

7.4 Summary

This chapter has described the structural and operational factors that affect the capacity of the actors and entities making up Manchester Food Futures to work towards their aims. The fieldwork took place during a period of transition in terms of governance structure, and at a time when no meetings were taking place, meaning that it was not possible for the researcher to observe Food Futures practices in person. Nonetheless, the evidence shows that networks within MCC, both into departments and service areas and the executive committees, are important mechanisms for securing buy-in to the food agenda. The effectiveness of this mechanism depends on the will and interest of individual strategic leads, as well as the profile of Food Futures in relation to the top-level agenda. A second mechanism is agency on the part of actors to initiate activities under their own steam and seek advice on running them. While the Food Forum is particularly conducive to initiatives and partnerships that cannot be carried out in the name of Food Futures as it is a Council programme, in general there is a tendency on the part of many actors to over-rely on the programme manager as initiator. As a result, the absence of this manager impacts day-to-day running, and the programme as a whole is vulnerable.

The shifting structures at the Greater Manchester level, together with development of two Greater Manchester Food Strategies, means Food Futures must forge inter-level channels for cooperation in food-related policy areas. This looks to be an opportunity for greater cohesion in food policy across the sub-region – although in the short term it will present administrative challenges.

The next chapter turns to the case study on the Bristol Food Policy Council. Both Bristol and Manchester are regional centres and Core Cities, and indeed several actors with personal experience of the Bristol Food Policy Council sat on the Expert Panel of Food Futures in 2012. They differ, however, in terms of economic context and levels of social capital. Moreover Bristol in 2012 adopted a Mayor plus cabinet model for the local authority, and elected its first Mayor – an independent – later the same year.

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8 The Bristol Food Policy Council

8.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings of the case study on the Bristol Food Policy Council (BFPC), the only local food policy group in England to use the name 'food policy council', from May 2012 to March 2014. During this period the BFPC was relatively new and the actors were getting to grips with their role and modus operandi, and the *Bristol Food Plan* was under development. Nonetheless, the BFPC was already active in advocacy and facilitation work to address food related issues and policies.

The chapter first sets out the socio-economic and political history and context of Bristol, before explaining the top-down/bottom-up process that culminated in the formation of the BFPC, its vision, aim and objectives, and its structures. In the second section, enablers and barriers stemming from the group's own structures and operations are identified, followed by an examination of multilevel constraints and the ways in which actors engage and interact with other governance levels.

8.1.1 The Bristol context

Bristol has a population of 441,000, making it England's sixth biggest city. Located between the River Avon and the Severn Estuary it flourished as a trading port from the 14th century, largely on the spoils of the slave trade. Today its primary industries are aerospace, defence, media, IT and tourism. There is a strong civil society sector and several national organisations have their headquarters in Bristol, which contributes to the city's alternative ethos. The average salary is above the UK average but there are significant inequalities in wealth, health, and life expectancy.

Bristol City Council (BCC) is a unitary local authority and Labour currently holds the greatest number of seats[133]. Bristol's first Mayor, independent George Ferguson, was directly-elected in November 2012, following the 'yes' result in a referendum earlier that year to replace the leader-and-cabinet model. The election of an independent candidate was seen as a break from a recent history of fierce infighting between the political parties in Bristol, which hampered decision making and was the source of frustration for residents (Luffingham 2012). The Mayor does not have significant powers beyond those of the former Leader but he is a figurehead for the city and cannot be removed by Councillors. He is responsible for all the Council's executive functions that are not explicitly the responsibility of any other part of the Council, and determines which decisions should be made by himself, the cabinet (executive), individual

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[133]As of the local government elections May 2013

cabinet members, or officers. The *Mayor's Vision for Bristol* (BFPC 2013b) has three priorities – people, place, and prosperity – and is underscored by the principle that Bristol should control its own future without being stifled by central government control, and that citizens should be actively involved in the life of the city. There is an emphasis on fairness and environmental issues, especially in light of Bristol's Green Capital year in 2015[134].

BCC had to make budget cuts of some £90m between 2010 and 2013, and the same amount again for the subsequent period 2014-2017, as a result of reductions in national level grants. Although Bristol has fared better in the face of resource constraints than some cities due to a relatively strong local economy, it has experienced pressure for services from a growing population. The Mayor's approach to the latest round of cuts has been based on guiding principles including protecting vital services, community resilience, addressing inequalities, and council efficiency – while, at the same time, stimulating the economy and ensuring resilience to further anticipated cuts (Taylor 2014).

The Bristol Partnership is the city's LSP, made up of representatives from across the public, private, and voluntary and community sectors and with several cross-sector boards and strategies[135]. The Bristol Partnership's *Sustainable City Strategy: the 20:20 Plan*, aims to propel Bristol into the top-20 European cities within 10 years by focusing on sustainable prosperity, reducing health and wealth inequalities, stronger and safer communities, and raised aspirations and achievements (Bristol Partnership 2010).

Within the city, fourteen Neighbourhood Partnerships make decisions over street cleaning, parks, recycling, local roads, and community safety. Bristol has historic links with neighbouring local authorities Bath and North East Somerset, South Gloucestershire, and North Somerset, as parts of each comprised the county of Avon that was abolished in 1996. The West of England Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) covers Bristol and the three counties; it partly replaces the South West Regional Development Agency, which covered the larger region.

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[134] Bristol was named as European Green Capital for 2015 in June 2013. The European Green Capital Award recognises cities that achieve high environmental standards and encourages them to make further commitments and inspire other cities. It provides leverage to attract investment and sponsorship in green infrastructure and initiatives – for instance, central government pledged £7m towards Bristol's Green Capital year. After having been shortlisted in 2008 for the first award in 2010, Bristol Green Capital Momentum Group ensured continuing efforts towards the award in the intervening period.

[135] Backing Young Bristol, Health and Wellbeing Board, Homes4Bristol, Safer Bristol Board, Children and Young People's Outcomes Board.

Figure 8-1 Bristol and neighbouring local authorities
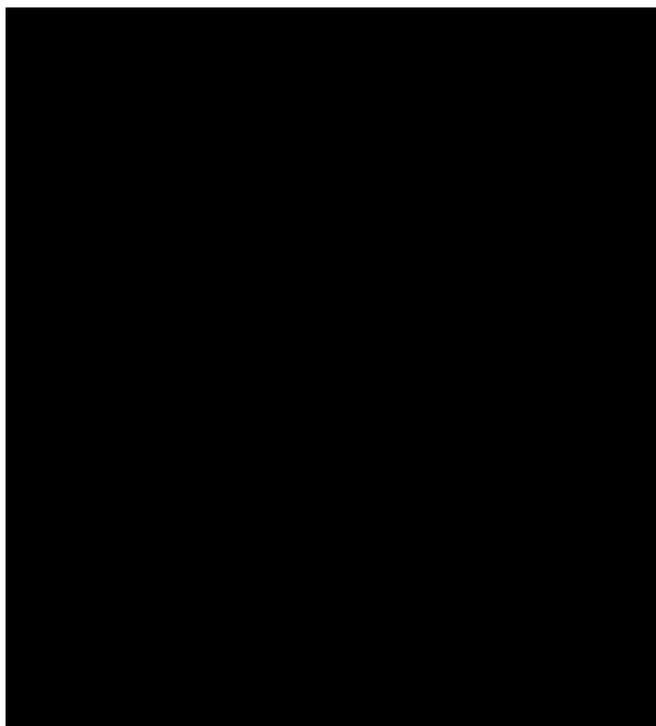
Source: Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2015

8.1.2   The Bristol Food Policy Council

The Bristol Food Policy Council (BFPC) was born in 2011 out of a combination of 'bottom-up' community movement and 'top down' support from within BCC. During the 1990s and early 2000s the BCC-funded civil society network Bristol Food Link promoted healthy, sustainable, and accessible food in the city. When its funding expired in 2005 a group of organisations formed Bristol Food Network and, with a small amount of money from BCC's Environment and Sustainability Unit, in 2008 wrote a bid for new funding in the form of a food strategy (Voscur n.d.; Bristol Food Network 2009). Although the bid failed and BCC did not adopt the strategy as it was not produced via council processes (Carey 2013), it kept food on the public agenda.

In parallel to this, in 2009 the BCC cabinet held a discussion on the food-related recommendations of the *Bristol Peak Oil* report (Osborn 2009), commissioned by Bristol Green Capital Momentum Group and Bristol Council. It was recommended that BCC, with Bristol NHS and the Bristol Partnership, should review Bristol's food systems vulnerabilities and work to improve resilience. An example action was to draw up a *Food Charter* for council catering services; this was published by BCC in March 2010, setting out 10 ambitions (not commitments) to underpin its approach to procurement (BCC 2010a), and accompanied by a declaration on standards for public food procurement (BCC 2010b). A cross-departmental food

interest group (FIG)[136] was formed within BCC during the BCC *Food Charter* process and began organising an annual food conference that identified the need for a dedicated food body. A steering group (a sub-group of the FIG) consulted on the nature of this body and terms of reference (B-Pub1).

Another report, *Who Feeds Bristol* (Carey 2011), was commissioned by NHS Bristol, BCC and Bristol Green Capital to shed light on Bristol's current food system and how the powers that exist within the city and the region could improve resilience and sustainability. In keeping with a recommendation of *Who Feeds Bristol,* and informed by the consultation carried out by the FIG sub-group, Bristol Food Policy Council (BFPC) was formed in March 2011. One year later it published the *Bristol Good Food Charter* (BFPC 2012c), and in November 2013 the *Good Food Plan for Bristol* (BFPC 2013a), which was facilitated by funding under the EU URBACT project for sustainable food in urban communities, in which Bristol is a partner[137].

Figure 8-2 Timeline of Bristol food policy groups and documents

Framing docs						Bristol Peak Oil		Who Feeds Bristol?		
Year	From 1990s	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
BCC						BCC charter / Public procurement standards				
						Food Interest Group				
Civil society	Bristol Food Link			BFN strategy/funding bid						
						Bristol Food Network				
Multi-sector									Bristol Good Food Charter	Good Food for Bristol Plan
									Bristol Food Policy Council	
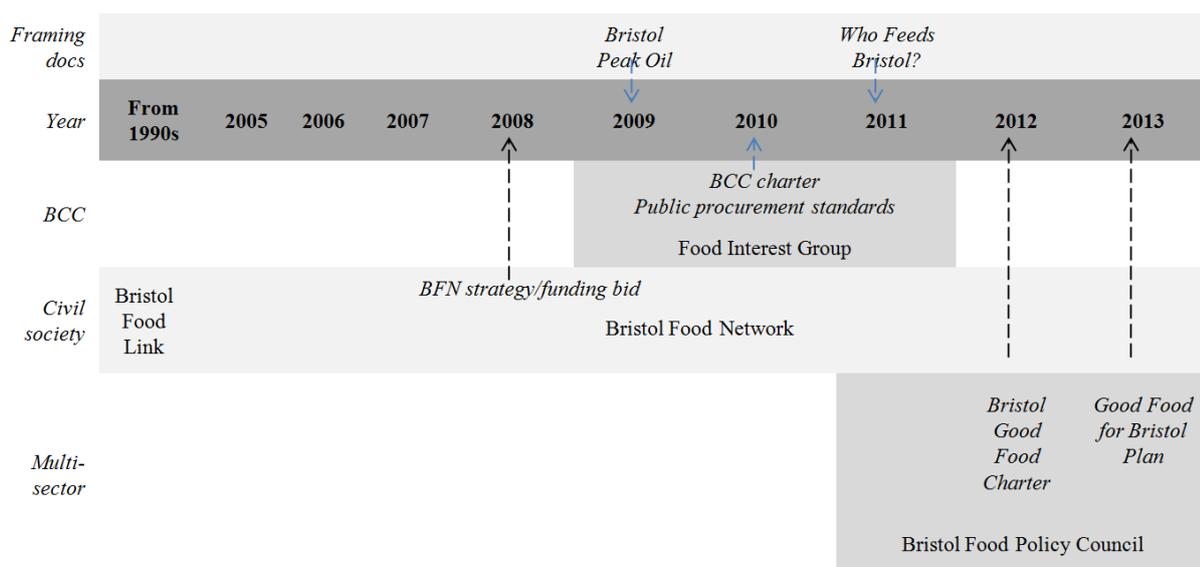
(Source: author)

The BFPC meets four times a year and is a 'high-level strategic grouping combining the different elements of the food system (including production, processing, distribution, retail, catering, consumption and waste disposal) with the common objective of achieving a healthier,

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[136] The FIG was made up of officers from Parks and Estates (allotments), Public Health and Regulatory Services (environmental health; public health services), Neighbourhood and Housing, Sustainability, Strategic Planning (health improvement), Care Services (catering and contracts), Regeneration and economic development, Public Health, Markets, Corporate property, Children and young people's services (school meals; client contracts), Chief executive's office (health policy). As of 2014 the FIG was no longer meeting and many of its members were no longer in post.

[137] www.urbact.eu

more sustainable and resilient food system,' (BFPC 2012a, p.1). The *Terms of Reference* set out the responsibilities of the group and membership, and draw on several 'success and learning' pointers from the structural and operational features of food policy councils in the United States.

In addition to the quarterly BFPC meetings, sub-groups of members meet at more regular intervals to progress specific activities, such as around communications and food poverty. A one-day conference of the wider community interested in food issues in Bristol is convened every year, where workshop activities seek to harness views on the work priorities.

There are twelve seats on the BFPC that are purposely drawn from across the food system; the organisations of the current members are shown in table 8-1, together with the area of the food system they represent and their sector.

Table 8-1 Membership of the Bristol Food Policy Council

Member's organisation	Network / representation	Sector
Cardiff University	Chair	Academic
One Stop Thali	Catering	Private
Public Health Bristol	Health	Public
Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester	Training	Academic/private
Bristol Food Network	Community	Civil society
Southwest Food and Drink	Business development	Trade association/private
M&D Kidners	Wholesale	Private
Yeo Valley Organics	Producer	Private
Soil Association	Non-governmental food organisation/community	Civil society
Elected councillor	Local government	Public sector
Bristol Green Capital	Green Capital	Civil society
Supermarkets/ retail – position unfilled	Retail	Private

(Source: BFPC 2012a; BFPC 2013c)

The BFPC sits outside formal BCC structures but it has strong ties to the local authority. There is always a seat for an elected member (a member of the Mayor's cabinet, previously the leader of the Council), and secretariat services are provided by a BCC sustainability officer who, while not a formal member as he does not represent an area of the food system, attends every meeting and draws up the agendas. This role is recognised in the *Terms of Reference* and the officer's time is considered in-kind support from BCC.

A consultant also attends meetings but at the time of the fieldwork was not a formal member of the BFPC. However this person has unrivalled knowledge about Bristol's food system and therefore makes a valuable contribution. The consultant, unlike the members, is paid through a

small budget from Bristol Public Health[138]; the same source provided small, unspecified sums for other pieces of work, such as a public relations consultant to develop a communications campaign. The only other financial resource is a small, unspecified amount from European URBACT project to develop the food plan and for information-sharing activities with other cities.

Figure 8-3 Structure and location of the Bristol Food Policy Council
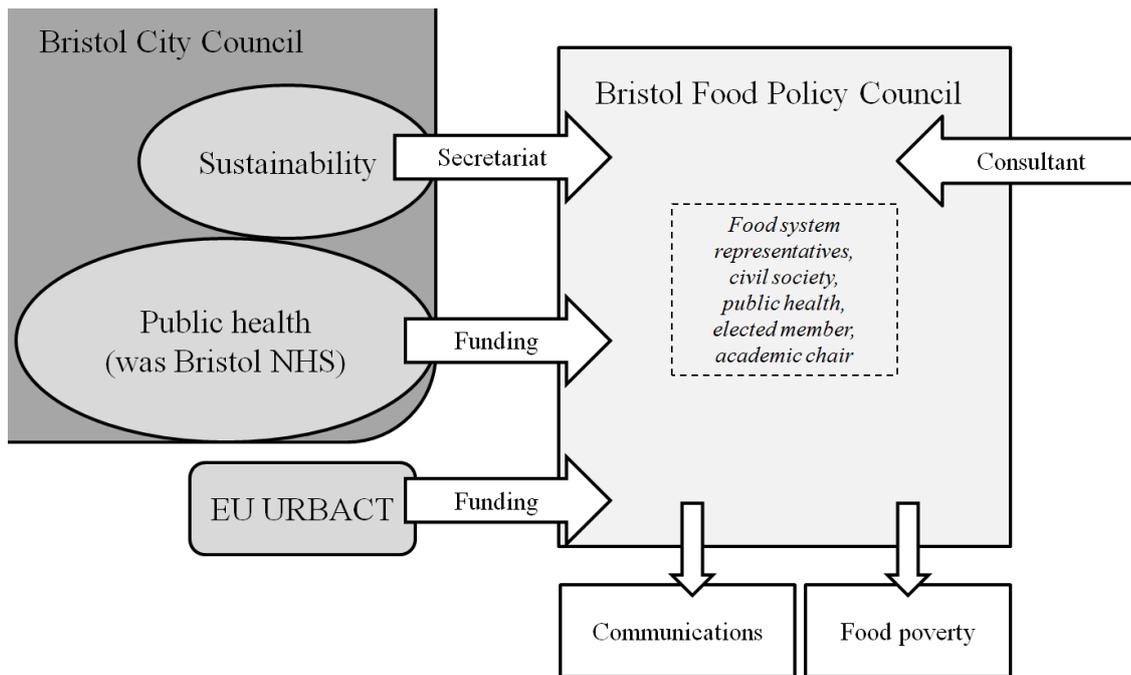
(Source: author)

Central to the BFPC and the *Good Food Plan for Bristol* (BFPC 2013a) is 'good food', which was first defined in the *Good Food Charter*: **'**As well as being tasty, healthy and affordable the food we eat should be good for nature, good for workers, good for local businesses and good for animal welfare'(BFPC 2012c). The statement is underpinned by three sub-definitions:

- Good for people means 'everyone should have access to information, training and resources that enable them to grow, buy, cook, and enjoy good food'
- Good for places means 'the public and policy-makers should support and value food enterprises who promote local jobs, prosperity and diversity, and treat workers well'
- Good for the planet means 'food should be produced, processed, distributed and disposed of in ways that benefit nature'.

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[138] Formerly under NHS Bristol, now part of BCC.

Meanwhile, the overall objective of the *Good Food Plan* is to promote systems change and to offer practical and tangible solutions to the complex issue of food provisioning for Bristol. It is based around eight themes and associated objectives (table 3-2) which were originally identified in *Who Feeds Bristol* as work areas for the 'food systems planning' approach. Food systems planning is, 'strategic integration of agriculture and the food system into city plans … [that] contributes to sustainable regional development plans and addresses a wide range of issues including: climate change and environmental concerns; employment and the local economy; education and training; health and wellbeing; social justice and inclusion' (Carey 2011, p.110).

Table 8-2 Themes and objectives of the Good Food Plan for Bristol

Theme	Objective
Transform Bristol's food culture	To encourage people to cook from scratch, grow their own, and eat more fresh, seasonal, local, organically grown food
Safeguard the diversity of food retail	To champion the use of local, independent food shops & traders to help keep our high streets vibrant & diverse
Safeguard land for food production	To promote the use of good quality land in and around Bristol for food production
Increase urban food production & distribution	Grow and distribute Bristol grown fruit and vegetables to restaurants, cafes, markets, households
Redistribute, recycle, and compost food waste	To minimise food waste by encouraging composting and the redistribution of good food that would otherwise be wasted
Protect key infrastructure for local food supplies	To retain & strengthen city links with local wholesale markets, & nearby abattoirs, dairies & farms
Increase the market opportunities for local & regional food suppliers	Increase procurement of regional staples, and establish more markets for local producers
Support community food enterprises	To promote community-led food trade such as co-operatives, buying groups, Community Supported Agriculture and pop-up shops

(Source: BFPC 2013a)

In addition to the objectives, the food plan sets out eight targets for the next five years. Some of these can be mapped directly onto the themes and objectives, while others are more general targets or fall under the broad heading of food culture.

1. Halt and reverse the decline in independent food shops on our high streets
2. Involve every school in the 'Healthy Schools' approach to food and make food growing and farm visits part of every child's education
3. Achieve 'Silver' on the Food for Life Catering Mark (or equivalent) for every Hospital, University and School caterer or kitchen
4. Provide practical help for community food growing projects and community kitchens making it easy for projects to start and to keep going
5. Collect and compost or recycle the food waste from fifty per cent (eventually one hundred per cent) of food businesses
6. Halt and reverse the rise in childhood obesity

7. Strengthen the wholesale, brokerage, and delivery infrastructure that supports the independent food sector

8. See year-on-year increase in the proportion of households eating meals cooked from scratch at least once a week (as measured by the Quality of Life annual survey)

The *Good Food Plan* is not meant to be a strategy in order to prevent agenda-ownership impeding action, but rather a framework for multi-sector actors to see how their work fits into a bigger picture (Carey 2014). The BFPC has no formal powers for advancing these aims; it does not make policy, and policy makers are not obliged to act on its advice. The roles and responsibilities in the *Terms of Reference* (BFPC 2012a) can be divided into four categories (table 8-3).

Table 8-3 Role and responsibilities of the BFPC

Agenda-setting	Promotion and advocacy	Action and delegation	Information, coordination, facilitating	Monitoring, evaluation, and accounting
Identifying and selecting priorities in accordance with local needs and context Setting work programme to deliver the aims of BFPC	Promoting knowledge, skills and experience of healthy, sustainable, and resilient food system Influencing and advocating for national, regional and local policies Working with a range of relevant bodies locally, regionally and nationally to further the aims of BFPC	Acting on the recommendations of *Who Feeds Bristol* Delegating tasks and programmes to sub-groups, and overseeing progress	Ensuring partner organisations are kept informed, and contribute to work programme Facilitating co-ordination of the different elements of the BFPC initiative	Ensuring work of the BFPC is underpinned by monitoring and evaluation, and this knowledge is used and shared to bring improvements Accounting for the use of any dedicated Food Policy Council funding Reporting annually on the progress made

(Source: author, compiled from BFPC 2012a)

8.2 Enablers and barriers

8.2.1 Structures and operations

The BFPC is located outside the structures of BCC but with links into it via public sector actors – including a Councillor – and the secretariat services provided by the Sustainability team. This external status is an important principle as it allows the BFPC to criticise the council and hold it to account if it fails to adhere to its commitments, which can be a powerful tool for influencing policy. For example, a need to monitor implementation of

BCC's internal charter on sustainable public food procurement (BCC 2010a) – even though it contained ambitions rather than commitments – was identified following doubts over how broadly and deeply it is embedded in local authority departments (BFPC 2012d).

The external status means the BFPC it is not bound to or constrained by the political agenda, so it can determine its priorities independently of those of BCC leadership. Conversely, ties with the BCC via elected members provide useful leverage for having food issues recognised on the city-wide agenda. Under the previous Leader-and-cabinet model, the then-Leader sat on the BFPC. Since the switch to the Mayoral model and election of George Ferguson, food issues (and the BFPC seat) have been assigned to the portfolio of the cabinet member for neighbourhoods, so high level engagement has endured. The Mayor-and-cabinet leadership model of BCC is, under George Ferguson, conducive to influencing policy at the local level thanks to a combination of structural and personal factors. Structurally-speaking, a Mayor has the ability 'to get through to different areas of people' (B-Private1), indicating access to previously uncharted networks. The Mayoral structure also brings simplified lobbying. If you want the council leader to take a particular position under the leadership model:

> 'You have to get a collective view of the cabinet, you have to get a cabinet majority and preferably unanimous consensus, and the easiest way to do that is to go through their entire political group, which is a majority group, that might also be accountable to some federal policy committee on a national level. Now you just go to George, or to a gatekeeper for the Mayor. By and large you know he agrees with you anyway,' (B-Pub2).

Certainly it is significant that an independent Mayor is not bound by the political preferences of the major parties that are set at national level, leaving him free to decide his own approach to food issues at the local level. In terms of the personal factors that render the current Mayor helpful to the BFPC's mission, George Ferguson has a 'rounded understanding and possibly a deeper interest [than the former leader]' in food issues (B-CS1), is a 'very strong willed person,' (B-CS2) and has influence 'in terms of the public and also in the corridors of where he works,' (B-Private1). The Mayor's buy-in to the work of the BFPC applies to the work plan generally, which means that the BFPC can be confident of his backing for the duration of his office without needing continually to re-framing activities and sell-in to new priorities. He has place food issues within the political heart of the city by assigning them to a cabinet portfolio, and with a page on the BFPC in his three-year vision.

In addition to the connection to Bristol's top-level leadership, further channels into BCC are provided at officer level, with Council-employed members expected to advocate for food issues within departments. Some strategies and plans for departments and service areas contain explicit references to BFPC or *Who Feeds Bristol* objectives as a result of actors' network relations. For instance, the draft *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy* (BCC et al. 2013) makes the promotion of 'a healthy sustainable and resilient food supply that benefits the local economy and creates better access to fresh ingredients' a priority. Significantly, the public health representative on the BFPC is very influential within Public Health Bristol, and the Director of Public Health, who sits on Bristol's Health and Wellbeing Board, attended and contributed much to a BFPC meeting in January 2013 (observation notes). In addition, the draft *Bristol Markets Strategy and Action Plan* (BCC 2011b) acknowledged the role that markets, including St Philip's wholesale market, play in food access. The market manager was a member of the FIG as of January/February 2011, just before the formation of the BFPC (Bristol Food Network 2011), so was an influential character and part of the wider network.

A specialist professional planner who is part of the Public Health Bristol team but sits within BCC's strategic planning division (and who was also part of the FIG) is credited with influencing the insertion of positive food references into the *Bristol Plan*[139] (Raffle 2013), such as the *Bristol Core Strategy's* (BCC 2011a) inclusion of policies that may help safeguard retail diversity and apparent promotion of green infrastructure by incorporating green space into new developments and designating food production as one use for such space. However this actor's influence does not extend to all points that touch on food within the draft *Site Allocations and Development Management Plan* (SAADMP) (BCC 2013), as a number of weakness and contradictions remain. Nonetheless, they were instrumental in preparing a consultation response to draw attention to these problems, including proposing an additional policy called *DMX* that aimed to have food growing specifically written into the planning documents in order to promote sustainable food systems (BFPC 2013d). Ultimately *DMX* was not adopted as it is not required by national planning policy (Carey 2014).

The successes in the above examples notwithstanding, there are doubts as to how far these links can truly help BFPC penetrate the BCC megalith, which is made up of 9000 employees and within which there exists considerable siloism and different ways of working between departments. Moreover, the Sustainability team (which provides formal secretariat services) is not the locus of power within BCC, but greater power lies within the

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[139] *The Bristol Plan* is a suite of documents, including the *Bristol Core Strategy* (BCC 2011a) and *Site Allocations and Development Management Plan* (SAADMP) (BCC 2013), which sets out the details.

Neighbourhood and Economic Development teams (B-CS1); where there is inter-departmental conflict, the more powerful department is likely to prevail. One interviewee (B-Pub1) highlighted the need was identified for a 'really sophisticated and skilled internal public relations campaign around what we mean by good food as part of the transformation programme within Bristol City Council' in order to raise awareness of BFPC within the Council – yet the BCC members of the BFPC have neither the time nor the resources to organise it.

The relative weakness of existing networks means that for each new piece of work that is not directly related to any members' sphere of influence the BFPC must identify the key influencers and forge new relationships. However, the BFPC may not always know the right way to approach local authority departments and the language to use. Lobbying efforts over the Blue Finger controversy[140] demonstrate how cultural differences can be unnecessary barriers to mutual understanding:

> 'Why that patch of land is so special and so important in planning terms, it's not good enough to say 'we need to feed the children of tomorrow'. The planning department won't take something like that on board. They may agree with it completely, but they need a legislative underpinning. At the same time, when the planning department come back and say we need to consult on this, the food policy council need to understand that's not 'we'll ask you what you think and do what you say'. It's a different thing. It's both learning the boundaries, and the language, and the motivations of the other. Because they do have a lot in common, but very often they are not pushing in the same direction because of blunt misunderstanding,' (B-Pub2).

Such *faux pas* come about because BFPC is embedded in a very different institutional environment, which is dominated by a strong civil society sector and do-it-yourself culture. This means that unlike in cities like Manchester and London, where the food policy group exists within the structures of local government, the BFPC is conditioned by an entirely different environment and which is in many ways at odds with the formality and

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[140] The Blue Finger is a 20km long strip of land beside the M32 motorway that runs from Stapleton on the northern fringe of Bristol to beyond Winterbourne in South Gloucestershire, much of which is grade 1 agricultural land that historically held market gardens (some parts are also grades 2 and 3a, which are also classified as 'best and most versatile agricultural land'). Parts of this land have been earmarked for development in the draft SAADMP document, including a new site for a 'Park and Ride' bus station and large car park, but a civil society-led alliance is lobbying for its preservation and return to agricultural use, including community food growing projects (CPRE 2013).

unwieldiness of BCC. That the Mayor also comes from this informal environment can explain his receptiveness to the BFPC's agenda.

Turning next to the composition of the BFPC, the group was put together deliberately by an initial core steering group to have representation from across the food system and a broad base of knowledge and experience. The *Terms of Reference* serve as a formal reference point on all membership matters, setting out aims that all members are expected to agree to (B-Pub1) and a process for any new appointments. This avoids adding members on a whim and keeps the group small, focused and manageable. A useful mechanism for tapping specialist knowledge without adding new members is the invitation of experts to one-off thematic meetings, with whom working collaborations are subsequently forged. For instance, several food bank representatives were invited to a thematic meeting in April 2013 and a food poverty sub-group was then up in which they are involved.

A second mechanism for accessing a wider pool of knowledge and expertise and also for leveraging more support for the BFPC's work is the requirement that each member have a strong network, either in unrepresented areas of the food system and/or with actors in the political system around Bristol. For instance, the Bristol Green Capital member reportedly took it upon themselves to represent the business community in Bristol (B-Pub2), and farmers in the Southwest are indirectly represented by the member from the Royal Agricultural College, even though primarily this actor represents the food skills and training sector. Actors move easily between networks; in particular the overlapping membership of the BFPC and the Bristol Food Network is evident in members of the BFPC being actively involved in community initiatives such as the Feeding the 5000 event, the Growing Trail, Bristol Independents, and the Bristol Pound, which are all closely aligned with the BFPC's objectives.

The weakest spot in the BFPC's representation of the food system is the seat for a retailer/supermarket, which remained vacant three years after the formation of the BFPC (although the independent retail sector is represented by the Bristol Food Network, which coordinates the Bristol Independents campaign). Early attempts to engage with supermarkets were unfruitful. Only one – the Co-op – gave any useful input for *Who Feeds Bristol* but was ultimately unable to put forward a representative (B-Pub1). Attempts to engage a retail trade organisation have also been unsuccessful, but the BFPC pledged to keep trying by advertising for applicants (BFPC 2012b). Two interviewees saw retailer involvement as desirable for the group to really be able to make an impact on the food system:

'I think it's better to have someone sitting on the group who can be realistic about how supermarkets can be part of a sustainable food culture,' (B-Private1).

'Can we realistically expect to drive significant positive improvements in the food system and the food culture if we are not somehow engaged with big food business? Because otherwise all you end up with is the relatively weak small food businesses working together with [...] the small voluntary sector and small public sector. It's an uneven battle, as it were,' (B-CS1).

However another actor pointed out that not all major supermarket chains share the same values: 'If we had someone from one of the big multiple chains there, their aim is to maximise margins and expand their market share. Apart from the Co-op and possibly Waitrose, their aims aren't congruent with the aims of the Food Policy Council,' (B-Pub1). This means there could be conflict within the group if a supermarket representative were to join – assuming that they were prepared to sign up to the *Terms of Reference* in the first place. On the other hand, if the Co-op or Waitrose were to supply a member with values more akin to those of the BFPC, they may not truly represent the entire sector.

The initial group of actors was selected by a core group with a strong public sector presence, thanks to the preparatory work of the FIG. However that members of the BFPC are selected rather than elected means that there is a lack of democratic legitimacy within the group, as those doing the choosing could form a clique of friends and allies rather than selecting best people for the task. Moreover, there is currently no mechanism for dispensing with actors who have become disengaged, and indeed, a non-core group of members that have become less engaged has emerged (B-CS1). Possible reasons for this disengagement are discussed below, but electing rather than appointing members to seats was suggested as it would make actors accountable to the wider food community and mean they would not be re-elected if they underperformed. That said, membership elections would be unlikely to change the core membership, as the same individuals would be most likely to put themselves forward and have amassed experience and recognition to make them the preferred candidates.

Differing levels of engagement between actors raises concerns about how far each member contributes to agenda-setting, how active they will be, and how much they will leveraging their networks. From observation, the 'core' group is made up principally of the public sector and civil society whose involvement in food policy issues pre-dates the BFPC and who may have had some hand in establishing it. The less-core group generally is private sector actors who were invited to join or inherited their seat within their organisation. Thus, levels of engagement may be down to sector divides, as the private sector was not involved in instigating the BFPC along

with public and civil society sectors. Also, new members signed up to an existing agenda but did not help write the *Terms of Reference*, so they may be less wedded to them. This raises the question of how much shared purpose there is between members, a point over which even members disagree. Some interviewees (B-Pub1, B-CS1) claimed everyone's visions for the food system conformed with the *Terms of Reference,* but another detected a range of different understandings running beneath the formal version:

> 'There are some people in the group who do see it as 'we must have a vision of the complete food system for the city'. [The consultant] clearly believes that very strongly. Others believe in targeted intervention, so this is for the market to decide, this is for X to decide, this is for policy to decide, and we will nudge in different areas as we go along. Others see it as a regulatory mechanism, so we shouldn't have horse in burgers, discuss, sort of thing. Others see it truthfully as a consciousness raising mechanism; it is raising awareness for the fact that we as a city, as the people who live in that city, should care more about where our food comes from and how it goes. Others see it as a tool for influencing. There are people there who see it in real solid, politic, pragmatic terms, this is a tool potentially for acknowledging the need for sustainable food throughout the planning system. This is a way of influencing the council to do procurement better, this is a way to promote the Fairtrade agenda. These sort of product based policy outcomes, and that's a world away from what other people feel,' (B-Pub2).

One explanation for the different views is that at the time of the fieldwork the BFPC had not yet fully figured out its role and modus operandi. However, since then the BFPC has published the *Good Food Plan for Bristol*, which is a more detailed formal expression of its work plan. It is highly unlikely that all the different visions mentioned in the above quote have acquiesced during the process of finalising the *Good Food Plan* – indeed during a meeting at which the structure and phrasing of the food plan was discussed there was no detectable fundamental disagreement or conflict. Rather, the draft was quite lightly refined and re-phrased based on discussion, reasoning, and contributed expertise (observation notes, January 2013). More likely is that the *Terms of Reference* and *Good Food Plan* contain the formal vision and approach, over which the consultant and the public health representative have presided and with which other actors generally agree, while a multitude of informal visions or approaches coexist beneath it. The variety of purposes need not be a barrier to the BFPC's work, as they can be accretive and different routes towards the same broad ideal. However it may be more problematic if the variations are not acknowledged and animosity develops between those actors who stick to formal expressions and those who are creative in pursuing other methods.

Two actors played notable leader-like roles in developing the *Good Food Plan*: the public health representative, who is described as being 'in a very important support role' (B-CS2); and the external consultant who is a 'bell-weather' for views and able to push the group towards ambitious objectives (B-Pub2). Notably neither of these actors have roles enshrined within the *Terms of Reference*, which identify rather the particular roles of the academic chair, who brings knowledge on sustainable food systems and has studied food policy councils around the world, and the Sustainability officer who, although not formally a member of the BFPC, prepares the meeting agendas, is recognised as the 'go to' person for members who have questions, and is a link with the local authority[141]. The perception of the public health representative as a leader stems from the actor's knowledge and expertise, dedication, networks both within BCC and in the wider food scene in the city, and the small amounts of financial resource they bring. They have led by example, been very active and used instruments available to them to advance the BFPC's ends, for instance through the public health team publishing a report on food poverty for the BFPC (Maslen et al. 2013). The public health representative was also very much invested in setting up the BFPC, consulting on what its mandate should be and writing the terms of reference, so their perceived leadership may have its origins in the pre-BFPC era.

The financial resources brought by the public health representative, meanwhile, have enabled the consultant to remain involved with the BFPC and to work towards developing a full food plan for the city. For their part, the consultant certainly has a unique insight into the food situation in Bristol, which is of great value to the BFPC in drawing up a relevant and appropriate agenda. Together the public health representative and the consultant appear as a nexus of influence: the former as a kingpin in establishing the BFPC, determining its mission, and enabling the consultant's involvement; and the consultant as a respected source of valuable knowledge and expertise. Nonetheless, there was some feeling that these two assumed leaders over-dominate agenda-setting:

> 'My worry is that the process leans too heavily towards [consultant] and [public health actor]'s role and that the Food Policy Council isn't taking enough responsibility for the emergence of that food strategy. I mean they are being engaged in it but [...] we'd almost been presented with a draft food strategy. [...] I think probably the Food Policy Council ought to be more engaged and a bit more hard-headed about what it thinks,' (B-CS1).

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[141] No tensions were observed between the formal and informal leaders, but they were seen to be complementary in what they bring to the group.

These remarks raise issues of power and influence, together with the suspicion that although the funding does not come with strings attached that require prioritisation the public health, it might elevate the enabler to a position of having more say over the BFPC's agenda in its entirely. Whether or not this nexus of influence actually affects the BFPC ability to fulfil its function, the same interviewee tempered their opinion by adding: 'Actually in the end the thing that really matters is we end up with a well-crafted, comprehensive, strategy, action plan with really stiff and ambitious targets, and that we then get motoring and deliver it,' (B-CS1). It is therefore advisable to remain aware of the danger of over-domination, but appreciate that actually the consultant has been commissioned to marshal the process and ensure it happens, when no one else has had the time to do so.

The question of resources is intrinsically linked to the capabilities of the BFPC. All the members are voluntary and therefore participate in BFPC activities either as part of their day jobs or in their spare time. Some administration services are provided by the BCC sustainability team, but that team's capacity is under pressure due to cuts and there are no funds to buy in admin support. Additional admin support or a dedicated project officer would allow the BFPC to fulfil its current mandate better. This need was acknowledged in the meeting observed in April 2013 (in discussions over funding a project on food poverty), but one interviewee (B-CS1) pointed out that applying for a grant from a funding body is problematic since the BFPC – with its voluntary membership and non-BCC status – is not a constituted entity. This means that any funding bid would need to be channelled through one of the organisations represented in the membership and therefore would compete with that organisation's other priorities. A solution would be for the BFPC to become incorporated so as to be able to apply for funding in its own right, which need not affect the BFPC's mission as long as the funding does not come with strings that would require a change in the group's priorities. The interviewee raised the possibility of such funding enabling project delivery as well as communications and influencing work, however this is wishful thinking from an actor from civil society, the life blood of which is project delivery funding, since the Bristol Food Network already exists for project delivery.

8.2.2 Multilevel framing

The local level environment is generally helpful to the BFPC, not least because of the amenability of the current Mayor. Indeed, in the Mayor's vision document the BFPC is described as an 'inspiration for a healthy city' (Ferguson 2013, p.19). The first three pillars of the vision (Ferguson 2013) – 'a vision for people,' 'a vision for place', and 'a vision for prosperity' (including Bristol Green Capital) – are near perfect fits with the 'good for people', 'good for places', and 'good for the planet' principles of the Bristol Good Food Charter (BFPC 2012c). Helpful though this is, it must be acknowledged that the Mayor and

cabinet structure is only beneficial to the work of the BFPC if the Mayor in post sympathises with the agenda. If a future Mayor were to be unsupportive or actively oppose the BFPC, the Mayor and cabinet structure could prove detrimental. Support from a new Mayor was by no means a given since the foundations of the BFPC's work plan were laid in the *Who Feeds Bristol* report, which was commissioned as a result of environmental concerns in the era of the previous leader but, as it turns out, were perpetuated from one leadership era to the next. That said, while the current Mayor's support opens more doors and boosts the group's authority, the BFPC's existence is not dependent upon it – it could remain active with or without support of the political leadership.

The support shown by the current Mayor does not necessarily hold true for all Councillors in Bristol, not least since the Mayor is elected directly by the people of Bristol and not the Councillors, and local politics in Bristol has a recent history of fierce and sometimes obstructive discord. This means that there are instances when council decisions go against the general spirit of the BFPC, as in the case of the defeated motion to request from national government the power to levy a 8.5 per cent charge to supermarkets on their rateable value (Bristol Post 2013). The motion was not proposed by the Mayor but by another Councillor, but George Ferguson is reported to favour more planning powers from central government to protect the viability of independent shops (Bristol Post 2013) – as this levy, permitted under the 2002 *Sustainable Communities Act*, would have done.

There are also contradictions, both between policy domains at the local level and through vertical policy framing, that can hamper the BFPC's capacity for influence. One example is the afore-mentioned Blue Finger controversy, which has arisen out of a tension within Bristol's planning framework caused by the Core Strategy prioritising the promotion of sustainable transport on the one hand, and on the other hand recognising the value of land for food production. The value of land receives weak support in the NPPF's recognition that grade 1 agricultural land ought to be protected from development wherever possible, but this is a mere guideline rather than enforceable policy and leaves the door open to local authorities to give it whatever weight they see fit. Given the lack of network influence over this issue, the BFPC has sought to move through other mechanisms, such the (failed) proposal for a policy *DMX* on food growing and sustainable food systems in the *Development Management Policy*, and supporting the alliance lobbying for its preservation, which seeks support from the Mayor (CPRE 2013).

There are several issues over which the BFPC, cognisant of barriers posed by local level and national policy contradictions, resorts to agency and innovation – including seeking to influence private policy. One such issue is business food waste. While BFPC's ambition to

redistribute, recycle, and compost food waste appears to be supported by the *West of England Joint Core Waste Strategy* (West of England Partnership 2011), which is guided by the waste hierarchy also set out in national guidance to the *European Waste Directive*[142] (Defra 2013). BCC does not offer a commercial food waste collections for businesses and, since it is not mandatory, there tend to be too few willing participants to make it viable, particularly as for small businesses like cafes and restaurants participation in collection schemes can be difficult due to the time and expense implications of separating food from non-food (Marriott 2013c). Innovations to advance the BFPC's objectives on food waste stem from the convening of a Mayor's Conversation on food waste, which leveraged the influence and strong networks of the Mayor to convene and engage key actors, particularly in the business community. Out of this meeting came the opportunity for the Mayor and his team to be briefed on food waste so as to broach it during meetings with businesses, thereby making them agents for the BFPC's objectives. It was also suggested that food waste messages be bolted onto existing protocols, such as food safety inspections and procurement guidelines. Business Improvement Districts' funds could be tapped to help small businesses manage waste better, and the possibility was raised of seeking funds for surplus food initiatives from supermarket corporate social responsibility funds, which may be possible on a store-by-store basis despite the non-representation of the sector on the BFPC (Marriott 2013c).

A second area where the BFPC's ability to pursue its objectives is impaired by policy framing is over ambitions to increase market opportunities for local and regional producers, which are ostensibly hampered by the *EU Procurement Directive* as it does not allow for origin to be specified in public tenders in an effort to uphold the common market. One way around this is for buyers to simplify their systems to allow smaller suppliers to bid – as was the intention of a 2008 concordat to help SMEs compete for tenders by ensuring availability of information and removing financial conditions, in enactment of national interpretation of the EU directive. However in the experience of one interviewee, the massive administrative burden faced by a small company seeking to bid for public contracts remains:

> 'Some of the red tape in the future to get school contracts and NHS contracts, for companies [...] in the market it's been hideous. It's been piles and piles of paper, and a lot of it is absolute bullshit to be honest. But they have got to do it because at their end's red tape, and perhaps in the future the government can look at it and say hang on, this is bloody stupid,' (B-Private2).

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[142] The order of preference for waste disposal is: reuse, recycling, value extraction, landfill.

The BFPC's approach is to seek alignment between suppliers and buyers through its *Sustainable Food Procurement Project* by identifying the opportunities in both the public and private sector – such as educating procurers, proactively seeking new supply chains, and developing and embedding new standards – and seeking to minimise challenges such as time, knowledge, cost, and trust, on both the producer and buyer sides (Storry 2013). In practical terms this means activities to engage farmers – such as through a whole-sector seminar (Marriott 2013a) and working through the networks of the Royal Agricultural college – and encouraging collaboration between businesses to create a viable supplier base for buyers of all sorts to frequent, like a local food hub as part of the development of the wholesale market (Carey 2011).

There is recognition that while the Bristol city level is seen as being generally conducive to sustainable food policy, at least in the city-wide strategic plans if not in all the related policy-domains, the approach of the BFPC is in stark contrast to that of the national level which, while recognising the challenge of feeding the population, is wedded to the agri-tech approach (Marriott 2013b). The BFPC's emphasis on external communications and transparency strives to harness local level will and embed it into the city's culture, as is the explicit purpose of the communications sub-group, which also forges alliances with food-related community events such as a conference element to the Eat Drink Bristol Fashion food event in summer 2013. There remains much outreach work to do, however, as while BFPC members attend community events to raise awareness of activities and resources they are restricted by the small size of the group and that everyone had a full-time job (B-Private 2). The implication is that the communications strategy it is not as effective as it could be due to lack of resources. On the other hand, the BFPC actively seeks to communicate with and lobby other levels, such as in responding to national policy consultations, as it did over the place of food in the school curriculum, arguing for food teaching in all schools, including Academies and Free Schools, that food be a subject in its own right rather than under another foundation subject, and that teaching continue after the age of 14 (BFPC 2013e).

It is certainly useful that Bristol is part of the URBACT project in terms of raising the profile of the food work EU-wide; in addition, that one of the BFPC members is a coordinator of the Sustainable Food Cities Network means the group is closely associated with a project designed specifically to enable the sharing of knowledge and experience within the UK, and building a movement of local level food policy that may, ultimately, be able to impact other levels. Finally, that certain members or associates of BFPC engage in dissemination activities helps build Bristol's sustainable food reputation, not just in policy and practitioner circles but also within the academic community; the academic chair and the academic abilities of the consultant have led to the publication of papers in scientific journals and presentations at conferences.

Table 8-4 Summary of factors affecting the Bristol Food Policy Council

Factors	Effect on local food group
Structure and organisation of food policy group	
Structural	
Members/composition	Broad representation of food system means good knowledge base
	Councillor facilitates buy-in
	Missing retailer means questions about ability to drive change
Consultants/advisors	Paid consultant has unique in-depth local food knowledge
	Chair brings knowledge from academic and international perspective
History, origins	Long history and top-down/bottom-up process means good relations between public & civil society sectors. Private sector joined later, may be less engaged
Resources	Broad non-financial resources but seriously hampered by lack of funds
	May need to become entity to apply for funds
	Small bits of finance have been crucial
Operational	
Membership grounds	Members chosen not elected so no democratic accountability; could lead to disengagement
	Membership condition is that actors have good networks
Programme leadership & management	'Nexus' of leader-like figures, make things happen but too much say over agenda
Location, relation vis-à-vis local government	
Structural	
Location	Not beholden to political agenda so can criticise BCC/hold to account
	Embedded in civil society culture, lacks strong networks into BCC and knowledge of ways of working
Mandate/ legitimacy	No mandate to write policy, but draws legitimacy from being independent and previous work of key members
	Mayoral support helps advocacy and awareness raising throughout city.
Operational	
Partnerships and collaborations	Network use is crucial – brings more information and representation and work as channels to magnify impact
	Networks within/into BCC are especially helpful for policy influence
Local level context	
Structural	
Local level powers	Mayoral structure currently very helpful due to compatible leader
	Mayor not accountable to other Councillors, they may block
Political environ.	High social capital, DIY culture of Bristol is amenable to independent group
Admin/management structures	-
Ways of working	-
Operational	
Understanding levers & language	BFPC embedded in different culture, does not always understand language and levers inside BCC departments (which can differ)
Multilevel context	
Structural	
ML food framing	General approach is at odds with bio-tech preferences at national level
Policy framings by dept	Seeks innovative work-arounds due to multi-level framing and contradictions
Operational	
Partnerships/mediation through levels	Members actively lobby national level, seek to engage through attending conferences and events
	Two actors publish about BFPC and give academic presentations
	Involvement in URBACT gives connection to European experience

Source: author

8.3 Summary

This chapter has described the structural and operational factors that affect the work of the BFPC. During the research period a major activity of the BFPC was developing the Bristol Food Plan, which relied heavily on the knowledge-based resources of the consultant (and financial resources of the public health actor). Other activities, around facilitation, advocacy, and action/delegating, utilised BFPC members' wide networks. Moreover, the BFPC wears its independence as a badge of pride but nonetheless benefits from the support of the independent Mayor, who opens doors and is prepared personally to promote the sustainable food agenda through his vision and day-to-day encounters. That said, networks into BCC departments are relatively weak, and mismatched culture and language can impair its advocacy capacity. Although the BFPC's approach differs wildly from the national level, nonetheless Bristol is gaining renown as a relatively effective local food policy group in England, not least thanks to the multilevel lobbying and communication activities of its members.

The next chapter turns to the County Durham Food Strategy Partnership, which differs from all previous case studies as it relates to a large, unitary local government area that is predominantly rural. Like Bristol, the Co. Durham Partnerships sits outside of Council structures, but rather than being independent it is housed under the auspices of a voluntary sector organisation.

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9 County Durham Sustainable Local Food Strategy

9.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings of the case study on the County Durham Sustainable Local Food Strategy project during its initial funded period between November 2011 and April 2014. During this time the mission of the project was to develop a *Sustainable Local Food Strategy* (SLFS) document through a collaborative process and establish a Food Partnership, and then to start implementing actions.

The chapter first sets out the context of County Durham, drawing attention to divisions within the rural county in the North East of England and recent administrative reconfigurations. The genesis of *SLFS* project and its structures and operations are described. The second section identifies structural and operational factors that affect the capacity of actors to pursue the aims. First factors relating to the project steering group and its location within the governance context are identified, followed by factors concerning multilevel governance.

9.2 Context and background

9.2.1 County Durham

County Durham is a rural county in the North East of England under the administrative control of Durham County Council (DCC), a unitary local authority[143]. It has a population of 513,200[144]. Geographically it is a county of contrasts. The east of the county is more densely populated than the west, with a number of former mining towns and two larger urban settlements, Durham City and Chester-le-Street. The west is dominated by farmland, forming part of the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and is dotted with small rural communities (figure 9-1). There are also stark socio-economic differences between middle-class Durham City, renowned for its Cathedral, University, and knowledge-based economy, and the working class towns and villages that suffered a major blow with the decline of the mining industry in the second half of the 20th century. County Durham is the 50th most deprived unitary/top-tier local authority area out of 149 in the country, and the inequalities were exacerbated by the 2009-10 recession (CDP 2010). Despite the divides, however, there is a strong sense of culture in County Durham that is distinct from neighbouring counties and Newcastle-upon-Tyne, a major city just 10 minutes by train from Durham City.

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[143] Unless otherwise indicated, references to County Durham in this thesis relate to the area under the administrative control of DCC as of 2014, as opposed to the ceremonial county of County Durham covering a larger area including the local authority areas of DCC, Borough of Darlington, the Borough of Hartlepool, and part of the Borough of Stockton-on-Tees.

[144] As of the 2011 census

Figure 9-1 Map of County Durham showing current boundaries, former districts, and North Pennines AONB
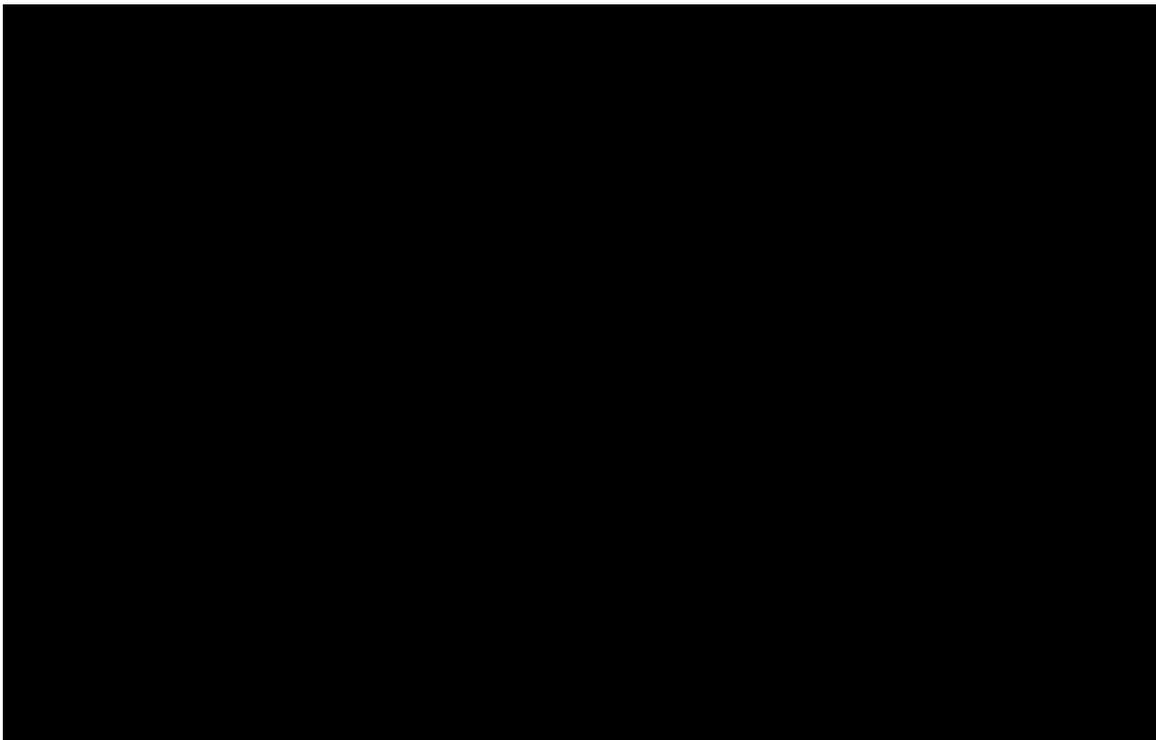
Source: Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2015

Farming in the North East of England is dominated by livestock, with 66 per cent of the agricultural area devoted to grazing, while cereal and general cropping covers 26 per cent of the farmed area (Farm Business Survey 2012). At the end of 2013 there were an estimated 1076 farms in County Durham. Of these, 65 per cent are livestock, with beef and cattle produced in the Pennines in the western part of the county, a small number of dairy farms to the south, and lowland beef and sheep in the east. Cropping, mainly cereals, is also concentrated in the east and accounts for 17 per cent of the county's farms. The remaining 18 per cent of farms are mixed (Farm Business Survey 2013).

Until 2009 Durham County Council (DCC) was the top tier of a two-tier local authority structure under which sat seven district councils (shown by the thin lines in figure 9-1). The re-drawing of responsibilities under the Brown government saw the functions of Durham, Easington, Sedgefield, Teesdale, Wear Valley, Derwentside, and Chester-le-Street District Councils folded into DCC, making it one of the largest unitary local authorities in England. County Durham's administrative boundaries were previously re-drawn in 1997 when Darlington (a non-metropolitan district since 1974) was cleaved off into its own unitary authority area; prior to this in 1967 the boundary with North Yorkshire was adjusted to bring in the town of Barnard Castle, while Hartlepool and Stockton-on-Tees were ceded to other local authorities. The cultural identity associated with the ceremonial county has remained and tensions between

the ceremonial and the administrative boundaries persist (eg. The Northern Echo 2006; The Northern Echo 2003).

DCC is responsible for the range of services and policy areas typically handled by unitary authorities: education, housing, planning, transport, fire, social services, libraries, leisure and recreation, waste, environmental health, revenue collection and, since April 2013, some of the public health functions formerly handled by NHS County Durham. DCC has a leader-and-cabinet structure; the current leader is a member of the Labour Party and Labour holds the majority of seats[145]. Since 2010 DCC has been hard hit by cuts in central government grants which has had a severe impact on service delivery and funding for the community and voluntary sector; by 2016/17 it will have implemented a total of almost £224 million in cuts (Henig 2014).

DCC's overarching vision is to be an 'Altogether Better Place which is Altogether Better for people'. Underlying this are five priority themes: Altogether wealthier; Altogether better for children and young people; Altogether healthier; Altogether safer; and Altogether greener. These themes form the basis of the *Sustainable Communities Strategy – Altogether Better Durham* (CDP 2010), the over-arching plan for County Durham drawn up by the County Durham Partnership (CDP) that is meant to inform the physical strategy, the *County Durham Plan* (DCC 2013b), and act as a guiding framework for other strategies. The CDP consists of a board, a forum, thematic partnerships around each of the five themes, and 14 Area Action Partnerships (AAP) to give local people and organisations in different parts of the county a say over service delivery.

There is no regional level of government in the North East since the demise of the Government Office for the North East in 2010, the Regional Assembly in 2009, and the North East Regional Development Agency in 2012. The 'no' result in the 2004 referendum on establishing an elected Regional Assembly in the North East effectively put an end to the then-Labour government's proposal for elected regional bodies across the country. However in 2014 the seven councils that make up the North East Leader Board[146] agreed a plan to form a Combined Authority which, while not replacing the existing local authorities, would have devolved responsibility for economic growth, job creation, skills development and transport links (DCC 2014).

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[145] As of the May 2013 local elections

[146] Durham County Council, Gateshead Council, Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside Council, South Tyneside Council, Northumberland County Council and Sunderland City Council

9.2.2 County Durham Sustainable Local Food Strategy project

The *SLFS* project has its origins in the PhD research of a rural development officer employed by Durham Rural Community Council (DRCC/DCA)[147]. Amongst the findings of that individual's thesis[148] was a lack of joined up food policy between organisations and departments in County Durham, and facilitating the *SLFS* was a policy outcome. On the initiative of the researcher (who became the project coordinator), a consultation event was hosted by consultancy Helmepark in March 2010 to gauge views and priorities of a range of actors. Support for the local economy was found to be the top priority (DRCC 2011a)[149]. The project coordinator sought advice on how to approach the project from national organisations Sustain and F3[150] and developed a *Business Plan* (DRCC 2011a). Funding was secured from the Durham and Darlington Primary Care Trust Charitable Trust[151] for a 2.5 year project hosted by DRCC/DCA, the funding recipient. Ultimate accountability for the project lay with the executive director of the DRCC/DCA, with day-to-day management by the project coordinator (DRCC 2011a) (figure 9-2).

The coordinator assembled a project steering group (PSG) of 11 actors (including themselves), as shown in table 9-1. These actors were to be 'organisational stakeholders with a mandate for health, food or sustainable rural development in the County together with businesses and voluntary bodies' (DRCC 2011a, p.3). The PSG membership included a process consultant (the only remunerated actor) who was commissioned to monitor and evaluate proceedings using the Theory of Change (TOC) methodology[152]. At the first PSG meeting it was generally agreed (subject to changes in the *Business Plan*) that the group's role was to assist in project steering by 1) helping with event planning, 2) checking and challenging (testing ideas, bringing ideas

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[147] The DCA, known as Durham Rural Community Council (DRCC) until mid 2013, is a charity that provides support to communities across County Durham.

[148] *Community Supported Agriculture as a model for an ethical agri-food system in North East England* (Charles 2012)

[149] 18 people attended the initial consultation event, with another 24 returning an electronic questionnaire

[150] F3 proposed a model of three ultra-local strategies but this was not adopted as the preference at the initial consultation event was for a coherent whole County strategy so as to be better coordinated with the new unitary local authority (DRCC 2011a)

[151] Following the closure of the PCT in 2013, administration of the grant was taken over by the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust.

[152] TOC, as used in the SLFS project, 'establishes evaluation as a core part of the work of a project from the start, making sure it does not become an add-on or end of project process, while still ensuring that robust independent evaluation takes place. It provides a clear focus to make sure that the long term changes which are being sought (the outcomes) are clearly identified and agreed before decisions are made about the day to day activities and interventions which then need to be put in place,' (DRCC 2011a, p.27).

and perspectives, questioning), and 3) supporting engagement of the wider group (DRCC 2011b).

The County Durham Food Partnership, meanwhile, emerged during the initial funded period as a large and amorphous group of actors and organisations who had some engagement with the *SLFS* project and whose contact details were included on the email distribution list. The role of the incipient Food Partnership during the *SLFS* development was to provide feedback on drafts in workshop settings and through email follow-up.

Figure 9-2 Entities involved the County Durham Sustainable Local Food Strategy project
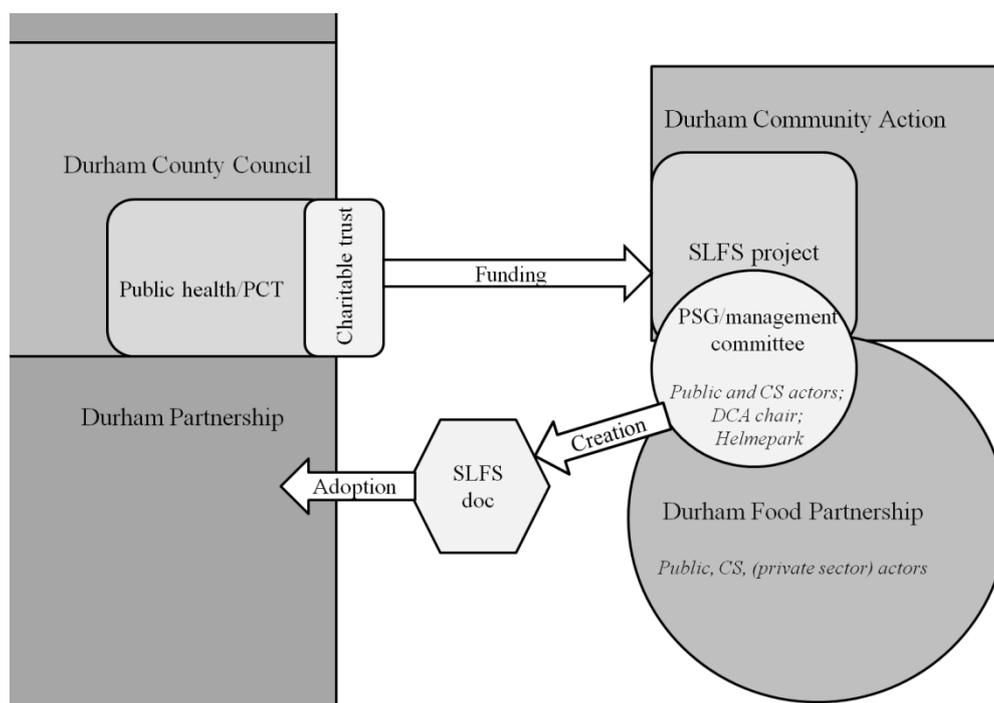
Source: author

Table 9-1 Project Steering Group of the County Durham Sustainable Local Food Strategy project

Member's organisation	Sector
DRRC/DCA (chair)	Civil society
DCC Sustainability team	Public
DCC Spatial Planning team	Public
Love Food North Pennine Dales	Multi-stakeholder partnership
Groundwork	Civil society
Food for Life Partnership	Civil society
DCC Planning Policy	Public
Helmepark	Consultant
Durham Local Food Network	Civil society
Durham University	Education sector
DCC Public Health (formerly PCT)	Public

(Source: CDFP 2014)

It was originally planned that two Area Plans for the *SLFS* would be drawn up, but these were abandoned partly due to the abolition of the two-tier system and the seven districts, with no district level public body to take them forward, and partly due to a perceived lack of need and lack of enthusiasm by local communities (CD-CS2).

It was envisaged that there would be two project stages during the initial funded period: the first was strategy development, with the *SLFS* document to be published and the Partnership formed by May 2013; the second was to start implementation. The first phase (which coincided with the fieldwork period) took longer than anticipated and the strategy was published only in February 2014, with the result that the formal implementation stage was delayed – although some implementation activities did overlap with development. In keeping with the TOC approach, the process of working towards the outcomes was just as important as the outcomes themselves since it provides 'opportunities for network development and the forging of new alliances to create a strong platform for the Partnership and future work,' (CDFP 2014, p.6). Helmepark guided the PSG in developing an outcomes pathway as a framework for planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation, comprising a strategic outcome (that the 2.5 year funded project was to contribute to but not achieve alone), a long-term outcome to achieve by the end of the funding period, and supporting outcomes as steps towards the long-term outcome (figure 9-3).

Figure 9-3 Outcomes pathway
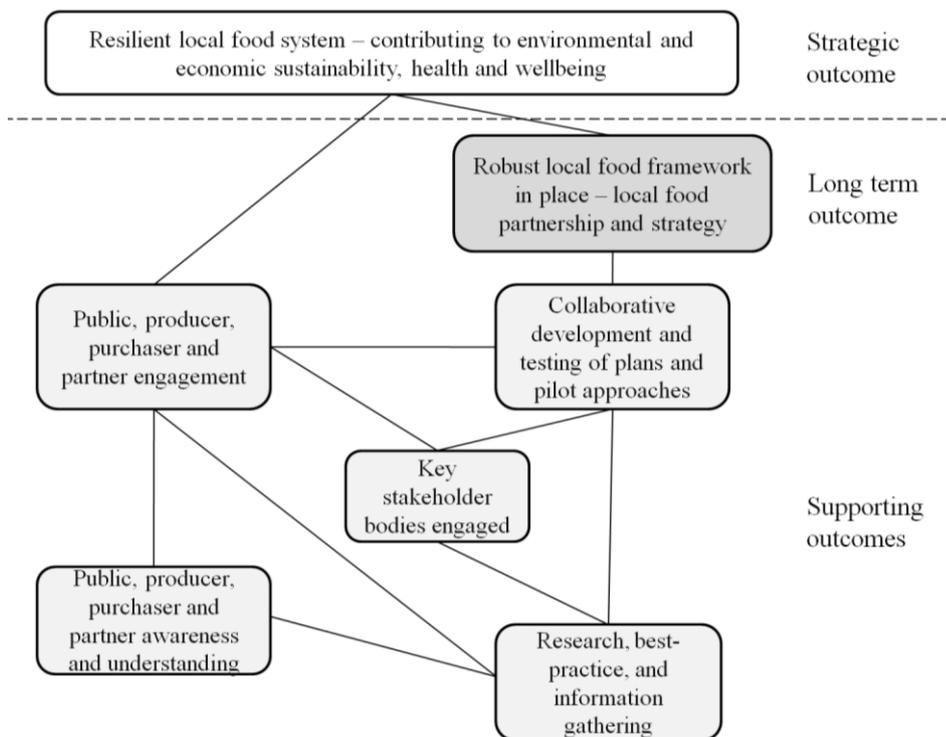
(Source: Helmepark 2013)

A Mid-term Evaluation (MTE) by Helmepark in early 2013 drew attention to the need to accelerate progress in the second half of the project term, and to prioritise strategic work and raise awareness amongst strategic actors at director level, particularly within DCC, in preparation for anticipated adoption of the *SLFS*[153] (Helmepark 2013). A tool for securing early awareness was the *Food Charter*, which contains 10 points, grouped according to six themes that signatories pledge to support (table 9-2). The *Food Charter* is made up of elements of the *SLFS* that had already been finalised. It had 62 signatories between its publication in September 2013 and the finalisation of the *SLFS* in February 2014 (CDFP 2014).

Table 9-2 County Durham Food Charter pledges

Theme	Pledge to support
A strong local economy	A flourishing, competitive local 'good food sector' providing gainful employment for local people Public and private caterers sourcing good food from local producers and suppliers, keeping value within our local economy An economically viable supply chain for sustainable local food
Environmental sustainability	A local food system that protects biodiversity and ecosystems and minimises its environmental impact Food that is processed, distributed and disposed of in a way that increases composting and recycling and reduces the need for transportation, energy use, packaging and waste
Health and wellbeing	The creation of environments and infrastructure that make it easier to adopt and maintain healthy and sustainable diets Food-related activities (eg growing, cooking) to improve physical and mental health for all and which are available in our communities
Resilient and active communities	All our communities have access to land, knowledge and skills in order to grow some of their own food
Education and skills development	Opportunity of everyone to learn about 'good food' – growing/rearing, cooking, preserving, marketing and selling it
Food fairness	Improved access to 'good food' for everyone, regardless of their income or where they live Food production with high animal welfare standards and producers being fairly rewarded

(Source: CDFP 2013)

The final *SLFS* document sets out a vision statement, 'to work and advocate for a revitalised, viable and diverse local food system that supports the local economy, and makes available to all a wide range of fresh, healthy foods that are sustainably produced in or around County Durham,' (CDFP 2014, p.2). 'Local sustainable food' is defined as 'food that is produced and consumed in or near County Durham that is healthy for people and the planet, and supports our local economy,' (p.3). The emphasis is not only on geography but also on the economy, social, and environmental pillars of sustainability. This means that the *SLFS* is capacious enough to include social aspects of public health, such as quality and price aspects of food access.

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[153] At the time it had not yet been decided whether adoption of the SLFS would be sought by DCC or by CDP. The latter was eventually determined to be most appropriate, but awareness by DCC directors was still deemed important because DCC is a major partner in CDP, and it would still be necessary to pass the strategy via DCC bureaucratic processes.

In the *SLFS* the themes of the Charter are presented as six strategic aims, some of which have sub-themes (table 9.3). For each aim and theme it asks two questions: 'What do we want to achieve?' and 'How will we do it?'. The verbs in the 'how will we do it' sections can be assigned to six headings that represents instruments for implementation. These are: research, facilitating and convening, information provision, encouraging/supporting/promoting, policy advocacy, and projects. Figure 9-4 shows the distribution of activities under each instrument.

As for the actors and groups of actors to carry out the activities, some are assigned to specific organisations or council departments. In these cases the programme coordinator obtained initial agreement before the document was finalised. However many activities are assigned to the whole Food Partnership, and some to generic types like schools, businesses, or farmers.

Table 9-3 County Durham SLFS strategic aims and sub-themes

Strategic Aims	Themes
Supporting the Local Economy	Theme A: Local Supply Chains
	Theme B: Public Sector Procurement
	Theme C: Tourism
Environmental Sustainability	Theme A: Low Input/Sustainable Production
	Theme B: Reducing Wastage, Packaging and Transport
Health and Wellbeing	
Resilient and Active Communities	
Education and Skills Development	
Food Fairness	Theme A: Access to Affordable, Fresh, Local Food For All
	Theme B: Animal Welfare Theme
	C: Fair Trade

(Source: CDFP 2014)

Figure 9-4 Categorisation of SLFS actions
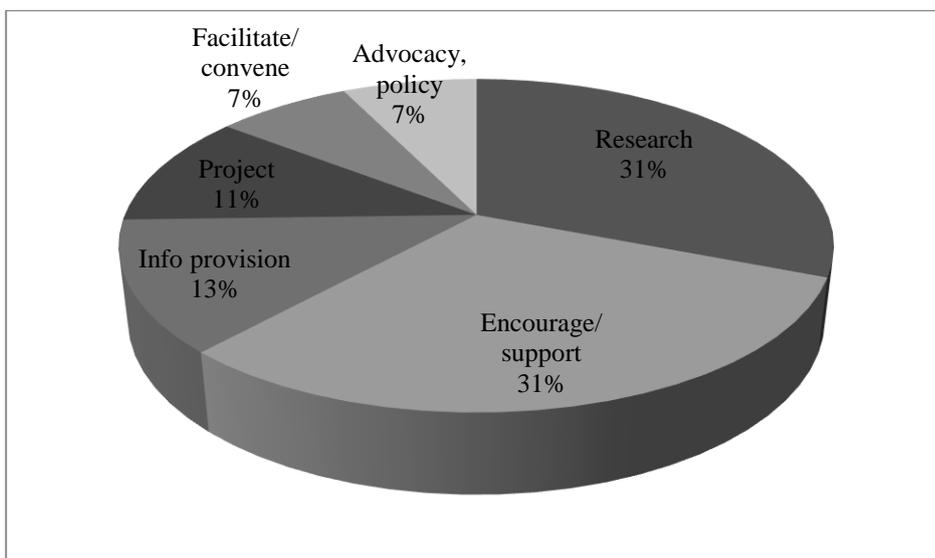
(Source: author developed from CDFP 2014)

The next section turns to structural and operation factors that affect the actors involved in the *SLFS* project working towards their objectives. The research relates to the structures, operations, and role of actors during the initial funded period until April 2014. After this date the roles of various groups of actors changed: actors in the PSG were to become the core of the management committee, with a new task to run and manage the Food Partnership; the role of the Food Partnership was to shift from consultative to implementing; the future role of the project coordinator was unclear because no additional funding had been secured, without which the *SLFS* project could continue through voluntary efforts only. However, the structures and operations in the initial funding period were in preparation for adoption and implementation of the *SLFS* after April 2014 and therefore the research includes the effect of structural and operational factors in the initial period on capacity to work towards objectives in the initial period *and* on anticipated or likely capacity thereafter.

9.3 Enablers and barriers

9.3.1 Structures and operations

The location of the *SLFS* work outside of DCC structures and its voluntary sector leadership are regarded as novel and beneficial. Given the size of the DCC and the large area it covers, three interviewees thought that if the project were to have been located within its structures it would have become stifled by formality and inefficiency – if it had been able to get off the ground at all. This is because food policy does not sit squarely within anyone's job description in DCC, so the project would have risked getting lost in the gaps between policy domains or being seen as the 'poor relation of all the other policies,' (CD-CS2). Moreover, non-public sector organisations would have struggled to see their place in it and how it could inform their own work:

> 'If it was the Council it would be just another Council strategy and people are completely disillusioned when it comes to anything to do with the Council,' (CD-CS1).

> 'The fact that the Rural Community Council are doing it rather than the County Council gives it that more – it's got a life of its own, it's not just a council document that we could produce and might get ignored or be seen as a very authoritarian type piece of work,' (CD-Pub2).

Nonetheless, buy-in or engagement in the *SLFS* from within DCC is crucial to its success (CD-Pub1, CD-CS1), both as a precursor to adoption by the CDP (of which DCC is a major partner) and to promote consideration of food issues across public policy domains. Ironically, in one respect the external status is conducive to this: it is anticipated that the *SLFS*, as an external

initiative, will be perceived as dynamic, entrepreneurial and a refreshing change from weighty public sector strategies and, as such, be best placed to gain support both inside and outside DCC.

As for the location of the *SLFS* project within DRCC/DCA, being rooted in an established and respected voluntary sector organisation brings a degree of legitimacy to the project, and has provided it with clear lines of accountability with respect to the funding. Moreover, DRCC/DCA has wide-reaching networks with the voluntary and community sector throughout the county, which the project coordinator has been able to leverage in order to build the Food Partnership, to obtain feedback on drafts, and to secure implementation commitments. On the other hand, being external to DCC means the *SLFS* lacks ready-made embeddedness into council departments and networks. In this respect the project must rely on links and networks into the local authority that PSG members can provide. While both public sector actors interviewed avowed strong networks in relation to their own policy domains, both inside and outside DCC, there are concerns about whether these networks are numerous or high-level enough, or with the most influential departments (CD-Pub1). Obtaining senior level representation on the PSG was remarkably difficult as requests from the project coordinator either went unanswered or were delegated to subordinates (CD-CS2). Moreover reception of the food agenda across departments and through the public sector hierarchy depends on the will and whim of individual decision-makers:

> 'Because in my experience it seems to be if you find the right person who is already passionate about these things and believes in them and has the motivation to do them, then they will. But if you just get Joe Bloggs who just happens to get a job at the Council and he's not particularly passionate about local food then he won't bother,' (CD-CS1).

During the initial project period four DCC departments were represented on the PSG: Sustainability, Spatial Planning, Planning Policy, and Public Health (DRCC 2012b). Conspicuous by its absence is the Regeneration and Economic Development team, since the main hook for the strategy is to improve the local economy. In fact the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development nominated a representative for the PSG but that individual was later reassigned to the spatial strategy team. Whilst one would hope that the network ties between the actor and the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development were not entirely severed, this could not be ascertained. What this does demonstrate, however, is that reliance on individual actors – who are wont to change jobs, be reassigned or made redundant – makes for fragile networks.

Aside from questions over public sector actors, the most noticeable absence on the PSG is representation from the private sector and, in particular, farmers – although a small number of farmers have taken part in activities of the wider Food Partnership (CD-CS2). This is problematic given the rural character of the county and the ultimate aim hinging on availability of foods produced in and around County Durham. As one interviewee put it: 'So in a way you could say it is all a bit superficial. We are meddling about with the food system but without farmers there. Local food is about a way of farming and distributing produce and I think it has got to involve the farmers,' (CD-CS1). Getting farmer representation on a body like the PSG is very difficult for several reasons: 'People who work on a farm, a) they don't like committee meetings, they haven't got time, they are working 12, 14 hour days, they often have to do things at short notice because of the weather, etc etc. And they have probably got quite a lot of scepticism about this sort of project,' (CD-CS2). In light of this, efforts have been made to include farmers' perspectives firstly by conducting a survey of their views[154], and secondly by seeking involvement from the National Farmers' Union. Although these efforts go some way towards bridging the gap, both are imperfect solutions – the former because it does not permit the same in-depth discussions and dialogue as sitting around a table, and the latter as the NFU does not represent all farmers.

The PSG also lacks representation from the other end of the supply chain, supermarkets. This is a conscious choice made by the project coordinator on the grounds that supermarkets wield power over the food system in general, and their values and objectives are perceived to be the antithesis of those underscoring the pursuit of sustainable, local food: 'They are the powerful players. This whole business of food policy and local food policy is in some ways trying to counter, and bring some level of food democracy in rather than having the power all at the level of large corporations and supermarkets,' (CD-CS2). However discussions during the meetings observed indicate that the deliberate exclusion is not necessarily the preference of all other actors (observation notes, 14 May 2013). One interviewee agreed that involvement of supermarkets would change the nature of the strategy and discussions, but said 'you get people so passionate that you cannot do this without the supermarkets because we are totally – over 90 per cent of what we spend on food is spent in supermarkets and things, so statistics suggest that we have got to work with them' (CD-CS1). The exclusion is not necessarily for all time, but supermarkets may be approached to join the wider Food Partnership after the negotiation and bedding down of the values and objectives, particularly if they are able to bring useful resources and expertise to implementation – although it was also suggested that more non-supermarket businesses may also be needed as ballast against excessive influence. Whether or not they are

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[154] 700 questionnaires were distributed, mainly via NFU offices. Thirty six were returned for County Durham and 14 from outside the County, but given their proximity and the 'leaky boundaries' all 50 were taken into account.

willing to sign up to a ready-made agenda, or are able to engage at the county-level, remains to be seen.

As noted above, the first members of the PSG were invited to join by the project coordinator and the selection of actors was informed by their early work on the proposal and contacts made during this time. Subsequently, the initial members were able to suggest additional members to be invited (DRCC 2011b). The above example on supermarkets demonstrates that, to a certain extent, prospective members were identified by values and visions that were aligned to those of the project coordinator – that is, the desirability of a sustainable, local food system. However it would be unfair to portray the PSG as a clique with a shared vision. Rather, members were intended to be organisational stakeholders with strong network connections, which is fundamental to the group's role in 'supporting the engagement of the wider group' (DRCC 2011b). Indeed, the very process of developing networks and forging alliances during the first phase lays the foundations for the Partnership and for future work (CDFP 2014). An example of the benefits of networking early on is the introduction of a farmer to the Durham University procurement actor, which led to a working relationship (DRCC 2012b; DRCC 2012a); and a supplier's local produce being provided and promoted at Durham University's Garden Party after having met the same actor at a Public Sector Procurement meeting (DRCC 2013b).

A second practical membership principle is the need for cross-sector representation so that the capacity of the *SLFS* project is not solely down to public sector actors' influence within DCC but that actors from multiple sectors should pursue the objectives via their own organisations (Helmepark 2013). How far actors actually do so could not be tested given the time and project-stage constraints of the case study. However, the PSG was described as 'a safe place' for actors to air their views and not feel they have to 'tow the party line' of their home or employer organisations (CD-CS2). While the intention is that actors leave any institutional constraints at the door and engage in creative thinking without the imposition of unnecessary barriers, they will only be able effectively to work through their own organisations if the agendas and working practices are aligned, or if they are senior- or influential enough to change them. For instance, at the time of the fieldwork it was unclear how far the social aspects of public health that are embraced by the *SLFS* would be taken up by the new Public Health team within DCC. If they were not, it was acknowledged that the public health actor may face constraints in implementation (CD-CS2, CS-Pub1).

Turning next to the project leadership and management during the initial funded period, the project coordinator's (part time) job was day-to-day management and delivery of the project (DRCC 2011a). Their legitimacy in this role is derived from their employment by DRCC/DCA, as well as their status as originator of the project idea and their PhD in a related area. The

coordinator assumed the role of chair, without any purposive appointment decision (CD-CS2, CS-Pub1). Despite an assertion that the coordinator does not 'get more power in the decision-making process' (CD-CS1), they did make certain unilateral decisions in the early stages, not just with regard to convening the group and its approach but also in drawing up the aims (albeit based on research), and the decision to appoint Helmepark as monitor and evaluator was made by the project coordinator alone (CD-CS2).

While generally-speaking the project coordinator has been appreciated for their central role in facilitation and coordination (CD-CS1), the group developed to be focused around the project officer's role so that there was excessive onus on them to pull everyone together, while responsibility-taking on the part of other members was lacking (CD-Pub1). For example, the skills audit form to establish in-kind resources existing within the PSG met with mixed response – by October 2012 not all actors had completed the form, with reticence apparently down to fear of making commitments they may not always be able to keep (DRCC 2012a). This indicates that actors are prepared to go so far in attending meetings but they are cautious about accepting too much responsibility. The eventual upshot of over-reliance on the project coordinator/chair is that should the leader be lost as a result of funding uncertainty, the impetus for the entire project would be lost also (Helmepark 2013).

As for the role of Helmepark, the consultancy was engaged not to advise on sustainable local food systems or food strategies, but on the process of collaborative, multi-sector initiatives. The role is a valuable one as it provided a more detached, objective viewpoint on the project's process, and a mechanism for drawing attention to successes and shortcomings contemporaneously, rather than in retrospect. For instance, the mid-term assessment found 'an opportunity, and perhaps a need, to ensure that there was a programme of more visible projects, activity and support on the ground directly linked to the project – to ensure the approach was seen as grounded in reality and not just a talking shop,' (Helmepark 2013, p.9). This fear of 'talking shop' was also evident in an interviewee's account of debates over strategy wording:

> 'There's quite a bit of debate at the moment because a lot of the verbs we are using – well, the verb – was support. Which is so fluffy, you can support just by smiling and nodding at someone, that's deemed to be – oh yes, I support what you are saying, oh yes, brilliant, carry on. Whereas it's got to be more than that because people like the Council, oh we support your initiative entirely, and that's all you hear from them. It needs to be more than support, it needs to be implementation, action, do, ensure. You know, like will actually make change,' (CD-CS2).

Although most of the implementation was due to take place after the end of the case study period, some windows of opportunity to seek policy influence before the *SLFS* had been finalised were identified, through formal instruments such as consultation responses. For example, a response was sent to the consultation on the new *Durham Plan* (DRCC 2012b), and actors involved in the *SLFS* sought to have Food for Life criteria included in DCC's new school meals contract (DRCC 2012b; DRCC 2013a). In the event neither of these attempts at policy influences were fully successful, although some specifications on local food and sustainable farming were included in the school food tender documents. However, no conclusions can be drawn about why because the project coordinator was struggling to obtain feedback (CD-CS2, observation notes, January 2013). In itself, however, this struggle demonstrates the challenges of being an 'outside' respondent and the need to new seek contacts over issues as they arise.

A final word is needed on the potential for effective implementation of the *SLFS* in the next phase, as a result of the foundations laid by structural and operational factors in the initial funded period. The project coordinator ensured that named organisations that are unrepresented on the PSG had read and understood the *SLFS* document before agreeing to lead implementation activities, but accountability rests on a networked relationship with just one individual. Considerable onus is placed on the Food Partnership as a lead implementing entity, but no formal list of Food Partnership membership has been published. Membership is assumed as a result of an actor having participated in a consultation workshop or otherwise expressed an interest in the *SLFS* project and the issues covered, and therefore being listed in the project coordinator's email database (Charles 2014). Members are given the opportunity to opt out by email, but it is possible that not all the actors are aware of, or in agreement with, the implementation expectation that has been placed on them. Placing lead responsibility with such a large group of actors raises questions about monitoring and accountability, as there is no way of coordinating contributions between the membership. As for generic groups of actors or organisations, their willingness to implement will also depend on the strength of the network ties. Some of these groups and organisations will be members of the Food Partnership and therefore have the strongest degree of buy-in, while others will have looser ties through being networked with a PSG actor, and others will be targets to become networked with *SLFS* entities.

9.3.2 Multilevel framing

Despite the *SLFS* being based – and likely to remain – within the civil society sector, local government structure impacts activities of actors, their organisations and the wider Food Partnership. As a unitary authority DCC covers a large area, but local government functions are centralised in Durham city. This has led to tensions. For example, there has been controversy over DCC's plan to charge a £5000 license fee for operators of weekly town markets that it

inherited from the seven districts, but which residents felt belonged to the towns and not the county (Laundy 2014)[155].

The initial thinking around the *SLFS* project pre-dated the abolition of the two-tier system and the seven districts, which meant that the two Area Plans to represent communities in the east and in the west were no longer feasible since there is no public body to take them forward (CD-CS2). There has been an intention to keep Area Action Partnerships (AAPs) informed (DRCC 2011c) and some interest in the project was elicited through meetings with councillors in the Durham City, East Durham Rural Corridor, and Weardale areas. However AAPs are imperfect vehicles for programmes or for seeking policy change because they group together towns that face different issues under the banner of one 'community', thereby risking internal tensions over priorities taken forward. In addition, priorities are determined by vote and (with the exception of Durham city where there has been a lobbying effort by Transition Durham) there is concern that local food will be far down the agenda as it is thought that 'the sort of people who turn up at the meetings are not the sort of people who would consider a sustainable local food strategy to be a priority' (CD-CS2).

Beyond these structural factors, there are a number of other ways in which the political and economic environment at the different levels has a bearing on the *SLFS* entities' ability to work towards the aims. At the county level the *SLFS* is a good fit with the 'Altogether' taglines of the County Durham Partnership's *Sustainable Communities Strategy* (CDP 2010) – and local food is explicitly mentioned under the headings 'Altogether wealthier', where food security is a recognised issue and working with the local food industry is a means to boost the local economy, and under 'Altogether Greener, where local food initiatives are linked to the low carbon economy, reduced food miles, improved health, and the rural economy. Other food issues – which are not necessarily local but which fit with the social model of public health – fall under the Children and Young People and Health priorities. Development of the *Sustainable Communities Strategy* pre-dated the initial funding period for the *SLFS*, meaning that the local food references in the former were not influenced by the latter. The *Sustainable Communities Strategy* was developed in the time of the former Labour government and in the wake of *Food Matters* (Cabinet Office 2008), when the national climate was more conducive to concerted food policy than under the Conservative-led Coalition.

Beyond its own reach, the *Sustainable Communities Strategy* is intended to frame other County Durham-wide strategies and plans, and food issues are covered in several of them. For instance, the *Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy* (DCC 2013a, p.13) contains a strategic action on health

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[155] This issue is an example of the tendency for tensions within the Council area but is not an issue that the *SLFS* project dealt with directly.

inequalities to 'produce a Food and Nutrition Plan for County Durham to include work around policy, food provision and access'; the draft *County Durham Climate Change Strategy* (DCC 2012b) refers to local food in the context of carbon reduction and the local economy; the *Regeneration Statement 2012-2022* (CDEP & DCC 2012) pledges delivery of the Love Food North Pennines Project, which has a representative on the PSG; and local food features large in the *Revitalising Markets* strategy (DCC 2013c). In this way the *Sustainable Communities Strategy* has helped prepare the ground for the *SLFS* to develop and embed these ideas further, and for them to be received at the strategic CDP level.

The mid-term evaluation described the *SLFS* as 'a valuable addition to the policy landscape and, in particular, by drawing out the relationships in terms of health, economy and environment would provide key hooks for influencing other policies and strategies more effectively in the future and engaging major partners,' (Helmepark 2013, p.8). Indeed, the *SLFS* is specifically mentioned in the two planning strategy documents with the most relevance for the *SLFS* project – the *County Durham Plan* (DCC 2013d, p.3) and *The Green Infrastructure Strategy* (DCC 2012c). However closer examination of the draft *County Durham Plan* reveals a tension with the *SLFS*: the draft *County Durham Plan* has been criticised for being too development-heavy and too focused on Durham City (Tallentire 2012b; Tallentire 2012a), and in particular for an intention to build on the green belt (Tallentire 2013; Tracy-Smith 2013). The controversy exposes the weakness inherent in the *NPPF* in its failure to define 'exceptional circumstances' for developing greenbelt land and therefore leaves the term open to interpretation and appropriation by planning departments. Amongst many environmental arguments put forward against the intention to develop the green belt are those in the *SLFS* project coordinator's response to the consultation: there is a need to consider food security in the future and green belt land is ideally situated for growing food for the urban population – yet land for food production is not mentioned in the *County Durham Plan* (Charles 2012). The *County Durham Plan* bases development of the local economy around growth and attracting qualified professionals and industry employers to the area – indeed, the economic priorities of County Durham are establishing an internationally renowned knowledge-based and hi-tech economy (Thompson & Foster 2014). If this must be at the expense of farmland assets then the mention of a sustainable local food strategy – and the rural and local food economy priorities inherent therein – appear to be mere lip-service to upholding the traditional agricultural economy. The *SLFS* propounds the economic benefits of sustainable, local food in the face of an economic agenda that does not recognise food – nor the traditional, agricultural economy that produces it – as a priority.

The sale of farmland owned by DCC has also been proposed by a Councillor to help off-set the impact of £110m of further cuts in central government grants faced by the local authority over

the next three years, on top of cuts of £113.9m realised between 2010/11 and 2013/14 (Henig 2014). The 2,238 acres of land spread across 24 farms could fetch between £7m and £10m and DCC confirmed a review of its portfolio to see if any tenant farmers are in a position to buy their farms (Arnold 2014). As the NFU points out, however, liquidisation of farm assets to cover a funding shortfall would have a long-term impact on the local farming industry, not least because renting council-owned land can provide a route into farming for newcomers, at a time when the average age of farmers in the UK is 58 and some 60,000 new entrants are required to replace those who will retire in the coming years (Prince's Countryside Fund 2013). The implication of this proposition is that DCC must choose between the future of the farming sector and service provision in the short term; with electoral cycles being relatively short it may be tempting to play for popularity with voters and retain services that would be missed immediately. The choice is being forced by the national level, so that the viability of food production in County Durham, which is crucial to implementation of the *SLFS*, risks being compromised by national economic policy. It is also seems to fulfil the prediction of the national level *Green Food Project conclusions* (Defra 2012b), which identified a need to increase production in the face of food system pressure (The Government Office for Science 2011) but considers there is unlikely to be more land available in order to do so.

The national-level *Green Food Project*, while going some way towards recognising issues facing the food system, is regarded by the *SLFS* as imperfect and incomplete, so there is no comprehensive national food policy under the Conservative-led Coalition government. Although the *SLFS* document words this problem delicately, interviewees were forthright about the effects of no national level support. One said, 'I think it is a massive weakness and a massive gap, because you can't back it up with the national [...] You can't fit it into national strategies because they are not there. So it takes away that leverage,' (CD-CS2). An example of the effect of this lack of support is the government's belief in the biotechnological approaches to increasing food production, as demonstrated in the resurrection of public debate on GM foods in a bid to stimulate research and consumer confidence (Harvey 2013). The *SLFS* states no position on the sustainability of GM foods, but the national-level approach would have an impact on the crops that are grown in County Durham in the future (CD-Pub1). Another example is the national Responsibility Deal scheme for the food industry to reduce the fat, sugar, and salt in foods in manufactured food products. The *SLFS* summaries the causes of diet-related ill health as 'a result of the 'nutrition transition' with diets having become increasingly high in sugar, salt, processed foods and saturated fat' (CDFP 2014, p.27) but there is no power at the local level to insist on altered recipes or to curtail retail sale of such products. Rather, local level agency is limited to harnessing powers that do exist locally around healthy food procurement, engaging a broad tranche of the community in food education and activities that

are likely have a knock-on effect on people's choices, and using planning powers to curb proliferation of unhealthy food takeaways near schools and playgrounds (CD-Pub1).

It is noteworthy that the foreword to the *SLFS* is written by Lord Curry of Kirkharle, the lead author of the 2002 *Report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Food and Farming, Food and Farming, a Sustainable Future* (Curry et al. 2002) and also a North East regional food champion[156]. The foreword identifies strong synergies between the CDFP and the *Curry report* in aiming to reconnect people and business along the food chain. Even though the *Curry report* has in many ways been superseded by successive policies, and especially by the removal of the regional government tier, it remains relevant for a rural county and, as well as recognising the sustainability imperative, it also recommended the economic valorisation of local produce and development of short food supply chains. Moreover Lord Curry, who also spoke at the launch event of the *SLFS* project in 2012, is a figurehead who transcends the national and regional levels and whose support, coupled with his influence, provides a great opportunity for exploiting powerful networks at multiple levels.

Regionally the *SLFS* enjoys somewhat more support than at the national level, if not through non-existent public sector structures since the demise of RDAs, GOs, and LDAs then through links that have been fostered with other food-related policy initiatives in Newcastle and Gateshead[157] and acknowledgement of the relevance of food mapping carried out by the Council for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) for Darlington (Marsh 2012a) and Hexham (Marsh 2012b). The cultural characteristics and approaches of these places are different – for instance Newcastle is the most populous city in the North East[158] and the centre of the Tyneside conurbation – yet the local identities are bound by a greater, North East identity and 'leaky boundaries' where food is concerned (CD-CS2) – that is, geographical boundaries relating to food are artificial since different people have different interpretations of 'local' that depends on where they live.

Several regional strategies related to local food that were mentioned in the *Business Plan* are no longer current[159] but two regional networks identified in the *SLFS* provide touch points with its objectives: The *North East Rural Growth Network* programme of activities (NCC 2013)

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[156] In the 2011 *Business Plan* (DRCC 2011a) Lord Curry was said to be chair of a new regional food body, but as of 2014 this no longer exists.

[157] The Newcastle Food Charter, and Gateshead Rural Economy Strategy

[158] Population around 280,000.

[159] These are a *Strategy for Regionally Produced Food and Drink in the North East of England* that was produced by the RDA One North East, a *North East Regional Food and Drink Board*, and a *Food Supply Chain Programme* that ran from 2006-9 under the auspices of the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (DRCC 2011a).

involves support for rural and small businesses; and the *North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network* advocates branding to encourage local people to buy more local produce and to widen the market.

The North East is a constituency for the European Parliament (one of nine in England), which is more significant for County Durham's *SLFS* than for any other case studies in this research since the farming community is directly affected by the CAP. The MEP for the North East of England, Stephen Hughes, was a proponent of reforms in 2008, advocating market-oriented systems for investment in rural sustainability and environmental protection in lieu of subsidies (Hughes 2008). The CAP reforms of 2013 contain a dual focus on global and local supply chains: on the one hand, production limits on some produce is removed to enable Member States to compete in world trade, and on the other hand it includes clauses to support short food supply chains, local markets, and local food chains (European Union 2013). However, the CAP reform also leaves more power to Member States to target spending according to their own priorities. The 2013 reforms are likely to impact Country Durham's farming community, but the nature of this is not yet clear due to the recent conclusion of the consultation on CAP implementation in England.

Beyond the CAP, one interviewee (CD-CS2) expected the European level to affect implementation of public procurement elements of the *SLFS*, as the prohibition on specifying 'local' in procurement tenders in the interests of the common market is in direct conflict with a strategy that revolves around market opportunities for local food. However, they acknowledged that 'when you look at examples of best practice they seem to get around it somehow', referring to practices of specifying 'fresh and seasonal' instead of 'local'. The innovations contained in the 2014 EU Public Procurement Directive reform (European Union 2014)[160] may well provide more avenues for procurers to use environmental and social grounds to meet their own requirements. In the meantime County Durham's *Corporate Strategy for Commissioning and Procurement* (DCC 2012a), while recognising that tenders may not specify 'local', notes a number of measures to promote local wealth creation that could help make tenders more accessible for small, local procurers. These include an electronic system for local suppliers to easily bid for contracts between £5000 and £50000, with all buyers of such goods and services to seek at least one quote via the system, and the creation of a Procurement Action Group to lead supplier engagement.

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[160] Includes environment and social criteria rather than consideration of price alone (see Chapter 2)

Figure 9-5 Summary of factors affecting the Co. Durham Sustainable Local Food Strategy project

Factors	Effect for local food group
Structure and organisation of food policy group	
Structural	
Members/composition	Absence of private sector on PSG, especially farmers
	Absence of supermarkets is conundrum; business variety needed for balance
	Limited DCC actors on PSG, and may not be powerful/senior enough
Consultants/advisors	Consultancy facilitation is helpful, enables immediate response
History, origins	Origins in PhD project, brings legitimacy to coordinator
Resources	Financial resources for limited time
	PSG actors reluctant to commit in-kind resources
Operational	
Membership grounds	PSG actors chosen for values, networks and cross-sector representation – actors to work via own organisations
	Food Partnership membership is assumed, lacks accountability
Leadership/management	Leader has formal legitimacy from employment and PhD
	Over- reliance on leader means others contribute less; project vulnerable
Location, relation vis-à-vis local government	
Structural	
Location	External location is novel, prevents being lost in DCC structures
	No ready-made embeddedness into policy processes; uses DRCC networks
Mandate/ legitimacy	No public mandate, but legitimacy in being funded, and part of established and accountable organisation
Operational	
Partnerships and collaborations	Multi-sector PSG intended to implement via own organisations
	PSG actors may experience conflict in values/ways of working
	Implementation relies too heavily on unaccountable Food Partnership, and organisations with just one network link
Local level context	
Structural	
Local level powers	Partnership-level *Sustainable Communities Strategy* frames other strategies
	Abolition of districts prevents targeted implementation; no AAP food agenda
Political environ.	Lack of regional entities for formal cooperation across North East
Admin/management	Unitary authority is beset with tensions and centralised
Ways of working	-
Operational	
Understanding levers & language	No evidence; adoption will take time, depend on individuals' will
Multilevel context	
Structural	
ML food framing	*Sustainable Communities Strategy* gives local food framing
	Curry report gives supportive regional framing
	Lack of national food policy to back up *SLFP*, esp. in biotech approach
Policy framings by dept	New EU Procurement Directive environmental to help get around 'local'
	County Durham plan is development-heavy, encroaching on Green Belt
	Weak *NPPF* allows green belt development in 'exceptional circumstances'
	National economic strategy might compromise farming future
	CAP's 3-crop rule seems to promote diversity but could harm viability
	EU procurement laws do not allow local to be specified in tender calls
Operational	
Partnerships/mediation through levels	Lord Curry as supporter transcends regional and national levels
	Connections with other NE food initiatives
	North East EU constituency is a vehicle for lobbying on CAP

Source: author

9.4   Summary

This chapter has described the structural and operational factors that affect the work of entities involved in the County Durham *SLFS* project. It is clear that the most important way of working during the case study period was development and nurturing networks, in order to secure buy-in and implementation capacity from a broad spectrum of actors and organisations within the county. The ability to form productive networks and to leverage them was affected by the location of the *SLFS* project outside DCC structures (and within DRCC/DCA), by the composition of the PSG and the wider Food Partnership. While the networks of all PSG actors are intended to be leveraged, the project coordinator is a key player in the project, with the largest, strongest and most actively sought networks. This is extremely beneficial, but it also renders the project somewhat vulnerable, not least when faced with an uncertain funding future.

The large and unwieldy structure of DCC is also seen as an impediment to effective network building as it is difficult for external actors to penetrate and gain support, and is beset with bureaucracy. The rural nature of County Durham means the county is directly affected by certain EU policies, around public procurement and the CAP, yet although the local economy is a major priority and there is an intention in some quarters to promote local food, it tends to be overshadowed by a knowledge-based economic agenda.

Now that the findings from all five of the case studies have been described, the next chapter compares the findings, and seeks institutional insights on local level food policy through the second stage of analysis.

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10 Analysis and discussion

10.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to compare the findings from the five case studies and set out the findings from the second stage of analysis, and to discuss the findings in the context of previous theoretical and empirical literature. The next two sections compare the case studies' visions, aims and objectives, drawing insights on their core definitions regarding sustainable or 'good' food and their views of the food system, and then comparing the structural set-up and functions of the food policy groups. Section 10.4 compares the case studies on the structural and operational factors that affect their capacity to pursue their aims, using the four governance locations as sub-headings. Explanations are built by running the comparative data through the abstract concept of new institutionalism. The final section considers the contribution that this study makes to the academic literature, on new institutionalism, conceptualisation of food policy groups, and to the study of food policy in the English context.

10.2 Visions, aims and objectives

There are several ways in which the visions, aims and objectives of good policy groups can be assessed. A crucial criterion for identifying eligible food policy groups for this project was that they must envisage a joined-up approach to food policy across food-related policy domains and service areas that are handled at the local level, and seek to create synergies between them (figure 4-3). As such, on one level the common aim of local food policy groups is to change the way that food policy is handled within local government, from discrete silos to cross-domain thinking whereby food is at the centre of policy decisions rather than as a disconnected afterthought.

In the groups' strategies, charters, or other documents, however, the visions, aims and objectives are expressed in terms of attributes and impacts of food provisioning arrangements and food environment. The visions and aims/objectives[161] of the case studies are tabulated in table 10-1, with the latter grouped into seven themes: consumer health, environment, local economy, food security, fairness, ethics, and culture. The terms of expression and focus areas vary but there is consistency in the themes, as (generally) every case has at least one 'tick' in each group[162].

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[161] The tabulation draws on both aims and objectives, as in some cases the themes were more evident in the latter. For London the aims/objectives are discerned from examples of projects that the LFP would support.

[162] Islington and Manchester do not specifically mention food security or resilience but food security issues within a community – access, affordability and right to food – are addressed under 'fairness'.

Table 10-1 Values and objectives of the food policy groups

	London	Islington	Manchester	Bristol	County Durham
Vision/top-line statement	Healthy and sustainable; 'good food'	Healthy, environmentally and socially sustainable food is affordable and accessible to all	Enjoyable, safe, nutritious, environmentally sustainable	'Good food for people, places, planet'	Revitalised, viable, diverse local food system; supports local economy; makes available to all wide range of fresh, healthy foods sustainably produced in & around Co. Durham
Consumer health					
Safe	✓	✓	✓		
Healthy/nutritious	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Environment					
Enviro. sustainability			✓	✓	✓
Sustainable farming	✓				
Minimal waste	✓			✓	✓
Min. resource/low input	✓				✓
Reduce carbon footprint		✓			
Local economy					
Local supply chains		✓		✓	✓
Short food supply chain			✓		
Local economy/viability	✓			✓	✓
Food retail diversity				✓	
Community food sec.					
Community resilience				✓	✓
Food security	✓				
Fairness					
Access k'ledge,education			✓	✓	✓
Fairness, right to food	✓		✓		✓
Affordability		✓		✓	
Accessibility	✓	✓			
Reduce health inequalities		✓			
Social participation			✓		
Ethics					
Ethical food/trade	✓	✓	✓		✓
Workers rights	✓			✓	
Animal welfare	✓			✓	✓
Culture					
Enjoyment/tastiness	✓		✓	✓	
Food culture and diversity		✓			

(Source: Author, compiled from LDA 2007; GLA 2011; IFP 2010; LBI & NHS Islington 2010b; Food Futures 2007; BCC 2010a; BFPC 2013a; CDFP 2014)

Two terms recur in several case studies as shorthand for the overarching vision: 'good food' and 'local food system'. 'Good food' is used in the documents of the food policy groups in London, Bristol, County Durham and Manchester, accompanied by definitions (table 10-2). Again the definitions cover many of the same themes. They adhere to Sage's (2003) three attributes of

'good food': properties of the product, ecologically embedded characteristics, and socially embedded features. While all three pillars of sustainability are evident in the definitions of London and Bristol, in Islington and Manchester the economic pillar is absent, despite promotion of local or shorter food supply chains amongst their aims/objectives.

Table 10-2 Definitions of 'good food'

Good food is...	
London	'safe, secure, healthy, fair, profitable, sustainable, enjoyable and accessible to all'.
Bristol	'As well as being tasty, healthy and affordable the food we eat should be good for nature, good for workers, good for local businesses and good for animal welfare.'
	'Everyone should have access to information, training and resources that enable them to grow, buy, cook, and enjoy good food.'
	'The public and policy-makers should support and value food enterprises who promote local jobs, prosperity and diversity, and treat workers well.'
	'Food should be produced, processed, distributed & disposed of in ways that benefit nature.'
Manchester	'enjoyable, safe, nutritious, and environmentally sustainable'.
Co. Durham	'food that is safe, nutritious, of good quality and environmentally sustainable'.

(Source: author compiled from GLA 2011; Food Futures 2007; BFPC 2012c; CDFP 2014)

The word 'good' is a more accessible, everyday term than 'sustainable'. It avoids 'quality', which is open to a myriad different understandings, is associated with assurance schemes, and is vulnerable to appropriation (Sage 2003). However 'good' invites binary value judgements about the origins and qualities of food so that any food that is not provided in a way that impeccably upholds the definition appears by default to be 'bad'. Sage has no objection to this binary opposition, considering 'bad food' largely to be the outcome of industrial scale production and 'good food' to be produced with consideration of sustainability, naturalness and animal welfare. Others have argued that binary value judgements such as 'alternative' versus 'conventional' and 'local' versus 'global' are problematic because the distinctions are not clear-cut (Hinrichs 2003; Watts et al. 2005). 'Good food' imbues the food itself with the moral values of exchange relations, so that a food item could be deemed 'bad' if any aspect of its provisioning falls short of any of the criteria – even if its nutritional or sensory qualities are perfectly acceptable.

The term 'local food system' appears in the formal expressions of the food policy groups/programmes in London, Bristol and County Durham, but does not have exactly the same meaning in each. In Bristol the 'food system' is described as having six key components – production, processing, distribution, retail, catering and waste (Carey 2013). While covering all supply chain stages except inputs, this represents only a portion of the wider food system that includes context, multilevel policy and other shaping forces, and multifarious outputs (figure 1-1). This may give the impression of seeking 'some kind of self-sustaining, 'enclosed' food system' (Kneafsey 2010, p.180), but local food is clearly a means to an end of greater

sustainability, and actors are actively engaged with policy at multiple levels. Thus, Bristol's view of a 'local food system' is a conceptual sub-system that is territorial but remains part of the greater whole.

In County Durham 'local food system' refers to the distribution and consumption of food produced within and near to the county. Kneafsey (2010) draws attention to the common conflation of 'regional food systems' and 'regional food networks', while Harris (2009) considers embedding production and consumption into places via local food networks to be the antithesis of the placelessness of conventional agri-food systems. The 'local food system' envisioned by County Durham is broadly synonymous with promotion of short food supply chains on a geographical basis, and is a means for supporting the local economy. This, and the inclusion of broader sustainability aims, means County Durham avoids a charge of defensive localism.

Finally, for London 'food system' refers to every facet of food in the capital from the standpoint of meeting the needs of its residents. This inward-looking definition has parallels with Pothukuchi and Kaufman's (1999) urban food system for planning policy that pertains to food within the boundaries of a city, and Mendes' conceptualisation of food systems as 'an urban governance concern evidenced in municipal support for food-related initiatives that are seen to align with municipal roles and responsibilities,' (Mendes 2008, p.943). There is the greatest risk here of perpetuating divides between urban and rural, and production and consumption, but the sheer size of Greater London, which is effectively a region, means this is perhaps inevitable.

Another point on the visions and aims of food policy groups is whether they seek to forge an alternative to the current food system configuration, or to improve the dominant conventional configuration to render it healthier and more sustainable. The desirability of supermarkets' involvement and attempts to engage them throws 'alternative' or 'conventional' food system configurations into sharpest relief, since supermarkets are the physical manifestation of, and power-holders in, industrial, globalised food provisioning. Table 10-3 shows the five case studies' positions on supermarkets.

The different positions come down to the degree of alignment, or perceived alignment, between the values that underpin exchange relations. For instance, the London Food Programme's definitions of sustainable are sufficiently broad for supermarkets to see a reflection of their own understandings, and the profit and efficiency-driven values of supermarkets are not excluded. In County Durham, on the other hand, the vision is deliberately geared towards 'small', 'local', and 'alternative' as the antithesis of supermarket values. In Bristol, the vision and aims were forged without supermarket involvement, so in addition to supermarkets' inability to engage at the local level they may well fail to find common ground with the BFPC's core values. This seems to suggest that if supermarkets are to be involved they should be present from an early

stage, yet in Manchester and Islington, where a supermarket was involved at the outset, they withdrew for reasons unknown. It is possible that in one or both of these cases the Co-op withdrew after failing to have their preferences incorporated into the shared values; if this is the case it negates concerns in County Durham that a supermarket would exert too great an influence in the early stages.

Table 10-3 Food policy groups' positions on supermarket involvement

	Past involvement	Involvement during fieldwork	Position
London	Sainsbury's	Sainsbury's Budgens	Supermarkets bring consumer data; can effect change in food provisioning
Islington	Co-op	-	Not opposed, but did not find out why Co-op became disengaged.
Manchester	Co-op	-	Not opposed, but did not find out why Co-op became disengaged.
Bristol	-	-	Empty seat for a supermarket on BFPC, recognise importance in food system but failed to attract
County Durham	-	-	Exclusion during formative period. May be open to involvement later, but cautious over influence

Source: author

A related point is how far the formal, expressed values and visions are shared by all actors in a food policy group. In all cases except Islington alternative versions held by some actors were detected. In Bristol and County Durham the chief architects of the formal visions and values were their biggest champions, and murmurings of alternative views went unrecognised. In Manchester no dissent was found within the steering group but more was reported in the Food Futures Forum, where some saw the programme as not radical enough. Having two tracks for formal and informal visions is not necessarily problematic in itself. While it is useful for key understandings to be set out in black and white to provide a baseline, variations can boost inclusivity and be accretive towards the general aim – as long as the differences are acknowledged. If they are ignored then there is a risk of that chasms of misunderstanding could open up, leading to festering animosity.

10.3 Structures and functions of the food policy groups

There is a degree of consistency in the structural configurations of the food policy groups/ programmes insofar as all have a central and stable group of steering actors that meets on a regular basis; all have 'working' or 'implementation' groups as sub-sets of the wider cadre of actors; and all but London have a wider, less formal forum that meets occasionally, with which contract is maintained via email and which allows for wider views to be captured. This lends support to the suggestion that food policy groups are policy communities, and the wider, less

formal forums are issue networks, as per March and Rhodes' (1992) policy networks continuum. This is discussed in more detail in section 10.5.2 below.

In Bristol and County Durham there is evidence that the policy communities arose as a result of lead actors studying groups elsewhere, which may be construed as mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell 1983), although this requires the local food policy movement to be viewed as an organisational field. As for the issue networks, the drivers differ. In Manchester the Food Futures Forum was established as a result of an observed need for wider community input by a student, and can also be seen as isomorphism since a solution was drawn from experiences elsewhere. In both Islington and County Durham the wider Partnership was formed to play a central role in implementation from the start, whereas in Bristol the issue network pre-existed and helped establish the policy community. As for London, an issue network is not missed since agenda decisions are made by the Chair with input from a large, representative policy community.

It is also noteworthy that the food policy networks of London and Manchester are part of a formal programme of work that comprises additional entities. Both have officers who are employed by the local authority, and Manchester also has the Food Futures Board which, at the time of the fieldwork, was made up of MCC senior officers. As these are the two cases where the food policy work is located within local government, this location, and the endorsement and resources that accompany it, requires formal programme elements due to public sector norms.

The case study food policy groups each have defined functions and working methods, through which they intend to pursue their aims. Their ability effectively to do so depends on structural and operational institutions. Table 10-4 assigns the groups' functions to six categories, albeit in a rudimentary way that required interpretation of expressions. Where the main food policy group is part of a wider programme, the entity responsible for each function is indicated[163].

The three unshaded rows of table 10-4 contain functions for the identification and discussion of issues, while the shaded columns contain action-based functions. In some case studies there is an omnipresent fear lest the group become a 'talking shop' – that is, a forum for discussing issues without assigning action points. Thus, while the unshaded functions are important, the shaded rows provide ballast against the talking shop. There is a fine line between knowledge brokerage and talking shop, according to whether knowledge is shared for its own sake or with the intention that actors apply it to a problem and draw up action points. The Islington Food Strategy Steering Group is most at risk of being a talking shop as the knowledge brokerage and communications roles are prized and advocacy work by public sector actors happens largely behind the scenes.

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[163] For London, B = Board, IG = Implementation groups, and PG = project groups. For Manchester, B = Board, SG = Steering Group

Table 10-4 Functions of the food policy groups

	London	Islington	Manchester	Bristol	Co. Durham
Research, monitor, identify issues	Monitor/ evaluate intervention effectiveness (B) Develop, test, incubate projects and policies (IG)	Review objectives Use local evidence to target work & identify barriers to participation	Identify issues (SG)	Identify & select priorities Oversee work group progress Ensure work is underpinned by evaluation Account for funding Report progress	Bring and test ideas and perspectives
Knowledge brokerage, communication		Raise profile of food issues Disseminate information Promote clear messages Communicate partnership's work Link initiatives		Promote food knowledge, skills, experience Ensure partner organisations are informed	
Convene, partner, facilitate	Thought-leadership (B) Facilitate partnerships (B) Drive & create opportunities to pursue board priorities (IG)	Work in partnership to ensure best resource use Support delivery of LAAs	Harness enthusiasm Come up with innovations Drive activity (SG)	Work with range of bodies to further aims Facilitate coordination of elements of initiative	Support engagement of wider Partnership
Advocate, seek influence		Make recommend-ations Campaigning and lobbying Passing up information	Influence food aspects of plans and strategies (B)	Influence and advocate for local, regional, national policies	Respond to consultation Seek engagement through Charter
Advise	- Advise on strategy delivery (B) - Recommend on policy and projects (IG)				
Develop/ support project	Support projects & orgs (B) Develop & implement priority projects (PG) Support work of funded projects (IG)			Delegate tasks/progs to sub-groups	
Other	Lead by example (B)	Develop strategy	Make spending decisions (SG)	Set work programme Action areas of *Who Feeds Bristol*	

Source: Author

It is remarkable that partnership working is a common theme under the heading 'convene, partner, facilitate'; although it is not explicit in the case of Manchester, other evidence indicated

that the model is dependent on partnership between the Council and civil society, for agenda setting and running programmes. This means that the food policy groups are not the sole entities for pursuing their aims but their capacity is augmented by working through partnerships with other organisations, be they the organisations of member actors or external.

10.4 Comparing the institutionalist factors

This section is a comparative discussion of the structural and operational factors that affect the capacity of each of the five case studies to pursue their aims. The discussion is based upon the 17 factors identified in table 3-1, with the four sub-headings representing the governance locations identified in Chapter 3.

For each of the factors the findings from the cases are compared and a new institutionalist lens is applied to provide theoretically-based explanations for the effects of different institutionalist frameworks on food policy groups' capacities.

10.4.1 Structure and operations of the group/programme

The first point regarding structure and operations of food policy groups is the membership composition. In all the case studies there is an intention that the membership should include as broad a representation of the food sector as possible in order to have a spectrum of knowledge, views and experiences. In practice, however, the membership lists look quite different. In London and Bristol a variety of members are included from across the private sector (although gaps still remain, such as a major retailer in Bristol and major food manufacturers in London), whereas in Islington, Manchester, and County Durham the private sector is conspicuous by its absence or poor representation. In the latter case farmers/producers are particularly sorely missed, and as a result there are questions about how effectively the project can facilitate the connection of local production with supply and consumption.

The reasons for the gaps vary, from no invitation being issued, to no attempts at engagement, to actors/sectors being unwilling or unable to participate due to incompatible scales or, in the case of farmers and small businesses, being unable to take time away from their business for meetings. In the last of these scenarios food groups have prioritised alignment with the institutions of the public sector, which habitually operates through meetings, lobbying, consultations, etc, resulting in exclusion of some actors. Thus, the operational institutions privilege participation of some actors and organisations over others, and those for whom round-the-table discussion is alien and/or who cannot be absent from their workplace are marginalised. While concerns were raised in the literature review about actor exclusion on the basis of class or race (DeLind, 2011; DuPuis & Goodman, 2005; Jarosz, 2008; Kloppenburg et al, 1996; Mendes, 2008; Sonnino, 2009), these concerns were not borne out in the English cases, which are more focused on organisational or professional representation than lay community members.

Some of the membership gaps are, nonetheless, acknowledged and efforts are made to compensate through representative groups or opinion-gathering. For instance, the National Farmers Union (NFU) represents primary producers on the London Food Board, and the NFU was instrumental in the Durham steering group's solicitation of farmers' opinions via questionnaires. In Bristol it was suggested that the British Retail Consortium be invited onto the BFPC in the absence of a supermarket. Another membership-bridging mechanism is leverage of networks; indeed, having a strong network is a condition of membership in the Bristol and County Durham cases. Networked actors aid issue identification and knowledge brokerage by representing more perspectives, and also are vehicles for advocacy and seeking influence. This supports the idea of food policy groups as policy networks. Some actors belong to other policy networks in addition to food policy – such as around education policy, environment, planning, etc – and as they move between them they share information on institutional ways of working and propound ideas that they have bought into, meaning that policy networks can be effective instruments for advancing the food policy groups' aims.

The operational side of food policy group membership is how the groups are formed, on what grounds, and who the gatekeepers to membership are. In London, Manchester and Bristol actors were purposively appointed by a leader or small core group on the basis of (knowledge or experiential) resources. This supports the use of resource dependency to ensure that the full complement of resources needed to get the job done is available to the group. In County Durham membership was also purposive, but in this case it was based on food system representation and compatibility with the programme manager's ideas on local food and sustainability, while in-kind resources were an afterthought.

In Islington, on the other hand, membership of the food policy groups has been fluid and open to whoever wished to attend. The lack of clear institutional rules for participation does not necessarily enable participation by giving actors free reign to determine their own terms, as may be imagined from Lowndes and Roberts' (2013) perception of gaps between rules, practices and narratives. Rather, some actors' perception of their membership and role is casual so that they adopt practices with little relation to the rules – and they can easily disengage without repercussions, thereby impeding a stable membership base.

It is also significant that in none of the cases were members elected to their positions in the food policy groups. All were appointed. This was only acknowledged as an issue in Bristol, but the implication is a lack of democratic accountability to the wider community in whose interests the food policy groups exist. In addition, with the exception of London, where Board membership decisions are made unilaterally by the Chair based on her need for knowledge to support decision-making, there is no mechanism for dispensing with actors who underperform.

As well as appointing members, the leaders of the food policy groups also set the tone and approach of the entire initiative. This is particularly well demonstrated in London, where there was a difference in leadership style between the eras of the two leaders to date, who brought institutional ways of working from previous or primary arenas of activity. Logically-speaking leaders' backgrounds could give them greater traction with their original sectors due to institutional compatibility, so that the current London Food Board Chair would aid the media communications function, while the former Chair would have more influence over fellow politicians. However while the current leader is certainly a powerful communicator, it was outside the scope of this study to judge the former leader's political influence retrospectively.

In addition to official leaders, the use of consultants is common within the case studies. Several different kinds were identified, but the purpose of all was to ensure the food policy groups had functional institutional processes, and to guide reflection and change where necessary. The first kind of consultant is the academic, or researcher with exceptional local food knowledge. The BFPC has both an academic chair and a community researcher. The former brings gravitas, circumspection and insights on best practice from other places and contexts, while the latter has unrivalled knowledge on food issues in Bristol to connect the work to the local experience. In Manchester, on the other hand, there has been no continuous academic involvement in Food Futures but a multi-disciplinary academic group was convened as the one-off Expert Panel, whose advice resulted in new governance structures. Moreover, some Expert Panel members were involved in food policy groups in other English cities, so the exercise provided knowledge brokerage – or a route towards mimetic isomorphism (DiMaggio & Powell 1983). In County Durham the academic perspective and local knowledge was covered by the programme coordinator (leader), out of whose PhD the Food Partnership originated, while the role of the process consultant was to keep the group on track and encourage reflection. Only in Islington was there no consultant. In this case the academic chair, intended to demonstrate independence from the Council, had the potential to fulfil this role, but during the fieldwork period the Chair was a junior academic who did not specialise in local food policy and was observed neither to inform the group on best practice nor to challenge it over content or processes. As a result there was a pressing need to review the efficacy of the Islington Food Strategy Partnership structures, particularly in terms of the role of relatively inactive civil society actors.

It was possible to identify in several of the case studies actors who play a more prominent role than others in advancing the group's aims, and/or who are particularly well respected by others. This reflects a hierarchical governance mode within the groups, yet status is not necessarily related to sector or formal leadership. Drawing on the literature on resource dependency, an explanation is that prominent actors bring resources to the group that are highly valued for carrying out its mission (Rhodes 1997), such as knowledge of the local food system, wide or powerful networks, or the capacity to carry out work themselves or via their organisations. The

notion of 'special people' (Lowndes & Squires 2012) suggests that some actors' elevated status comes down to an intrinsic quality or ability. However not all prominent actors qualify as special people, but the latter are a subset of the former. In resource terms, the distinction can be drawn by whether the resources are material or learned, or whether they are derived from character traits, like powers of persuasion, energy and creativity. The latter resources are so highly valued because the bearer has the potential to galvanise others into action, and promote widespread entrepreneurship or agency with respect of institutional barriers. For instance, a civil society actor in the case of London was observed not only actively to seek to overcome public sector barriers, but also to encourage others to set a positive example and to seek to dismantle their self-imposed barriers to agency. Without such people there is a danger that some actors take a back seat while over-relying on the leadership or a small group of engaged actors. It makes the entire programme of work vulnerable to the continued involvement of an individual, and if they should withdraw or change jobs the entire initiative could collapse.

Actors' willingness to find work-around solutions to barriers posed by the public sector's institutional rules was seen to vary between the case studies – in other words, their preparedness to exercise agency in a bid to realise intentions (Hay 2002, p.94) through whatever weaknesses can be detected in the rules. In this way, agency is the key to effective partnership working, especially between the public and civil society sectors. Agency by civil society in respect of public sector rules is most clearly evident in the case of London, where the need for agency itself was enshrined with rule-like institutional status in the 2011 *Implementation Plan*, demonstrating how institutional practices can, over time and with accepted use, be elevated to rules. That said, the London case also shows the importance of regular reference to existing rules, as the low profile of the *Terms of Reference* has led some actors erroneously to try to impose constraints on what Board members can and cannot say through their narratives, as they adhere to the normative institutions of the organisation that employs them. In Bristol, on the other hand, institutional constraints of some actors are acknowledged, as it is understood that some public and private sector actors cannot subscribe to certain campaigns that run counter to the logics of appropriateness of their professional lives. As a result, these campaigns are carried by non-constrained actors.

The two cases where the least agency by civil society in respect of institutional barriers was detected were Islington and Manchester – although in the latter this was somewhat mitigated by Food Futures Forum as a non-MCC controlled space. The reason is that inception of the programme – whether it was predominantly via top-down processes or a combination of top-down and bottom-up processes – has an effect on perceived ownership of the food policy activity. Both the Islington Food Strategy Partnership and Manchester Food Futures were initiated from within their respective local authorities, and the intended co-ownership by civil society has not come to full fruition. Drawing on Hardy and Maguire (2013) and Lowndes

(2005), one may understand that these groups have been marginalised by the institutional arrangements, and although Islington actors in particular express a desire to change the institutional arrangements and become more involved they find they lack the power to do so on their own terms. In the London and Bristol cases, on the other hand, strong civil society movements around food (London Food Link and the Bristol Food Network respectively) pre-date the food policy activity and participated in a joint inception process with the public sector, so that the double-act was established at the same time as joint ownership and civil society experiences no marginalisation. In County Durham the food policy group was initiated by civil society, which brought in public sector actors at an early stage and, as a result, fostered joint ownership.

In none of the case studies were there any apparent feelings that the group must remain wedded to structures that were seen no longer to be effective. Rather, a readiness to edit structures when necessary was observed across the board. In London and Manchester the structures, membership, and roles of the various entities had been purposively redrawn for greater efficiency and to respond to external circumstances; and in Islington the lead Council department moved from Sustainability to Environmental Health, a change necessitated by the dismantling of Sustainability, to ensure the survival of the strategy programme. This demonstrates that no path dependency has developed in the structures of the food policy groups themselves, but there is a desire to remain flexible so as to operate more efficiently within the institutional environment. In some instances structural change in the food policy groups is in response to exogenous changes in the environment; in other instances it stems from trial and error, such as the abolition of the executive group of the London Food Board because it served no clear purpose. Either way, the desire for efficiency runs contrary to the intimation from Meyer and Rowan's (1977) original proposition for sociological institutionalism, that efficient institutions are less important than mimicking those of other organisations in order to gain legitimacy – although the parallel in this instance may not be entirely fitting since the structural changes are not isomorphic.

As for original framing of the food policy work, in most of the cases the overarching food policy work is not constrained either by the original hook with which buy-in was sought from the public sector or by the department that provided start-up funding. In Manchester, County Durham and Bristol start-up funds were provided by Public Health, and in Islington by Sustainability – yet in each case the monies have been used for broad, cross-domain strategic work. The exception is London, where it was reported that, in the past, institutional processes of budget administration were obstructive, as spending decisions for the LFP's budget under the LDA had to be approved by an actor who did not fully buy-into the food agenda and who blocked its use for some projects. This differs from the current situation in London, where spending decisions are made by the London Food Board Chair, who has a holistic view of food

issues (although constraints from the Mayoral agenda, and ways of overcoming them, are discussed below). The difference comes down first to the institutional rules on budget administration that exist within the setting where budget is held, and secondly how those rules are received and interpreted by actors making the decision. Drawing on Lowndes and Roberts (2013), it depends on the relative rigidity of rules within the administering department: where the rules are unbendable there is no scope for a gap to emerge between rules and practices; where the rules are less rigid, they can be interpreted in practice, with actors using them as cognitive templates only and exercising agency to turn them to their requirements.

It is remarkable that, while there are huge differences in funding amounts, in all five cases actors felt activities were restricted by budgetary limitations. The constraints – or perceived constraints – require the groups to be entrepreneurial over how they work. One entrepreneurial practice of the food policy groups/programmes of London and Manchester (notably both of which are located within local government structures) is to tap budgets of other public sector departments to carry out food work that progresses the aims of both. In such cases funding is usually ring-fenced for a particular piece of work, but this means the core budget can be reserved for other work. The food policy groups in London and Manchester have legitimacy in the eyes of council departments as they are internal programmes, and strong networks into departments that they can leverage. Budget-sharing between council entities is an acceptable course of action where it can be justified by joint aims, although it has been rendered less acceptable recently as spending cuts have left all departments' budgets with little to no excess. The practice has the additional advantage of strengthening internal networks, and facilitating future cross-policy domain work, by demonstrating how food issues may be addressed in practice rather than just advocating for their consideration in policy.

The budget-sharing option is not available in the same way to 'external' food policy groups. They may succeed in obtaining some funding from a particular department, such as Bristol Food Policy Council's public heath funding, but the underlying mechanism is different. BFPC lacks both the BCC networks and the formal legitimacy within BCC for it to acceptably seek budgetary allocations from departmental budgets, but it benefited from one member actor who was employed in the public health team, and who had the capacity to make budgetary decisions.

Another tactic for bridging funding shortfalls is to approach external organisations for resources. In London some match funding was obtained by civil society partners submitting bids to charitable funds, while some originated from private partners. Such external match funding brings joint governance over projects, providing on the one hand accountability and on the other a measure of freedom from the Mayoral agenda. In Manchester it was mooted that an independent (non-MCC) Food Futures would allow the private and civil society sectors independently to seek resources; whereas in Bristol the already-independent BFPC would need to become incorporated to apply for funding in its own right, without members' organisations

serving as vehicles for bids. In both of these cases any discussion of external funds was tempered with caution over strings attached, particularly if it could constitute a public relations fillip for private companies, and potential structural implications. This concern, viewed through a theoretical lens, highlights that relationships between organisations within an institutional matrix are underwritten by institutional conditions between them (Lowndes & Roberts 2013). The issue is whether a food policy group, in forging an institutional relationship with a new organisation in an effort to overcome resource constraints, in fact exposes itself to new constraints in the form of the institutional norms and ways of working of their would-be partners.

10.4.2   Location and relations of food policy group

The food policy groups in both London and Manchester are located within their respective local government structures, which has brought them credibility and the ability to use public sector institutional ways of working to their advantage. In particular, internal networks are acceptable institutional channels for seeking policy influence through a range of departments. Although this is exceptionally useful and network connections in both London and Manchester were seen to be high level, in the latter there is evidence that their breadth was constrained by some departmental heads' lack of will to absorb and perpetuate the food agenda. In Islington, where the food policy group's location is ambiguous, the mid-ranking LBI officers on the steering group have less policy influence in their home departments than their senior colleagues and, as a result, the networks lack depth. They are also less likely to be involved in other cross-departmental policy networks, which present an opportunity to advocate for food issues in more, wide ranging policy.

The food policy groups in Bristol and Country Durham, which exist outside of local authority structures, encounter greater barriers in using actor-network channels into and within the local authorities – although they try to use them nonetheless. In County Durham there are issues of network depth, and in Bristol of network breadth, meaning that BCC contacts must be sought from scratch for each new issue it tackles. In addition, these 'external' groups are not embedded in the local government culture and therefore are not *au fait* with the institutional processes, levers and language needed to exert influence. In Bristol the BFPC's language and framing of food issues that are not always compatible with those of BCC departments, while County Durham's steering group was unaware of the procedural pathway for the *SLFS* to be adopted by the CDP. In both cases actors with networks within the local authority have offered advice on adapting language and conforming to processes. This is resonates with DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) normative isomorphism, as the food policy groups alter their institutions to appear more professional to Council entities, in a bid for more efficient influence. Clearly local government departments are not going to change their operational institutions suddenly and seismically,

prompted just by the food policy group asking them to. Rather, the food policy groups, in aligning their approach to those of local government departments on a case by case basis, gain legitimacy and respect, so that the new institutional approach to food is slowly, incrementally, introduced and embedded – an idea that is consistent with conceptualisations of punctuated evolution or institutional layering (Thelen 1999; Mahoney & Thelen 2010). It is difficult to say how far institutions have evolved or been over-layered to date because the longest-running food policy groups – London and Manchester Food Futures – are also the two 'internal' models.

While 'internal' food policy groups have the advantage of strong internal networks and awareness of institutional ways of working, the trade-off of these benefits is a requirement to work in adherence to some constraining operational institutions. Firstly, they are subject to strict operational institutions over communications, which resulted in opacity over Manchester Food Futures activities, and in London the LFP's work was distorted by a press office that was bound to promote the Mayor but not the food agenda on its own merits. Secondly, there is a need to respond to the overarching agenda of the local authority, rather than a pure food agenda based on needs analysis. This does not mean that the food policy group's core values or objectives are compromised, nor that the cross-policy domain nature of food is undermined, but rather the priorities and flagship projects occasionally have to be re-framed. This is discussed in more detail in the next section. Thirdly, 'internal' food policy groups can be less critical of the Council than 'external' groups, which can publically and vocally hold it to account and also use the community consultation system as an advocacy mechanism in relation to proposed policy – an institutional process that is not appropriate for internal use.

An adjunct to the discussion on 'internal' or 'external' location is the department within which a food policy group resides or has the closest ties to. Departments have more or less power within the local authority depending on their proximity to civic priorities, which affects a group's capacity for influence over the top-level agenda. For instance, the LFP's residence within Business and Economy lent more weight to its activities at a time of economic strain than its former home in Environment. Conversely, the BFPC's formal association with BCC is via the Sustainability team, which held relatively little power and therefore was a less efficient link – and was more vulnerable to cuts.

The mandate of the food policy groups vis-à-vis local government also affects its effectiveness at advising, advocating, and seeking influence over policy. The LFP had the strongest mandate because the Chair was directly appointed by the Mayor and a new operational institution was created for her to advise the Mayor on food issues. While the Mayor was under no obligation to act on the advice, it was deliberately sought – as opposed to being unsolicited and proffered through lobbying channels – and therefore there was a high chance that it will be taken on board for the policy areas under the Mayor's direct control. Where the Mayor himself seeks to influence policy in the 33 boroughs, the advice informs his advocacy efforts. By way of

comparison, the Mayor of Bristol's general support for the vision and aims of the BFPC is a stamp of approval rather than a mandate. However as the city's figurehead, he also functions as an institutional channel to help raise the legitimacy and profile of the BFPC in otherwise unreachable policy domains and gives access to powerful city-wide networks.

The adoption of a food strategy or passing of a motion is also a formal mandate for a food policy group, as it signals acceptance of the need to address food issues and gives the food policy group the go-ahead for implementation. It is not the end-game for advocacy, however: while a strategy can aid integration into Council plans and strategies in the early days, on-going awareness-raising is needed to ensure action points do not fall by the wayside – or that the strategy as a whole sits on a shelf. In all three cases where a strategy has been adopted to date there has since been a need to review, renew or reframe it. For instance, the MCC motion on food poverty reasserted the Council's commitment to Food Futures around a new imperative, and by placing food poverty at the centre it gave Food Futures a new mandate to call for any related issues to be addressed across council departments. Both Bristol and County Durham, despite being 'external' food policy groups/programmes, intend for their plan or strategy to be adopted by the council (or LSP in the case of County Durham) – although again the institutional (cultural and procedural) barriers they face as outsiders to the Council institutional culture mean it could take some time.

10.4.3 Local level context

It has already been noted that that food policy groups occasionally re-frame their agendas to fit those of civic leaders. Since the leaders themselves are responding to issues within the local area context, in essence the groups are responding to changing external circumstances. While this observation may seem to support arguments that change is externally-driven, as is assumed in historical institutionalism where external change is the driver of critical junctures (Mahoney & Thelen 2010; Peters 2005), re-framing does not constitute institutional change *per se* but rather it is a bid to appear relevant to the top level agenda and, as a result, develop stronger institutional relations between the food policy group and the local authority through which it can seek influence more efficiently. Table 10-5 shows how the dominant framing and priorities of the London, Islington and Manchester cases have responded to changing local context and priorities since 2008; they are all framed around supporting the economy or mitigating the effects of economic difficulties.

The County Durham *SLFS*, being the most recent, has not been reframed, but the local economy framing is consistent with the others. Bristol, meanwhile, identifies needs independently of local government priorities and seeks contacts with individual BCC departments on a topic-driven basis. However, it does appeal to the strong green ethic in Bristol, and from the outset there has

been cooperation between BFPC and preparations for Bristol's year as European Green Capital in 2015, a civic priority given the international public attention this brings to the city.

Table 10-5 Topline framing of the food policy groups/programmes

	Previous framing		Current framing
London	Environment	⟹	Business and economy
Islington	Sustainability	⟹	Inequality
Manchester	Climate change	⟹	Food poverty
County Durham			Local economy
Bristol			(Sustainability)

Source: author

In addition to civic priorities, there is evidence that social capital within the local level context – that is, the habitual interaction between sectors and networks towards the effective running of society – affects institutional ways of working between a food policy group and local government. This supports Holman and Rydin's (2013) argument for a connection between social capital and norms of participation in local decision-making. In Bristol there are high levels of social capital, and it is institutionally acceptable for various organisations and campaigns to influence policy. This helps BFPC have traction with BCC, despite the network challenges of its external location that were identified above. In Manchester, on the other hand, the relatively low social capital and conservatism in the local governance context would make it too 'off the wall' for Food Futures to sit outside MCC structures. In County Durham the institutional environment is different again: the *SLFS*'s embedding in DRCC/DCA, a respected organisation, is expected to attract attention of senior council figures because it is seen as novel and dynamic – and therefore 'other' to the stifling and inefficient DCC institutions.

Another variable relating to local governance context is party politics. There are indications from both London and Bristol that party politics can either enable or impede food policy groups in working towards their aims. In London the Conservative party affiliation of the Mayor constitutes an institutional constraint that makes it impossible for work that conflicts with, or openly criticises, national government policy to be formally supported, while there is concern (if not firm evidence) that Labour-led boroughs will be less amenable to the food-related advocacy of a Conservative Mayor as a matter of principle. In Bristol, on the other hand, the Mayor's independence is helpful because his agenda is not bound by party political preferences, nor constrained by party political institutional channels for approval.

The next factor to consider is how the local government leadership model affects the work of the food policy groups. The Mayoral leadership model is helpful if the Mayor in post is sympathetic to the agenda and, as seen above, if it suits their political priorities. The respective Mayors of London and Bristol have each designated a representative to lead or to work with the food policy group. However, in Bristol the BFPC is not dependent on Mayor George Ferguson's support; the BFPC would continue even if Mayoral support were withdrawn, although with weaker institutional channels into the BCC and possibly an inhospitable local authority environment. On the other hand, London Mayor Boris Johnson's support constitutes ownership of the formal, supported elements of the LFP, and the programme's existence depends on it. While high level attention can accelerate institutional integration because food policy receives considerable, constant attention, too close association with a Mayor can make a food policy group vulnerable to electoral cycles, if their successor is disinterested in continuing a flagship project of the previous administration. This was the fear in London following the 2008 Mayoral election, and could well give rise to concern again at the end of Boris Johnson's second term in 2016 since, should the paid GLA team be decimated, civil society actors would undoubtedly struggle in their efforts to keep the issues alive and on the table having lost the support and structure that lent legitimacy to the operation. In both the Bristol and County Durham cases, on the other hand, the external status of the food policy groups provides a safeguard against electoral change, but the group can withdraw into civil society space, re-group, and formulate a different approach.

The implications of top-level support under a leader-and-cabinet model were hardly mentioned in any of the case studies. The former leader of BCC supported the BFPC – she had a seat on it – but her support for specific policy and activity was constrained by Liberal Democrat politics. Manchester, County Durham, and Islington all have a leader-and-cabinet model but the leader was not on the food policy group and did not send a representative. As a result, it is possible only to conclude that where there is a leader-and-cabinet model the work of the food policy group is not contingent on the explicit support of the leader themselves, but rather on officers and Councillors.

Finally, given that Islington, Bristol, Manchester and County Durham are all *de facto* unitary authorities in terms of their powers and responsibilities, while Greater London is *sui generis*, it was not possible to draw firm conclusions on the effect of different local government structures. What is pertinent, however, is that they cover areas of very different character, and each has a unique relationship with the immediately sub- and supra- administrative levels. These relationships, the repeated redrawing of administrative maps, and creation and dissolution of governmental entities means food policy groups grapple with changing institutional frameworks that underscore intra-level relations. For instance, the LFP struggles with policy implementation within the boroughs as a result of the Mayor's limited powers and poor representation of

boroughs on the London Food Board; in County Durham initial thinking on the *SLFS* pre-dated the dissolution of the seven districts, and the AAPs are unsuitable entities for ultra-local implementation; and Manchester is navigating rapidly changing structures as more power is being devolved from the national level to Greater Manchester.

10.4.4 Multilevel framing

The previous section considered the effect of local level context on food policy groups, including the effects of shifting sub- or supra-levels of government, which mean food policy groups depend on actors forging new working relationships and institutional channels. This section turns to the related but less tangible topic of policy framing, concerning which level is empowered to make which kinds of policy decisions and how they frame and constrain each other, as well as ways in which local level food policy groups strive to influence the national level.

As a result of the shifting sub-national structures, the channels for framing and for influencing issues within policy domains are no longer clear. This is especially evident in the case of Manchester, where Food Futures was seen to be beholden to public sector actors within policy domains – particularly health and environment – forging ways of working with respect of the changing structures, before they could seek to leverage them in pursuit of their aims.

What is more, the institutional framework of each food-related policy domain is complex and open to contradictions, contributing to the rich, multi-dimensional institutional matrix within which food policy groups operate (Lowndes & Roberts 2013; Lowndes 2005). The intentions of local food policy groups can be stymied by horizontal incompatibilities between policy domains; for instance, in the case of Bristol's 'Blue Finger' controversy the BFPC's objective of protecting good agricultural land was in conflict with the sustainable transport policy, which saw grade 1 agricultural land reserved for a public transport site. Another example is the economic framing of the County Durham *SLFS*, which at first appears to fit with the economic priorities of DCC but in fact the latter prioritises a hi-tech environmental economy rather than traditional farming economy. Inhospitable vertical policy framing also constrains the policy preferences of local food policy groups. These constraints are experienced as structural, but their root cause is the distribution of powers and responsibilities between levels that determine decision-making and compliance at each level. Where powers to overcome the structural barriers are lacking at the local level, food policy groups and local government must employ lateral thinking and creativity to take advantage of whatever institutional processes, loopholes and work-arounds are available to them to achieve the desired result. For example, local food policy groups advocate circumventing the restriction on specifying local origin in the EU Procurement Directive by addressing the informational and infrastructure needs of regional

producers; in Bristol the BFPC sought to counter the lack of requirement for businesses to separate out food waste by harnessing the Mayors' networks to discuss waste with business owners; and in Islington the LBI sought to counter the effect of the *NPPF* on takeaway zoning by adopting non-imminent directions to reinstate planning permission, and by preparing supplementary planning advice (non-legally binding) for officers.

Beyond individual policy domains, local food policy groups are subject to wide-angle framing on food issues by the national approach. There has been a shift in the national perspective since the 'Food Matters' era of 2008-2010, during which the food strategies for Greater London, Islington, and Manchester were published, from a focus on sustainability and acknowledgement of the cross-domain nature of food, to a largely economic approach that views biotechnology as the safeguard of food security. In County Durham and Manchester, for instance, the national level is seen as a food policy void because the approach is determinately hands-off, and thus provides neither back up to local level policy preferences and programmes nor a framework to give them direction.

The sense of being at odds with the national level was most clearly articulated in the Bristol case, as the sustainability focus of much of the BFPC's work clashes with national government looking to industry for answers – yet this has not prevented Bristol from pursuing its own direction within its territory. This reflects the positive side of the national void in that the issues that local food policy groups seek to address are 'below the radar', so that they do not have to comply with the need for evaluations or reporting on indicators. It would also appear to signify that local food policy groups are 'localism in action', utilising the institutional mechanisms newly created by the national level to mobilise multi-sector actors from within the local governance context, to take more locally-relevant actions. In reality, however, the newly created institutions of devolution to ever-smaller administrative units make food policy groups work harder. For instance, devolving school meal catering to individual schools rather than a centralised service within each local authority means engaging hundreds, rather than tens, of catering decision-makers. Moreover, localism has not (so far) involved significant and blanket devolution of fund-raising capacity so that the local level can be truly autonomous, but rather has been accompanied by crippling cuts to public services that places non-statutory services under threat – including, potentially, the food policy groups themselves.

The final point concerns the mechanisms through which food policy groups interact with the national level over its food policy approach, and seek to shift it. One mechanism employed in the case of London is to be a test case for policy approaches (such as universal free school meals), thereby showing national government what could be achieved, as direct lobbying would be inappropriate in the name of a Conservative Mayor (although some actors involved in the Board are openly critical of national policy through their own organisations). A second mechanism used in Bristol (but which would not be possible in London for the above reasons) is

to challenge the national level by responding to policy consultations (for example, on food in the school curriculum). A fourth, also used in Bristol, is actors' engagement in dissemination activities like presenting at conferences and publishing academic articles. Finally, a new mechanism for local authority areas to seek to influence multilevel policy is through the Sustainable Food Cities Network, which intends to serve the dual function of magnifying lobbying efforts vis-à-vis the national level and aiding shared learning between places. All the case studies are members of the SFCN, but it was formed after the fieldwork period of this research so it is not possible to comment on its utility as a national lobbying mechanism.

10.5 Discussion

This section assesses the contribution that this research has made to academic understanding of the potential of local level food policy in England, and the enablers and barriers it faces. First of all, consideration is given to the contribution made by applying new institutionalism to the study of local food policy groups, both in terms of the services to new institutionalist theory from its application to a new area of enquiry and how the conceptual framework has deepened understandings of the dynamics at play. This is followed by an examination of the findings in light of existing literature on how food policy groups can be conceptualised. Lastly, the findings are considered for their contribution to the on-going English food policy trajectory, to debates on food security and sustainability, and to understanding the effects of local government restructuring and central-local government relations in England.

10.5.1 New institutionalism

Lowndes (2005) provided a precedent for using new institutionalism – and specifically the institutional matrix – in an analysis of the actions of local government actors. Lowndes and Pratchett (2012) subsequently referred to key new institutionalist concepts in relation to local governance, particularly in considering the Conservative-led Coalition government's intention to alter central-local government relations as having the potential to be a critical juncture, yet in reality offering only incremental change. The present research has extended the application of the approach at the local level by exploring institutional relations between a partnership-like organisation and local government, and showing that the appropriateness and efficiency of different institutional channels for seeking influence (such as actors' networks, adoption of a strategy or motion, or the community consultation system) depends on the institutional culture within which the food policy group exists, the formality of its mandate, and the experiential resources proffered by its actors that can allow them to use channels more effectively.

Of the conceptual underpinnings of previous literature on food policy groups, new institutionalism in this thesis has the greatest synergy with Mendes' use of SUGC in Vancouver,

as both are concerned with constraints to implementation at the local government level. However, by taking the local governance context as an institutional matrix this research achieved a more nuanced and multi-dimensional understanding of the dynamics at play. This research considered four locations within which institutions reside, while Mendes' structural and operational factors concern the food policy groups themselves and relations vis-à-vis local government. The lack of attention to contextual features of the local governance – such as local government structure, leadership type, the powers and responsibilities afforded to the local level, the political environment and stability, and levels of social capital – is particularly missed in Mansfield and Mendes' comparative paper on urban agriculture policy implementation in three very different cities in the UK, USA, and Canada. The new institutionalist approach has also shed light on the conflict-riven nature of the space where conflicting institutions, framed as they are in policy silos, collide and cause tensions over priorities, such as between sustainable transport policy and the preservation of grade 1 agricultural land in Bristol. This goes beyond Mendes' acknowledgement of scalar challenges for food policy in general, with no specifics provided on food policy-related domain framing.

The research project has focused on food policy groups working towards their aims, which includes both advocacy work to get food onto the policy agenda and implementation of plans and strategies, regardless of whether a strategy or charter has been formally adopted by local government. This means that while there is a tendency for academic literature to focus on one stage – either getting food on the policy agenda (eg. Yeatman 2003) or implementation (eg. Mansfield & Mendes 2013; Mendes 2008), in fact the line between the two is ill-defined, there are frequent over-laps, and often the two occur concurrently. While Yeatman's findings supported the use of Kingdon's (1996) policy streams theory, which considers that a window of opportunity to get food on the agenda opens up with the coincidence of three streams – problem definition, policy proposals and receptive political environment – food policy groups have the first two ready prepared. As for the third stream, the new institutionalist approach is particularly sensitive to changes in the local environment and this research has seen that food policy groups do not wait idly for a receptive environment but rather proactively re-frame their lead arguments so as to be an apparent fit with new policy priorities, while still retaining core values and aims. In this way, getting food on the policy agenda need not always be a question of happenstance but of proactively drawing out synergies and selling into an agenda at a given time.

This research has also brought new insights on change, and particularly DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) institutional isomorphism. While normative, mimetic and coercive institutionalism were proposed as discrete processes, a close association between the normative and mimetic forms was detected as food policy groups alter their operational institutions in dealings with other organisations (particularly local government departments) to appear more professional and legitimate and, consequently, to be able more efficiently to influence policy. Local government

departments' ways of working have been established over many years, during which path dependency has developed. Consequently, the food policy groups have more chance of success in conforming to them and building legitimacy initially, rather than attempting to change them from the outset. For new institutionalism this means there are grounds for exploring more contingent effects between normative, mimetic and coercive institutionalism.

Much of the new institutionalist literature on agency conceives of actors acting intentionally to try to change institutional arrangements by which they are constrained, with the accompanying paradox that actors who are marginalised by current arrangements will seek to change them but lack the power to do so – while those that have the power lack the will because they currently benefit (Hardy & Maguire 2013; Lowndes 2005). On one level this can be viewed as applying to a food policy group as a whole: the food policy group can be viewed as a marginalised 'actor' that exercises agency to change institutions within the local governance context, but which has comparatively little legitimacy and power to do so. Within the case studies there is one example, in the case of Islington, of marginalised civil society actors' inability to alter institutions of the food policy group so that they may participate on their own terms. Aside from this, there was more evidence of actors seeking to exploit any cracks or loopholes in institutional arrangements in order to side-step constraints faced by the group, rather than trying to change those constraints *per se*. This includes finding non-conventional work-arounds, creative thinking vis-à-vis local level powers and, where necessary, actors from civil society or business stepping in to carry out activities (especially communications and lobbying) that contravene logics of appropriateness for their public sector colleagues.

This detection of creative agency supports Lowndes and Roberts' (2013) proposal that gaps or weaknesses exist between rules, practices and narratives that provide actors with the opportunity to act intentionally in a bid to realise their aims. Within food policy groups institutional rules are contained within documents like *Terms of Reference*, strategies, and implementation plans; these rules are then interpreted by various actors and put into practice; and described by actors through narratives. This means that the letter of these rules is not always strictly adhered to, but actors interpret them and put them into practice in the ways they wish to or feel they can. However, the London case demonstrated that there is not necessarily a progressive relaxation and free interpretation through rules, practices and narratives, but narratives can actually represent rules as being stricter than they were intended to be – with potentially constraining effects.

Creative agency also means it is hard to draw the line between what is possible and what is not possible, as per Dahlberg's guiding question 'has everything been done that was possible in that particular context?' (section 3.3). This is because the impossibilities are not immutable but are subject to continuous revision thanks to actors' imaginations and inter-sectoral double-acts. While previous authors, whose work contributed to the 17 factors that shape the contexts of

food policy groups, paid attention to partnership-working (Yeatman 2003; Mount et al. 2013; Mansfield & Mendes 2013) and the importance of individuals (Yeatman 2003), creative agency in respect of contextual and sectorial institutional barriers had not been identified as a factor of such importance, and the contexts of food policy groups had not been examined for conditions that foster such agency.

10.5.2 Conceptualisation of food policy groups

Section 3.4 above raised the question of whether it is more appropriate to conceive of food policy groups in England as policy networks, following Rhodes and March's typology, or Lowndes and Skeltcher's (1998) preference for partnerships. Both have merits to recommend them. Policy networks appear suitable because in general the cases conform to the structure of policy community plus issue network. In the cases where the food policy group sits within local government structures (London and Manchester) the food policy intervention forms part of a larger programme with additional groups of actors, notably a team of paid staff – but also in Manchester the (then) public sector only Food Futures Board. These additional structures, while not fitting into the policy networks continuum, are enabled by the cases being relatively well-funded, and therefore able to pay staff salaries, but they are also required to adhere to public sector norms, particularly regarding budget accountability, transparency, and line management.

In this research, networks were seen to be the main mode of governance within the groups; while some hierarchies were detected in terms how great a 'say' various actors have and their varying levels of engagement, these were attributed to resource dependency rather than any inherent public sector authority that could be construed as the hierarchical mode of governance. Markets did not feature as a governance mode in any of the case studies. This rather neutralises Lowndes and Skelcher's main objection that policy networks have wrongly appropriated a mode of governance – network – to describe the type, on the basis the hierarchical mode (if not the market mode also) can come into play.

That said, the research project has been concerned not only with the governance mode within food policy groups, which determines their internal operational institutions, but has also paid attention to the modes or institutional channels through which they work externally, in their relations with other organisations. Networks – both inter-personal and formal/professional (the latter tends to lead to the former as actors cooperate over time) – are crucial channels for enabling and encouraging partnership working. Given the importance of working through external partner organisations in all of the case studies, partnership working can also be construed as a 'means for achieving social coordination' (Lowndes & Skelcher 1998, p.314), which would qualify partnership as a governance mode in its own right.

10.5.3 The English food policy trajectory

This thesis began by positing local level food policy groups as a response to the food security and resilience threats posed by the current food system configuration. This claim requires review in light of the evidence from this study, considering whether food policy groups do indeed represent an alternative configuration, and the implications of this both in terms of the wider impacts of the trend and for food security and sustainability.

In all of the five case studies, governance of the food policy group was seen to lie between the public sector and civil society, while the private sector is only lightly or tangentially involved and national government is present only in policy framing. The intention is for food policy as it pertains to a local area to be determined consciously by actors close to the ground with principles of health and sustainability in mind, which clearly represents an alternative to the predominant configuration in which corporate interests influence national government (Morgan & Sonnino 2010). The evidence also supports the assertion that the local government level in England is pioneering the new approach to concerted, sustainable food policy that includes every stage in the food system and spans food-related policy domains, in keeping with Lang and Barling's (2012) socio-economic view of food and Sonnino et al's (2014) sustainable food security framework.

In some of the English cases – that is, Bristol and County Durham – the local food policy groups are deliberately at odds with the national level and therefore may justifiably be seen as pioneers of the new, cross domain approach with a different governance base. On the other hand the food groups in London, Manchester and Islington were founded, and strategies published, under a different (Labour) government and at a time of slightly different national approach to food: work in London and Manchester began in 2004, not long after a series of food safety crises and publication of the *Curry report* (Curry et al. 2002) that highlighted sustainability and advocated valorisation of local food on economic grounds; the Islington Food Strategy was published in the wake of *Food Matters* (Cabinet Office 2008), when an integrated approach was on the table at the national level. As such, these three cases seized upon intimations of a supportive national environment that, as it happened, did not flourish in the long term. While they were conscious pioneers amongst local government areas in taking a stance over food, they could reasonably have expected more multilevel support and, as such, did not intend to be quite so radical and at odds with the national level.

In her study of food policy in Vancouver, Canada, Mendes (2008, p.945) went beyond considering local governments that buy into food policy as pioneers, calling them 'incubator[s] of new, sometimes radical ideas and practices'. However the word 'incubator' implies the working up of ideas as to have a wider influence, either by spreading horizontally to more local areas or vertically to impact upon national level policy. While local food policy groups have proliferated in England in recent years, most notably since the start of the Sustainable Food

Cities Network (SFCN) in 2013, it is too soon to say whether the trend will be long-lived. As Morgan (2014) pointed out, the SFCN as a coordinating entity has time-limited funding and if it should not be renewed, in light of the funding crisis facing local governments there is a real danger that progress will stall and eventually recede. As for the ability to impact the national level, the power balance in national level governance is tipped towards corporations so that an approach that strives for concerted, integrated policy in lieu of leaving food policy to the market risks being dismissed as marginal. The local food policy groups do not yet have such an impact in their local areas that big businesses, like supermarkets, are asking to be involved in a bid to protect commercial interests, and creating local level institutional structures to enable this.

Turning now to the implications for food security, section 1.1.1 questioned whether concerted, sustainable food policy is really eclipsing the contested concept of food security, as claimed by Sonnino (2014), or whether there is an enduring incompatibility between the anti-hunger roots of food security and sustainability that emphasises origins and ethics of supply. This research has supported Sonnino's finding that food security is not mentioned in the documentary expressions of food policy groups, but that they do have resilience and an open view of food security at their heart, embracing physical access, food poverty and economic access, sourcing, nutrition, availability, and multifarious impacts and related issues. While an intention of food policy groups is to make 'good food' available to all, with a common emphasis on ideal values around health and sustainability, inequality persists between those who can afford 'good food' (which tends to be more expensive) and those who cannot. In the context of food poverty the emphasis tends to shift to health and nutrition. There is no suggestion that food that does not meet sustainability criteria ought to be dispensed with, but in order to avoid any tension between food security and sustainability, definitions of 'good food' ought to be clarified as ideals rather than absolutes, and some trade-offs should be anticipated.

While Sonnino (2014) surmised that the pursuit of local food is a proxy for food security, not as an end in itself but as a means to an end (see section 1.1.1), in this research local food was seen to be most prominent in the cases of Bristol and County Durham, which are, or are set within, rural areas (even though the underlying meaning of 'local food system' differs between them, as noted in section 10.2 above). However, in both these cases local food endeavours are somewhat stymied by the lack of a regional governmental layer in England, which means there are no convincing vehicles for regional food policy beyond the borders of the local authority, and the food policy groups rely instead on network connections.

In London, Islington and Manchester, on the other hand, all of which form part of conurbations, local food provisioning is less prominent; indeed, it was noted in section 10.2 above that for London a 'local food system' does not denote provisioning, but every facet of the food environment from the point of view of meeting its residents. That does not mean that locally-sourced food is not considered a desirable means to sustainable ends, but it is more pertinent to

consider the potential for integrated food policy to make a material difference at the local level, within local authority boundaries, by drawing on the powers and responsibilities that exist at that level, and how they are framed and constrained by the national level. It is to this question, and the effect of structural changes in the sub-national landscape, that the discussion now turns.

The national level is seen in this research to have considerable framing control over policy in particular domains, which means that even though neither national level actors nor representative agencies are present in food policy groups (Wilson 2003) it still retains steering capacity and a reserve right to intervene (Stoker 2000). While this means the Coalition's localism falls short of 'old localism' (Crowson and Goldring, 2009, as cited in Wilson & Game 2011, p.391), some concessions beyond those offered by previous governments have been made, notably through the negotiation of bespoke financial arrangements of City Deals, giving councils the power of general competence, and the creation of pilot combined authorities or city regions. On the surface these concessions appear to refute the sceptics who doubted whether the rhetoric would yield real change (Wilson & Game 2011; Jones & Stewart 2011). However the test for this research is whether the new arrangements have helped or hindered the work of local food policy groups within their local areas.

No evidence was found of City Deal funding arrangements in Manchester or Bristol directly impacting the food policy groups, neither of which receives any funding from local revenues. Meanwhile, in all of the case studies the food policy groups were feeling or fearing the effects of council budget cuts initiated as part of national-level austerity, which leaves non-statutory services vulnerable to cancellation, together with the effects of welfare changes on food access. This means that if there were any possible benefit to the groups from financial devolution it is being cancelled out by austerity politics. There was no evidence of the power of general competence being used to the benefit of local food policy groups either, although this may come down to general caution by councils who are anxious to avoid initiation costs or expenses of a legal challenge (Jeraj 2013). In the cases of Manchester and County Durham, however, devolution to combined authorities does mean that the food policy groups need to understand management structures and to work out institutional channels for dealing with the newly-important sub-national level – and the structures and channels differ between policy areas. It is impossible to judge in retrospect whether the food policy groups would have had an easier relationship with the former RDAs had they continued to exist, but it is clear from this research is that food policy groups have so far struggled to engage with the LEPs that replaced them; not a single interviewee mentioned any potential cooperation. The reason is likely to be LEPs' recent establishment, their amorphous forms and, even where food and drink is a priority sector, the predominance of big business interests. No mention was made of Enterprise Zones, either, likely for similar reasons, although Business Improvement Districts, operating as they do visibly

at the high street level, have been suggested as useful vehicles for food policy initiatives – even if no evidence was found for them having been harnessed in practice.

While the above indicates that the Coalition's localism intentions have had next to no benefit for food policy groups to date – partly because they have been stymied by the government's own contradictory austerity politics and partly because the radically new structures are still bedding down – structures and legal mechanisms that pre-existed the change in government in 2010 have not been used to their maximum potential either. Firstly, in several of the cases (Manchester, Islington County Durham) the local strategic partnerships (LSP) was a nominal framing structure for the food policy group, with an effort made to align food policy framing with LSP priorities, yet there was no evidence of direct LSP involvement or reporting up (in County Durham this may come post-adoption). Indeed, the apparent redundancy of the LSP in Manchester Food Futures' governance structure represents a 'withering on the vine' of the LSP's potential (Lowndes & Pratchett 2012; Lowndes & Squires 2012), and under the new governance structure the Health and Wellbeing Board is suggested as a more helpful, cross-departmental entity to have oversight.

The second pre-existing mechanism that is underused by food policy groups is the Sustainable Communities Act. Although there is some precedent for Councils to seek food-related powers under the Act, such as providing more allotments, the supermarket levy, and insistence on contractors paying the Living Wage (Local Works 2012), the only mention of the SCA in this research was the failed BCC motion to impose a supermarket levy – which the BFPC did not directly propose and there was no evidence of its direct involvement in community consultation, either. Thus, the SCA currently represents an untapped mechanism through which food policy groups could effect change, quite possibly due to lack of personnel resources to make proposals and because the SCA's use is contingent on political agreement within the Council, of which they are not yet secure.

10.6 Summary

This chapter has provided detailed comparison of the visions, aims, objectives, and functions of the five case studies, and has examined how the factors identified in Chapter 3 affect the food policy groups' capacity for working towards their aims. Insights from new institutionalism have been incorporated where they have been able to provide a deeper understanding of the reasons behind the enabling and constraining effects of the factors. The research project's contribution to new institutionalist thinking, conceptualisation of food policy groups, and the English food policy trajectory has been discussed in detail.

The next chapter concludes this thesis by reflecting on the key themes pertaining to the main research question, reflecting on the research process, and identifying some avenues for future and on-going research on local level and urban food policy.

11 Conclusions and reflections

11.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes this thesis by reflecting on the key themes pertaining to the main research question addressed in this thesis, examining the broader implications of the local food policy phenomenon for the food system, and providing some guidance for local food policy groups in England on determining their institutionalist structures and operations. The second part reflects upon the research process and the methodological lessons learned by the researcher. Finally, some avenues for future and on-going research on local level and urban food policy are identified.

11.2 Conclusions

This research has sought to discover how institutional norms, values and practices affect food policy groups' capacity to pursue their aims. Throughout the thesis this question has been addressed through the four secondary research questions, which represent the four locations where institutions affecting food policy groups reside: within the groups themselves, between each group and the local authority (and various departments therein); within the local level context; and within the vertical, multilevel governance context.

It is apparent that the structural organisation of the each of the groups, and their ways of working, should be purposively determined to enable them to work towards their aims, to be dynamic and creative, and to enable the actors to exercise agency so as to overcome constraints from institutions in other locations. Their internal institutions are not intended to pose constraints and, as such, it is significant that the food policy groups included in this research were reflexive and open to changing their structural institutions if they were seen to impede intended ways of working – for example the London Food Programme altered its structures to be more efficient and to have more traction with civic priorities; and the governance of Manchester Food Futures was reviewed to enable it to drive forward work more effectively. Such flexibility is advisable as it allows groups to respond to changing needs and to learn from experience.

Clear articulation of structural institutions of food policy groups (such as mission, ways of working, and roles of actors), and frequent reference to them, is key to productive participation, as it ensures that all actors know what is expected of them. This research has highlighted the importance of agency on the part of actors in food policy groups, yet effective agency in respect of institutional barriers is achieved to differing degrees. Where agency is lacking or under-exercised, such as in the Islington Food Strategy steering group, this is due to poor articulation of the group's enabling institutions, and lack of awareness of them by the membership. To the

same end, it is helpful for *Terms of Reference* and other documents explicitly to acknowledge the constraints faced by different sectors and the group as a whole, so as to help chart a path around them that allows for creative agency in practice. Such explicit acknowledgement was achieved in the London Food Programme in the last *Implementation Plan* and on its website, which note the importance of programme elements that are not supported by the Mayor.

Despite the enabling intentions of food policy groups' own institutions, they do, nonetheless, affect the breadth of the membership, because procedural arrangements (such as the format of meetings, leadership style, location, timing, etc) enable or disable participation by actors from different sectors and organisations. This is unavoidable because the institutional variation between all who would, ideally, be represented is too great for a common, universally acceptable set to be drawn up. Nonetheless, the institutions should ideally be determined with conscious consideration of their enabling and disabling effects, rather than favouring by default the founding or leading actors or those who request inclusion most vociferously. A membership base that is as broad as possible is desirable because it enables food policy groups to draw knowledge and experience from across the food system, and to have as wide an influence as possible, particularly with sectors and actors that are most closely involved in food provisioning and shaping consumption tendencies. While gaps were identified in the membership of all the case study groups, the greatest representation was seen in the London Food Board and the Bristol Food Policy Council. Manchester Food Futures and the County Durham SLFS steering group were cognisant of their shortcomings and sought to remedy them or at least bridge the gaps, while the Islington steering group, which was composed organically rather than purposively, wished to broaden its membership but was at a loss as to how to do so.

When it comes to the institutional relationship between a food policy group and local government, food policy groups are supplicants trying to influence the institutional practices that underlie approaches and policies. It is apparent that food policy groups seek to cultivate legitimacy in order to have influence, which means utilising established and acceptable institutional channels in an effort to change norms and practices from within. This was especially apparent in the case of Bristol, where actors realised they needed to alter their language in approaching different departments and sought to leverage networks into the local authority, and in County Durham, where there was a conscious effort to identify institutional channels towards DCC support for the SLFS in preparation for its adoption. Certain factors affect how effectively they can do this, such as the location of a food policy group in relation to local government structures, the department to which it has the closest ties, and the strength of networks into and within local government. In the cases of London, Bristol and County Durham the networks of member actors, and their consequent knowledge of the institutional norms and processes in different sectors, were highly valued resources as they enable the groups to adapt

their institutional approaches appropriately. This is an additional argument in favour of purposive membership selection, with wide-reaching networks as a key criterion.

The formality of mandate, such as whether a food strategy or motion has been adopted, affects whether advice is sought by local government or offered unsolicited and, consequently, whether the group is working largely with local government, or whether it is appealing for change in existing policy and practice. The former enables a more cooperative approach based (ideally) around negotiation, whereas the latter is more likely to be confrontational and to involve criticism of local government. However, that is not to say that external challenges, either by external food policy groups that are embedded in civil society or by non-public sector organisations exercising agency on behalf of food policy groups, are necessarily ineffective. Rather, levels of social capital – that is, the acceptance of civil society's role in policy making within the institutions of the local area – affect the potential for policy influence. If there is an active, vocal and well-respected civil society sector it may be seen as a force to be engaged with, such as in Bristol and London; where the wider community is fragmented, disorganised or conservative, such as in Manchester, the very idea of involving it in policy discussions will be alien to long established ways of operating.

Another respect in which the local context is crucial is the shifting of civic priorities, and how food policy groups constantly re-frame their agendas to highlight their relevance as local governments continually identify, and seek to respond to, emerging and urgent issues that affect the community. This is a facet of the dynamism remarked upon above, and it would be incredibly inefficient if groups were merely to bide their time waiting for a window to open that favours the food agenda. What is more, such windows can close with little warning due to changes in the economic, social or political environment. Thus, while food policy groups are advised to re-frame their arguments as necessary, it is also recommended that they retain a degree of independence from political leaders and party politics (such as has been achieved by the Bristol Food Policy Council); while supportive leaders can be helpful channels in working towards aims, too close alliance or over-reliance could be disastrous in the long term.

Thus far this concluding chapter has sought to convey the dynamism, vibrancy and creativity of food policy groups, both in forging their own institutional norms and practices and in dealing with the not inconsiderable constraints they face. This is fitting given that the focus of this research has been on the local level, and it is undeniable that the noise about food policy emanating from the local level is becoming louder. What is more, as more local areas adopt a concerted food policy approach there are increasing opportunities for knowledge brokerage; indeed, the sharing of ideas and experiences was evident in this research even before the establishment of the Sustainable Food Cities Network, particularly in research carried out by the instigators of the Bristol Food Policy Council and the Durham SLFS Partnership, and the influence of the Expert Panel on Manchester Food Futures. However, the fourth location of

institutions – in the multi-level, vertical dimension – opens up the question of inter-level relations and engagement. It allows us to take a broader view of the impact of food policy groups on the food system at large.

Considering first inter-level relations, food policy groups' ability to garner support from sub-regional entities, and to use any lower levels as implementation vehicles, is highly dependent on alignment between policy areas and line management structures, and understandings of how to navigate them – not least because organisational structures have been re-drawn in recent years. Food policy groups need to be constantly aware of the levels at which different powers and responsibilities lie for each policy domain, and to encourage creativity over vertical constraints they must be aware of the full arsenal of powers that exist at the local level. Moreover, national government's institutional approach to local government – most notably localism, combined with a severe reduction in local government resources due to cuts – poses further impediments. It is remarkable, however, that nationally-constructed mechanisms that could potentially be harnessed to help advance food aims – such as LEPs, the SCA and the power of general competence – they are rarely, if at all, utilised. The reasons for this require investigation in future research, but it could indicate either lack of awareness or lack of capacity to explore how exactly they might be employed.

In terms of the impact of food policy groups, that the national level's institutional approach to food is at odds with the local approach of concerted food policy means on the one hand that the food policy groups lack multi-level back up, but on the other hand the local level has more freedom to determine its own preferences to suit the local area (policy domain framing notwithstanding). The groundswell of activity and progressive thinking over food at the local, mainly urban, level represents the carving out of spaces in which food policy groups *can* act and affect the lived experience of food on the ground – such as in schools, over community food skills, and bringing economic benefits through local public procurement. These gains have a very real impact on individuals and communities and ought not to be belittled, but they are relatively small scale and contained, and are brought about through an inward regard for how to exercise local powers within the local areas. In many cases they deal with the public health and environmental symptoms of the wider configuration of the food system, rather than their causes – for the very valid reason that changing the system exceeds their reach. While being painfully aware of the outward constraints they face, food policy groups in England do not tend to dwell on them. Rather, insofar as they do try to influence higher levels of food policy they pick their battles and do not waste precious resources mounting challenges that are bound to fail. For instance, actors at the local level can do nothing about high salt, sugar and fat content in manufactured food products, which are subject to the national Responsibility Deal with industry, but they can play a role in shaping the settings in which such products are available, both within the fabric of the city and on public sector turf.

The reason for local food policy groups' lack of influence on higher levels is that large corporations hold considerably more sway over national policy than do cities, whose remit in the era of localism is to look inwards and take care of affairs within their own borders. The private sector – and particularly big business – is conspicuously underrepresented in food policy groups, to the extent that food policy governance is (largely, though not exclusively) strung between opposing sides of the food policy triangle: at the local level it is between the public sector and civil society, and at the national level between the public and private sectors. Although bodies do exist that seek a collective voice for local authority areas and cities over national decision-making, such as the Core Cities and the Local Government Association, their most powerful arguments highlight economic benefits. Economic benefits, even relatively short-term, tend to trump public health and environmental arguments, even though the latter underwrite economic prosperity in the long term. As Lang and Heasman (2004) point out, the intrinsic connection between economic outcomes, public health and the environment is too often overlooked in food policy; put another way, entrenched siloism at the national level obstructs the ability to see the cross-domain nature of food policy. Indeed even in London, the capital and economic engine of the UK that enjoys relative more influence over the national level than small towns and cities, the GLA's joined-up approach to food and pioneering policies and programmes have made little material dent on national policy to date, as the economic benefits are not immediate or apparent enough. Similarly efforts by actors in the Bristol Food Policy Council to influence the national level by responding to consultations and participating in conferences are valiant and contribute to awareness raising, but in themselves they have not resulted in any discernible national shift.

Borrowing Lang and Heasman's (2004) metaphor of warring paradigms, as the productionist paradigm is on the wane food policy groups are simply not powerful enough to take the helm from corporate interests and steer the new course. As such, the life sciences paradigm preferred by corporations and, consequently, the national level, looms large on the horizon. For the over-all configuration of the food system, this thesis has accepted the intrinsic connection between places so that practices and preferences in one place have a butterfly effect impact elsewhere. In this respect local food policy groups cause ripples through the food system. However, if one were to focus only on the individual and community level benefits of local food policy groups rather than the system as a whole, it would be easy to get carried away on a tide of enthusiasm stimulated by the noise, vibrancy, and on-going process of engagement in the food system that it promotes. The danger remains that this leads to the erroneously assertion that food policy groups can bring about major, seismic change in the overall configuration (Barling et al. 2002). While they can reasonably be said to be *pioneering* a new approach to concerted food policy, which has the potential to be the basis of a new 'sustainable food security framework' (Sonnino et al. 2014), asserting that they are *incubating* a sea-change in wider food system configuration exaggerates their potential, based on the evidence to date. The reality is that food policy groups

are limited in reach and fragile. Their fragility stems on the one hand from the fledgling movement's need for resources for on-going coordination (Morgan 2014), whether from the civil society sector or, better, from more substantial and permanent local government buy-in, and on the other from the institutional constraints they face. There is an omnipresent possibility that powers and responsibilities will be reassigned, curtailing food policy groups' ability to continue making a difference even in the lived experience within their own areas.

11.3 Reflections

The purpose of this section is to reflect upon the research process and to acknowledge aspects that worked well and those that, in retrospect, could have been improved.

The first task is to reflect upon the conceptual and theoretical frameworks used for the project. Table 3.1 provided a conceptual framework in the form of 17 structural and operational factors affecting the capacity of food policy groups, which were drawn from previous literature. By identifying the factors to be sought in advance, there was a danger of trying to fit the evidence into this framework and being closed to any new, previously undetected, factors that emerged out of this research. In the event, despite making a conscious effort to be reflexive about the suitability of the factors, all 17 were borne out in the evidence from the English local food policy experience. One additional operational factor is to be added, however, that of the importance of agency in order to overcome institutional barriers, particularly where actors from one sector can step in to overcome barriers faced by actors from another. This was seen most clearly in the case of London, where civil society actors worked through their own organisations to say and do what the Mayor's formal representatives could not, and in Bristol where the institutional constraints on public sector actors, such as in signing certain campaign letters, were accepted.

New institutionalism as a theoretical approach has been extremely helpful as it allowed not only for the institutional factors to be recognised, but also for exploration of how precisely these factors affect the capacity of food policy groups. Using new institutionalism effectively necessitated working in an iterative way between the theoretical literature and the empirical data. First I gained a broad understanding of new institutionalism and its variants, before embarking on my fieldwork and carrying out the first, descriptive phase of data analysis. On realising that my broad understanding was not sufficient to build the explanations I hoped for in the second phase of analysis, I subsequently returned to the new institutionalist literature and was able to fine tune my approach by identifying elements that were useful to this project. Only after this was I properly equipped to write the discussion chapter. This iterative process has provided me with a tailor-made version of new institutionalist for application to the problem in hand. While several authors have allowed for such cherry-picking of useful elements (Hall & Taylor 1996; Davies & Trounstine 2012; Lowndes & Roberts 2013), it must be acknowledged

that there is a danger of using the theory to impose preconceived explanations on the findings. As a result, I constantly questioned myself over whether explanations were right and logical. This could have been strengthened by building in an opportunity to share the interpreted findings with interview participants for their validation, or at least talking through them and giving opportunity for comment. That said, in some cases the findings have been rather critical of the practices and processes of food policy groups, and by opening them up to debate there would have been a danger of actors rejecting criticism and seeking to impose an alternative narrative that did not reflect institutional practice but sought to cast them in a better light.

The case study design required that each case be bounded, which included setting time parameters for data collection. The time frame was approximately 24 months, as shown in figure 4-4. However in both London and Manchester considerable changes were made to the structural institutions during this time. In Islington changes have been instigated since the end of the research period. In Bristol, too, the *Terms of Reference* have since been updated, while new ones have been drawn up for County Durham. This demonstrates the difficulty of studying an emerging and fast moving research topic, particularly one where the subject of enquiry is continuously altering its institutions in a bid for legitimacy and efficiency. At times it felt like studying a fast-moving train – no sooner had I glimpsed it, it had moved on to the next station. What is more, I am aware that some of the issues that arose in this research have since been resolved. For example, the research identified a missed opportunity for close liaison between the London Food Programme (LFP) and individual boroughs, and noted in particular dislocation between the LFP and the Islington Food Partnership. Since then the LFP launched a major project called Flagship Food Boroughs, for which London boroughs were invited to apply for funding and support to develop their own food policy. The two boroughs selected were Lambeth and Croydon, but the application process itself caused greater engagement by many boroughs, so that a diverse and well-attended boroughs group has been established under the auspices of the LFP.

As for data collection methods, the original intention was to analyse only documents relating to the local government area of each food policy group and documents published by the food policy group. However as explained in section 4.5.1 above, after the fieldwork I did not feel I had enough background information, particularly on how food was regarded and handled within the local authority. As a result, the decision was taken to conduct another phase of document analysis of committee meeting minutes and online archives of local newspapers. This exercise was purposive as I had a better idea of the kind of information I was seeking, but it did not mean I discounted any unexpected findings.

The intention was to carry out a similar number of meeting observations and interviews for each of the five case studies, so as to have an equivalent amount of data for each. As it happened, however, for the two case studies within London – my place of residence – there were

considerably more opportunities to engage with actors involved in the food policy groups, and others who were following their work, at professional events and conferences. This means I had absorbed more information than for the three non-London case studies, for which I was working at a considerable geographical distance and could engage with actors only during formal fieldwork. It could have been beneficial to devise a study design whereby I was seconded to work alongside the project coordinator for each case study for a period of time, which would have yielded a more direct experience of the effects of institutional factors, however such as design would risk straying into the territory of action research, and there would have been a greater risk that I would have unintentionally influenced practices by being too close to the research subjects. Moreover, this would not have been possible for all the case studies, because only in London, Manchester and County Durham did the coordinators work full-time on food policy. In Bristol and Islington the coordinators/secretaries, both local government officers, fit the food work around their day jobs so it would have been impossible to shadow them constantly. A more fitting solution would therefore have been to observe more meetings for all the case studies over the entire course of the research project, rather than stopping observation after the interviews, as this would have allowed for a closer look at the relationship between observable practices and recorded narratives.

During the meeting observations it was at times difficult to remain uninvolved in discussions so as not to influence proceedings. This was especially problematic in the case of London, where my opinions were sought by one civil society actor in particular on several occasions because they considered that, as a researcher, I would be able to make a knowledgeable contribution. Invitations to participate were politely resisted and an explanation provided, but it nonetheless caused some discomfort. Aside from this, I had no impression that my presence affected the behaviour of any of the groups during meetings. No actors appeared to hold back on their opinions due to my presence, and there was no reticence to discuss contentious issues because an outside observer was present.

When it came to the interviews, however, I noted that on two occasions (in Bristol and Islington) my questioning caused the interviewee to reflect on issues that had not previously occurred to them – and which they felt they ought to have considered. As a result, there is a possibility that if they viewed me as an expert in the field my questioning may have led to some change in institutional practices.

Another point arising from the interviews was that despite best intentions it was very difficult to ask open-ended questions when seeking confirmation of subjective observations; on at least one occasion I had to resort to asking for confirmation or refutation of an observation very directly. Moreover, given the interplay between practices and narratives, narrative accounts of institutional practices cannot be counted on as entirely accurate since slippages exist between the two; narratives are imbued with the perspective that the speaker wishes to perpetuate. It was,

however, very helpful to transcribe each interview as soon as possible after it took place, as this enabled me to identify and correct any bad practice – including a tendency inadvertently to ask closed questions – in future interviews. It also enabled me to verify facts with other interviewees in the same case study if there was any uncertainty, and to adapt phrasing of questions if they caused confusion.

Regarding interview procedure, all interviewees were given the option of a face-to-face interview but seven interviewees preferred a telephone interview – either because they had exceptionally busy schedules and considered it less burdensome or because they were cognisant of the geographical distance and did not wish me to travel for the sake of one hour. On reflection, however, telephone interviews yielded less useful data than face-to-face meetings. It was much harder to build a bond without visual stimuli, to elicit candid responses, and to discern the mood and tone of interviewees in response to some questions. I felt that the telephone apparatus mediated narratives so that they were more likely to represent institutional rules in their narratives rather than giving true accounts of how they view – and wish to represent – the institutions. Another drawback of the telephone interview was that although all interviewees (whether face-to-face or telephone) were sent the information sheet and consent form in advance, the signed consent form was returned in advance of the interview by only one participant. One telephone interviewee did not return the consent form at all after the interview, despite being asked for it several times. Although no reason was given, I eventually deemed the lack of response to signify a desire to withdraw as a participant and discounted all data from that interview. Had this interview been face-to-face I would have been able to request signature in advance and deal with any questions or concerns.

It is necessary to give particular reflection on the case of Manchester. The fieldwork in this case was seriously impaired by the absence of the project coordinator over several months, which meant that documentation could not be sourced in a timely manner and, importantly, it was not possible to observe meetings because none took place during the designated time-frame. I considered dropping this case study when this drawback became apparent because it means that there is unequal data collection compared to the other case studies. However, I eventually decided to retain it for two reasons. Firstly, this issue highlights the danger of food policy groups' over-reliance on one individual, as the entire programme can grind to a halt if they are not there. Secondly, I was able to bridge the data gap by receiving copies of meeting minutes from either side of the absence. While these documents were imperfect sources because they had been subject to subjective editing by the minute-taker, they at least allowed me to be aware of the key topics of discussion. On reflection, however, the absence of observation in this case meant I did not develop a rapport with actors; of the four interviewees, only one agreed to meet face-to-face. I felt the other three did not yield such good quality data, partly because the participants had had no verbal briefing of my project (although they did receive the info sheet)

and partly because, not having met and observed them in advance, I was unable to adapt my interviewing style to get the best out of them. What is more, I was dependent on the project coordinator to suggest suitable interviewees rather than being able to invite participants who seemed to me to be the most active, engaged or opinionated.

A final note is required on research ethics. All interviewees were asked by what job title they would like to be referred to in the text, but several of them pointed out that other members of the group, or those familiar with it, would easily identify them. None was concerned about identification, but as the information sheet specifically promised anonymity as a safeguard it was decided to dispense with job titles and instead refer to actors only by their sectors – ie, public, civil society, and private. The absence of job titles is not deemed to have had any effect on the quality of the findings.

11.4 Future research

While this research project has yielded insights on how institutions have affected the capacity of food policy groups in England to pursue their aims between 2012 and 2014, it has also brought to light some areas for future enquiry. Firstly, there is an observed tendency for the private sector to be un- or unrepresented in food policy groups, an omission that not only impairs the groups' knowledge base and capacity to influence key actors that shape the food environment for cities but, given that the private sector is an influential force in food governance at the national level, could well stand in the way of food policy groups hopes eventually and collectively to impact the national approach to food policy. More research is needed to establish the reasons for non-involvement of different kinds of businesses – including farmers, processors, ingredient suppliers, distributors, retailers, food service companies and restaurants, of all scales of operation – be it on institutional grounds, due to incompatible values, or simply because food policy at the local level has not yet impacted on their fortunes sufficiently to be considered worthy of engagement. Understanding this is a crucial first step to better representation from across the food system.

Another area for future research that is related to the need to improve private sector relations is the importance of the economic framing of food as a driver for local level food policy groups. In the ongoing political climate of austerity it is often the economic development team of a local authority that is best resourced, as it is assumed to be able to provide returns on investments, in tangible, economic terms, where other, non-priority departments would not. This means that 'selling in' the aims of a food policy group to the priorities of the economic development team has become a useful strategy to garner public sector support, and it is anticipated that it will remain so for the foreseeable future. As a result, there is a need for greater understanding on the best approaches and language to use in order to ensure mutual understanding between a food

policy group, whose members bring a variety of norms and values from their different institutional backgrounds, and key actors whose view is coloured by the institutions of their economic background. Moreover, food policy groups need to develop strategies to ensure their wider intentions are not compromised or subdued when the importance of the economy appears all-prevailing, but rather effectively use the economic buy-in and resourcing as a platform for achieving aims in policy domains that do not currently enjoy headline status.

The study found little to no evidence of food policy groups using several recently-devised mechanisms for the local level to secure greater devolved power, such as the Sustainable Communities Act and the power of general competence, and connections with entities for identifying and acting upon local needs, such as LSPs, LEPs, Enterprise Zones and BIDs, were under-developed. In addition, in 2015 Defra announced the creation of Food Enterprise Zones, intended to stimulate entrepreneurialism amongst farmers and food business and to boost the rural economy (Defra 2015). More research is needed on the precise ways in which all of these mechanisms and entities could prove useful to food policy groups, the barriers to exploiting the opportunities, and how to overcome them. What is more, the local government scene is rarely static; even as it struggles to get to grips with changes in central-local relations since 2010, the age of austerity is to continue following the Conservative majority in the May 2015 general election, and more spending cuts, particularly over welfare, are anticipated. It cannot be discounted that the sub-national landscape will be subject to a new round of editing. Particularly at a time when many food policy groups are emerging from their infancy in England and starting to explore their full potential to change the local food environment, more, longer-term studies are recommended to assess their evolution, and how they adapt to new institutional frameworks.

Local food policy is an area of rapid development and interest, not just in England and the UK but globally. New frameworks are being drawn up to facilitate the development of concerted food policy, particularly in urban environments, such as the Urban Food Policy Pact under development as part of Expo Milano 2015, under which the Mayors of some 38 world cities will commit to an international protocol for sustainable and socially just food systems (Cibo Milano 2015). There is a need for ongoing research on the effect of this burgeoning international movement on the English experience, particularly as it involves leaping the national level. The big question is whether cities, by joining together and finding their collective voice at the global level, can prompt a significant, wide-scale shift towards a more sustainable food system configuration, or whether their best intentions will be lost in the cacophony of interests seeking to influence food policy from the global level downwards.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Non-academic literature on local food policy groups

Reference	Publisher	Audience and purpose	Country/continent
Burgan & Winne 2012	Mark Winne Associates (consultancy)	Accessible non-expert guide on setting up a FPC; consultancy marketing tool?	USA
Clancy 1988	Part of a speech at Cornell Nutrition	Informed by academic experience and as member of Onondaga FPC.	USA
Dahlberg 1995	Summary of paper presented at academic conference	Drawing on experience to analyse factors influencing successes/failure of FPCs.	USA
Fox 2010	UCLA, for Los Angeles Food Policy Task Force (University for FPC)	Research/review of FPCs in major North American cities to highlight concepts, practices, lessons for LA.	USA
Freedgood & Royce 2012	American Farmland Trust (CSO)	Research to determine if food policy councils/food system plans effectively engender policy change. Target unclear	USA
Harper et al. 2009	Food First, Community Food Security Coalition (CSO)	Research on lessons to date – raises issues, provides recommendations on FPC structural set-up	North America
Hatfield 2012	City of Portland, Oregon Bureau of Planning and Sustainability (local government)	Research-based resource on best practice for local governments interested in developing food programme.	North America
Leib 2012	Harvard Food Law School and Policy Clinic, Community Food Coalition (University/CSO)	Toolkit for established FPCs (and others), to help them prompt policy change	USA
McCullagh & Santo 2012	Tufts University (University)	Research report from Master's thesis. Recommendations for FPCs on inclusiveness	North America
McRae & Donahue 2013	Toronto Food Policy Council, Vancouver Food Policy Council, The Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (practitioner/think tank)	Review of ways of working, key activities, value to food chain and municipality. Ideas and recommendations for municipal governments, actors and NGOs	Canada
Moragues et al. 2013	Foodlinks (Universities, local gov, CSOs)	Toolkit for actors wishing to formulate urban food strategy	Europe
Scott et al. 2011	Cherokee Nation, Healthy Nation Division (local government)	Primer for actors establishing a successful local food policy council/committee.	Tribal Nations
SFCN 2013; SFCN n.d.	Sustainable Food Cities Network (CSO)	Toolkit/method for setting up Food Partnership	UK

Source: author

Un-shaded rows indicate reports that are informed by primary research carried out by community/non-academic researchers (or by academics but published in a non-academic format), which attempt to distil lessons for food policy groups. Shaded rows indicate toolkits or guides developed by practitioners who are drawing upon their own experiences.

Appendix B: Case study protocol

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1) Overview of the case study

London Food Programme:
- Established in 2004, located within GLA (was in environmental team but moved to business and economy); Formal aspects are tied to Mayor's agenda
- GLA food team = 2 officers and Rosie Boycott, who chairs London Food Board
- London Food Board has 30+ members from across sectors, role is to advise the chair and does not make decisions. Meets twice a year
- NB structural changes to Executive and to implementation groups during fieldwork period.
- Projects are part funded out of GLA budget, part from partners
- Partnership working is crucial

Islington Food Strategy steering group
- Established in 2010, following adoption of the Islington Food Strategy and Action Plan
- Intended to be independent – has independent chair. Leadership provided by council officers
- Membership is public sector and civil society – no business
- Role to ensure progression of action plan, functions as knowledge hub
- Meets four times a year

Manchester Food Futures
- Established 2007 with publication of Manchester Food Futures strategy
- Located within Public Health team of council – programme manager and consultant
- Food Futures Board was made up of council leads, to influence policy internally
- FF steering group an advisory group made up of multi-sector actors (no public sector).
- NB Subject to governance review before/during fieldwork period

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Bristol Food Policy Council
- Established 2011 but long history of food policy work in city. Emerged from combination of top down/bottom up process
- Key document in foundation was *Who Feeds Bristol?* report
- Independent, has secretariat support from Bristol City Council and a Councillor on membership
- Membership is drawn from across food chain; academic chair
- Role is facilitation, awareness raising, advocacy
- Meets four times a year

County Durham Food Strategy steering group
- Formed in 2011 for 2.5 year project to write food strategy. Originated from PhD research
- Led and chaired by Durham Rural Community Council (later Durham Community Action); 12 members
- Role was to contribute to collaborative process of writing strategy, and begin implementation
- Met four times a year

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2) Field procedures

Document analysis:
- Document analysis to be done before observations and interviews

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Direct observation:
- For each case study, observation of two meetings (NB not possible for Manchester)
- Email info sheet and consent form to organiser or chair in advance
- Obtain signed consent form on arrival. Request announcement of presence at start of meeting
- Prepare brief verbal explanation of project; take copies of info sheet
- Make written notes throughout meeting
- Write up notes on same day, following quiet reflection. Highlight key issues at top of document
- During meeting, consider actors to request for interview

Interviews:
- Invite participants by email (with info sheet and consent form) follow up by phone if necessary
- Arrange interview at participant's workplace if possible (tell family of time/location)
- Before turning on tape: Confirm interviewee has read background information and invite questions. Read through consent form, noting opportunity to withdraw. Sign two copies, retain one. Ask interviewee to suggest short form of job description to use as identifier (eg, 'local government employee').
- For telephone interviews, request return of consent form by email
- Pay attention to validation of subjective info, asking open questions
- Transcribe interview
- Send copy of transcript or quotes to be used if requested

3) Case study questions/information to obtain from each method

Document analysis
- For local government in England, analyse government documents, academic literature, media articles, press releases.
  Info to obtain: historic and current philosophy on national-local relations; current local government structure

- For national food policy approach, analyse policy documents and reports from 2000 onwards.
  Info to obtain: recent history of food policy

- For policy domain framing, analyse EU and national policy documents and reports.
  Info to obtain: framing of food-related issues for which local level has responsibility

- For each case study, first analyse food strategies, charters, maps, minutes, reports, terms of reference.
  Info to obtain: framing of the problem; visions, aims, objectives, priorities, actions planned; structures, operations, rules of food policy group.

  Then analyse local government strategies and policy documents; council committee minutes; local media reports.
  Info to obtain: Political will for food policy, actions related to food; support of food policy group; contentious food-related issues.

Observation
- Two meetings of food policy group for each case study
  Info to obtain: group membership and attendance; practices, processes, decision-making and power dynamics; current topics and work plans

Interviews
- Between three and six interviews with food policy group members (one or two from each sector)
  Info to obtain: Narratives, opinions, experiences and observations of actors, corroboration of subjective observations

- Guide to questions (interviews are semi-structured so room for variation)
  1) How is the food policy group composed?
  2) What are the dynamics of influence, power, leadership, and decision-making in the group?
  3) In what ways are the content and priorities of the food policy group dependent on its funding, history, or particular actors?
  4) How easy is it to change the priorities or activities of the food policy group should a new need or priority emerge?
  5) What outreach or consultation is there/has there been over the food policy group's work?
  6) What is the political will for addressing food issues at city-wide level and in departments?
  7) What are the priorities at the borough/city level that are most pertinent to the food work?
  8) How easy is it to have the vision and aspirations of the urban food strategy taken up by other policies/strategies for [city]? Any particular problems or enabling factors?
  9) Do the powers and responsibilities to implement the food strategy exist at the local government

level?

10) Are there any structural or political factors that affect the work the food group can do at the city level/in the borough?

11) To what extent is local level food policy in England endorsed and supported by multi-level governance?

12) Are there any ways in which you see the work of the group being affected by national policies?

13) To what extent do actors in urban food policy networks actively seek to influence food policy throughout the levels of governance?

4)   Guide for case study report

Each case study findings chapter has two sections:

1) Context and background
- The local governance context is set out, including local socio-economic, cultural and political factors are summarised, and the local government structure, key organisations, strategic priorities are presented.
- The background to the food policy group presented, with a brief history of its genesis and current state of play, vision, aims and objectives, and ways of working.

2) Enablers and barriers to policy influence
- Enablers and barriers related to the structures and operations of the food policy group (including location within the local governance context)
- Enablers and barriers from multilevel framing, including local level powers and responsibilities and framing through policy domains.

Appendix C: Documents analysed

Governance and English local government

Document name	Reference
Open Public Services White Paper	Cabinet Office 2011
Working with Local Enterprise Partnerships: a guide for voluntary organisations	Compact Voice 2014
London and England's largest cities join to call for greater devolution to drive economic growth	Core Cities n.d.
Giving local authorities more control over how they spend public money in their area	DCLG 2013
The future of local enterprise partnerships: the small business perspective	FSB & CLES 2014
Unlocking growth in cities	HM Government 2011
Future funding for councils 2013	LGA 2013

English approach to food policy

Document name	Reference
A Plan for Public Procurement	Bonfield 2014
Food Matters: Towards a Strategy for the 21st Century	Cabinet Office 2008
Press release: Free school lunch for every child in infant school, 17 September 2013	Clegg 2013
Food & farming, a sustainable future: report of the Policy Commission on the Future of Food and Farming	Curry et al 2002
National Planning Policy Framework	DCLG 2012
The Strategy for Sustainable Farming and Food: Facing the Future	Defra 2002
Food 2030	Defra 2010
Government Review of Waste Policy in England 2011	Defra 2011
Green Food Project Conclusions	Defra 2012
Waste Management Plan for England	Defra 2013
The government buying standards for food and catering services	Defra 2014c
Statutory guidance: National curriculum in England: design and technology programmes of study	Department for Education 2013
Choosing a Better Diet: a food and health action plan people	Department of Health 2005
Public health responsibility deal	Department of Health 2013
The School Food Plan	Dimbleby & Vincent 2013
The Common Agricultural Policy: A partnership between Europe and Farmers	European Commission 2012
Overview of CAP Reform 2014-2020, Agricultural Policy Perspectives Brief, No 5/December 2013	European Commission 2013
Directive 2014/24/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 February 2014 on public procurement and repealing Directive 2004/18/EC	European Union 2014
Takeaways Toolkit: Tools, interventions and case studies to help local authorities develop a response to the health impacts of fast food takeaways	GLA & CIEH 2012
Government support to regional food producers: an assessment of England's Regional Food Strategy	Gorton & Treagear 2008
Foresight. The Future of Food and Farming. Final project report	Government Office for Science 2011
School meals and nutritional standards	Long 2015
The Education (Nutritional Standards and Requirements for School Food) (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2011	UK Parliament 2011
Make all state schools academies, report by rightwing thinktank	Weale 2014
Courtauld Commitment 3	WRAP n.d.

London Food Programme

Document name	Reference
London Food Programme web pages	
Membership of the London Food Board	GLA n.d.
London Food	GLA n.d.
What is the London Food Board?	GLA n.d.
Building Sustainable Supply Chains: Business Development Managers in London Wholesale Markets	GLA n.d.
Food strategies and plans	
The Mayor's Food Strategy: Healthy and Sustainable Food for London: An Implementation Plan 2011-13	GLA 2011
Healthy and Sustainable Food for London: The Mayor's Food Strategy	LDA 2006
Healthy and Sustainable Food for London: The Mayor's Food Strategy Implementation Plan, September 2007	LDA 2007
London Food Board minutes and agendas	
Minutes of the London Food Board Executive Group, 13 September 2012	GLA 2012
London Food Executive Minutes 12 January 2012	GLA 2012
London Food Executive Minutes 28 March 2012	GLA 2012
London Food Board minutes 25 October 2012	GLA 2012
London Food Board Executive minutes 20th June 2012	GLA 2012
Agenda, London Food Board. 25 October 2012	LFB 2012
Documents published by LFP partner organisations	
CIEH - Takeaways Toolkit: Tools, interventions and case studies to help local authorities develop a response to the health impacts of fast food takeaways	GLA and CIEH 2012
Sustain - Press release: Rosie Boycott promises good food for London police, transport workers and the fire brigade, 7th December 2010	Sustain 2010
Sustain - Good Food For London 2013: How London Boroughs can help secure a healthy and sustainable food future	Sustain 2013
Sustain - The Obesity Games: the inside track on the marketing strategies of Olympic food and soft drink sponsors, and the sponsorship deals behind them	Clark and Brownell 2012
GLA website – non-food web pages	
FoodSave: food waste solutions for London businesses	GLA n.d.
Apprentices and London's food and hospitality sector	GLA n.d.
Business and economy focus areas	GLA n.d.
Strong partnerships: the key to improving London's transport	GLA n.d.
Working with the boroughs on regeneration	GLA n.d.
Press release: Mayor launches 'Capital Growth' to boost locally grown food in London, 4 November 2008	GLA 2008
Request for a Mayoral Decision - MD388, London Food Programme 2009-2012	GLA 2009
Letter from the Mayor of London to Fiona Twycross AM, 25 July 2013	Johnson 2013
GLA plans, strategies and documents	
The London Plan: Spatial development strategy for Greater London, 22 July 2011	Mayor of London 2011
A Fairer London: The 2013 Living Wage in London	GLA 2013
Boris Johnson speech to the Conservative Party Conference	Johnson 2011
2020 Vision: The Greatest City on Earth, ambitions for London	Johnson 2013
A Zero Hunger City: Tackling food poverty in London	London Assembly 2013
Jobs and growth plan for London	LEP 2013
Greater London Authority – general/other departments and entities	

Olympics-related documents	
DCMS - This is Great Britain: London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games Quarterly report, June 2012	DCMS 2012
London 2012 - For starters: food vision for the London 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games	London 2012 2009

Miscellaneous	
London School of Economics - Hard times, new directions? The impact of the local government spending cuts in London, interim report	Fitzgerald et al 2013
New Policy Institute/Trust for London - London's Poverty Profile 2013	NPI & Trust for London 2013

Islington Food Strategy Partnership

Document name	Reference
Islington Food Strategy Partnership documents	
Islington Food Strategy Action Plan 2010 - 2013 Making healthy and sustainable food accessible to all	IFP 2010
Food: a strategy for Islington, making healthy and sustainable food accessible to all	LBI & NHS Islington 2010
Terms of Reference	IFP 2014

LBI and LSP documents, policies and strategies	
How we're tackling cuts	LBI n.d.
Islington Council Allotment Policy	LBI 2011
Islington's Core Strategy: Your neighbourhood, your Islington	LBI 2011
School Meals Scrutiny Report and Action Plan	Morphitis 2012
Towards a Fairer Islington: Corporate Plan 2012-2015	LBI 2012
Budget proposals 2013-14, report of Executive Member for Finance	Watts 2013
Islington's Local Plan: Development Management Policies	LBI 2013
Spaces for wildlife, places for people, Islington's Biodiversity Strategy 2010-2010	LBI 2013
The Impact of Welfare Reform on Islington and its People : Council Response, report of Leader of the Council	Kogbara and Harkin 2013
Annual public health report, Widening the Focus: Tackling Health Inequalities in Camden and Islington	Dougan 2014
Budget proposals 2014-15, report of Executive Member for Finance and Performance	Watts and Houston 2014
Planning Policy and Small and Medium Enterprises - response to the report of the Regeneration and Employment Review Committee	Sullivan 2014
Closing the gap: tackling health inequalities in Islington 2010-2030	LBI & NHS Islington 2010
The Proactive Islington Strategy 2012-2017	LBI & NHS 2012
Closing the gap, the final report of The Islington Fairness Commission	Islington Fairness Commission 2011
Fairness in tough times: Implementing the recommendations	Islington Fairness Commission 2011
Our Vision for 2020 – the Islington we want to be	ISP 2008

Council committee meeting minutes	
Executive meeting minutes 13 January 2011, London Borough of Islington	LBI 2011
Minutes of proceedings, London Borough of Islington Council Meeting 31 March 2011	LBI 2011
Minutes of proceedings, London Borough of Islington Council Meeting, 10 October 2013	LBI 2013
Notices of motion, item 10, Council Meeting 27 March 2014	Hull and Andrews 2014

GLA level

London Assembly - Written submissions received for the London Assembly's Health and Environment Committee investigation into Food Poverty Responses received as of 14 December 2012	London Assembly 2013

Sustain documents

Good Food For London 2012: How London Boroughs can help secure a healthy and sustainable food future	Sustain 2012
Good Food for London 2011: How London Boroughs can help secure a healthy and sustainable food future for everyone	Sustain 2011

Media articles & misc

Islington Gazette - Families of 400 Islington children won't be able to afford a home, says council	Dean 2012
Council admits to 114 job losses, Islington update from Andrew Cornwell, 24th February 2010	Cornwell 2010

Manchester Food Futures

Document name	Reference
Food Futures strategies and commissioned documents	
Food Futures Manchester: a food strategy for Manchester	Manchester Joint Health Unit 2007
Food Futures, a potted history. Unpublished backgrounder prepared for the Food Futures Expert Panel	Raiswell & Cox 2012
Small World Consulting - Sustainable Food in Manchester Final Report	Berners-Lee et al 2013
University of Sheffield - Report of the evaluation of Food Futures programme (April - October 2011)	Ouma 2011
Draft Food Board Terms of Reference February 2014	Food Futures 2014
Foodbanks and emergency meal provision in Manchester - December 2013	Food Futures 2013
Food Futures minutes and e-bulletins	
Minutes of the Food Futures Steering Group 11th September 2012	Food Futures 2012
Minutes of the Food Futures Steering Group 18th December 2012	Food Futures 2012
Food Futures e-bulletin, October 2013	Food Futures 2013
Minutes Food Futures Steering Group Minutes 28th August 2013	Food Futures 2013
Minutes Food Futures Steering Group Minutes 28th August 2013	Food Futures 2013
Minutes of the Food Board Development Session, 5th November 2013	Food Futures 2013
Minutes of the Food futures Board Meeting 16th December 2013	Food Futures 2013
Minutes of the Food Futures Steering Group meeting 9th October 2013	Food Futures 2013
Minutes of the Food Futures Board Meeting 11th March 2014	Food Futures 2014
Minutes of the Food Futures Steering Group 9th January 2014	Food Futures 2014
Manchester City Council, Manchester Partnership documents	
Manchester A Certain Future, Greater Manchester Climate Change Strategy 2011-2020	MCC 2009
Sustainable Procurement Policy Statement	MCC 2009
A1 Manchester Factsheet January 2014	MCC 2014
Manchester Sustainable Food Delivery Plan 2011-2020	Sustainable Food Steering Group
Manchester: a certain future 2013 update	MACF Steering Group 2013
Manchester's Healthy Weight Strategy 2010-2013	Ashton et al 2010
Points 4 Life: Evaluating innovation in health and wellbeing	Manchester NHS 2011
The Manchester Way, Manchester's Community Strategy 2006-2015	The Manchester

	Partnership 2006
Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy January 2013	Manchester Health and Wellbeing Board 2013

Manchester City Council committee meeting minutes	
Voluntary and Community Sector budget proposals, Report for resolution, Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee 20 October 2011	MCC 2011
Minutes of the Executive meeting held on 12 September 2012	MCC 2013
Economy Scrutiny Committee minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2013	MCC 2013
Greater Manchester Health and Wellbeing Board, MCC HWB Report for Resolution	MCC 2013
Health and Wellbeing Board Minutes of the meeting held on 18 September 2013	MCC 2013
Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2013	MCC 2013
Public Health Transition, report to the Health Scrutiny Committee 13 March 2013	MCC 2013
Revenue Budget 2013/14 and 2014/15	MCC 2013
Sustainable Food in Manchester, report for resolution to the Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee, 10 December 2013	MCC 2013
Economy Scrutiny Committee minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2014	MCC 2014

Greater Manchester level documents	
Stronger Together: Greater Manchester Strategy 2013	GMCA & AGMA 2013
What we do	GMCA & AGMA n.d.
Prosperity for all: The Greater Manchester Strategy August 2009	AGMA 2009
Greater Manchester Poverty Commission Recommendations Report	GMPC 2011
Stronger Together: Greater Manchester Strategy 2013	GMCA & AGMA 2013

Regional level documents	
North West Food & Health Action Plan	North West Food and Health Taskforce 2007

Media articles	
Manchester Evening News - Manchester Food Poverty	Kelloggs & M.E.N 2013
Manchester Evening News 0 M.E.N. calls for action to tackle blight of child poverty in Manchester	M.E.N. 2012
Manchester Evening News - M.E.N. hungry children campaign puts child poverty at the heart of Labour Party agenda	M.E.N. 2012
Manchester Evening News - Scandal of our hungry children: Manchester's MPs take poverty fight to Parliament	M.E.N. 2012
The Guardian - Comment is free: The church has no choice but to act when faced with the reality of poverty	Walker 2014
The Mirror - 27 bishops slam David Cameron's welfare reforms as creating a national crisis in unprecedented attack	Beattie 2014

Bristol Food Policy Council

Document name	Reference
Bristol Food Policy Council Documents	
Bristol Food Policy Council Annual Report 2012	BFPC 2012
Bristol Food Policy Council Terms of Reference, October 2012	BFPC 2012
The Bristol Good Food Charter	BFPC 2012
Yeo Valley Visit - Bristol Food Policy Council 23 May 2012	BFPC 2012
A Good Food Plan for Bristol	BFPC 2013
A vision for Bristol	BFPC 2013
About the Bristol Food Policy Council	BFPC 2013

Bristol Food Policy Council letter on proposed supermarket	BFPC 2013
Bristol Food Policy Council: Update February 2013	Marriott 2013
Bristol Local Plan Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Publication Stage Representation Form	BFPC 2013
Draft letter: Bristol Food Policy Council response to the proposed changes in the school curriculum	BFPC 2013
Press release: Launch of Stokes Croft Traders' Food Waste and Recycling Scheme, 9 April 2013	BFPC 2013

Bristol Food Policy Council meeting minutes

FPC meeting notes, 3 Oct 2012	BFPC 2012
Food Policy Council meeting papers, 10 April 2013	Marriott 2013
Meeting Notes - Food Policy Council meeting 3rd July 2013	BFPC 2013

Documents by organisations represented on BFPC

BCC Public Health food group for BFPC - The contribution of Public Health Bristol to the work of Bristol's Food Policy Council: Summary of who' s who and how our work fits	Raffle 2013
Bristol Food Network - A Sustainable Food Strategy for Bristol	Bristol Food Network 2009
Bristol Food Network - Bristol's local food update, January-February 2011	Bristol Food Network 2011
Carey - Presentation on BFPC at Purefood conference	Carey 2014
BCC - Food Poverty: What Does The Evidence Tell Us ?	Maslen et al 2013
Meeting notes: Mayor food conversation on surplus food and waste food, 20 May 2013	Marriott 2013
BCC - Sustainable Food Procurement, Powerpoint presentation	Storry 2013

Bristol City Council, Bristol Partnership, and Mayoral documents

Food Charter	BCC 2010
Food Standards	BCC 2010
Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy	BCC 2011
Bristol Markets Strategy & Action Plan Draft October 2011	BCC 2011
Appeal for mums to join the 'big breastfeed', press release, 3 September 2013	BCC 2013
Bristol Central Area Plan, Preferred Options Consultation, September 2013	BCC 2013
Bristol Living City: Fit for the Future 2013-2018, Bristol's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (draft for consultation 13th February 2013, version 1)	BCC 2013
Bristol Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies Submission, Statement of Representations Received on Publication Version, July 2013	BCC 2013
Bristol Local Plan: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies, Publication Version, March 2013	BCC 2013
Mayor of Bristol - A vision for Bristol	Ferguson 2013
The Bristol 20:20 Plan: Bristol's Sustainable City Strategy	Bristol Partnership 2010
Bristol Green Capital, NHS Bristol, and BCC - Who feeds Bristol? Towards a resilient food plan	Carey 2011
Bristol Partnership and Bristol Green Capital - Building a positive future for Bristol after Peak Oil	Osborn 2009
West Of England Joint Waste Core Strategy, as intended to be adopted, February 2011	West of England Partnership 2011
Bristol Living City: Fit for the Future 2013-2018, Bristol's Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (draft for consultation 13th February 2013, version 1)	

BCC committee meeting minutes

Agenda Item 6, 2014/15 budget and 2014/15 to 2016/17 medium term financial strategy, 18th February 2014	Taylor 2014

Media

Vote against levy on big shops and supermarket	Bristol Post 2013

'Waste village' blamed for rats at Bristol Wholesale Fruit Centre market	Bristol Post 2013

Miscellaneous	
CPRE - The Blue Finger Alliance	CPRE 2013
Independents for Bristol – a brave new dawn for politics in Bristol?	Luffingham 2012
International Planning Studies - Urban and Community Food Strategies. The Case of Bristol	Carey 2013
Bristol Food Links	Voscur n.d.

Durham Food Partnership Steering Group

Document title	Reference
Co Durham Food Partnership documents	
County Durham Food Partnership - Sustainable Local Food Strategy 2014-2020	CDFP 2014
Business Plan, Local food strategy development and implementation support	DRCC 2011
County Durham Local Food Strategy: Mid-term Evaluation Review, Draft 1	Helmepark 2013
Food Strategy meeting minutes	
Durham SLFS project steering group minutes 16 December 2011	DRCC 2011
PSG minutes 16 December 2011	DRCC 2011
Durham SLFS project steering group minutes 17 January 2012	DRCC 2012
Durham SLFS project steering group minutes 2 October 2012	DRCC 2012
Durham SLFS project steering group minutes, 25 July 2012	DRCC 2012
Durham SLFS project steering group minutes, 3 April 2012	DRCC 2012
Durham SLFS project steering group minutes 14 May 2013	DRCC 2013
Durham SLFS project steering group minutes 19 March 2013	DRCC 2013
Durham SLFS project steering group minutes 5 July 2013	DRCC 2013
Launch date, email from Liz Charles to CDFP, 7 April 2014	Charles, 2014
Durham County Council and Durham Partnership documents	
County Durham Economic Partnership and Durham County Council - Regeneration Statement 2012-2022	CDEP and DCC 2012
Altogether Better: The Sustainable Community Strategy for County Durham 2010-2030	CDP 2010
Corporate Strategy for Commissioning and Procurement	DCC 2012
County Durham Climate Change Strategy: draft for consultation	DCC 2012
The County Durham Plan: County Durham Green Infrastructure Strategy, September 2012	DCC 2012
County Durham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2013-2017	DCC 2013
Durham County Council Council Plan 2013-2017	DCC 2013
Revitalising Markets: a strategy for supporting the growth and enhancement of County Durham's street markets	DCC 2013
The County Durham Plan, Pre-Submission Draft Local Plan, October	DCC 2013
Press release: Next step for NE combined authority, 31 March 2014	DCC 2014
Wheels mean meals, press release, 27 February 2014	DCC 2014
County Durham committee meeting minutes/reports	
Cabinet Durham City Regeneration Masterplan, Key Decision R&ED/07/13 Report of Corporate Management Team	DCC 2014
General Fund Medium Term Financial Plan, 2014/15 to 2016/17 and Revenue and Capital Budget 2014/14, Report of Cabinet 26 February 2014, Agenda item 9, public reports pack	Henig 2014
Regional documents	
Northumberland County Council - Programme of Activities, NE Rural	NCC 2013

Growth Network	
The North East Farming and Rural Advisory Network - Rural Growth Prospectus 2013-14	NEFRAN 2013
Media – The Northern Echo	
Burning questions: Pushing the boundaries	The Northern Echo 2003
Border skirmishes over threat to move signs	The Northern Echo 2006
Critics remain unconvinced about County Durham Plan	Tallentire 2012
Fears raised over 'town in decline'	Leatherdale 2012
More houses and greenbelt intrusion in latest council masterplan	Tallentire 2012
Villagers face planning set back over anaerobic digester at East Hedleyhope, between Tow Law and Esh Winning	Tallentire 2013
Councillors offer to pay £1 to run Barnard Castle's weekly market	Laundy 2014
Durham County Council warned over potential farm sales	Arnold 2014
More than 150 people attend exhibition on Tesco plans for Stanley store	The Northern Echo 2014
Misc documents	
Farm Business Survey - County data in FBS data builder: Number of Farms (estimate): by County and Farm Type	Farm Business Survey 2013
Farm Business Survey - The Contribution of Farming in the GOR North East	Farm Business Survey 2012
Prince's Countryside Fund - Research busts myth that 'there is no such thing as a poor farmer'	Prince's Countryside Fund 2013
Sidegate Residents Association - Consultation response to Local Plan Preferred Options	Tracy-Smith 2013
StephenHughesMEP.org - Press release: Labour MEP slams EU over CAP	Hughes 2008

Appendix D: Meetings observed for case studies

Meeting title	Date	Location
London Food Board	23 May 2012	City Hall
London Food Board	25 October 2012	City Hall
London Food Board	25 April 2013	City Hall
London Food Board Executive	13 September 2012	City Hall
Islington Food Strategy steering group	22 October 2012	Freightliners Farm
Islington Food Strategy steering group	14 January 2013	Islington Council offices
Bristol Food Policy Council	16 January 2013	The M Shed
Bristol Food Policy Council	10 April 2013	The Park, Knowle West
Durham Food Strategy steering group	5 February 2013	DRCC
Durham Food Strategy steering group	14 May 2013	The Greenhouse, Stanley

Appendix E: Interviewees by case study
Greater London

Sector	Interview mode/location	Data code
Public	In person/workplace	L-Pub1
Public	Telephone	L-Pub3
Civil society	In person/cafe	L-CS1
Civil society	In person/City University	L-CS2
Private	In person/workplace	L-Private1

Islington Food Strategy Partnership

Job title	Interview mode/location	Data code
Public	In person/City University	I-Pub1
Public	In person/City University	I-Pub1
Private	In person/workplace	I-Private1
Civil society	In person/City University	I-CS1
Civil society	In person/workplace	I-CS2

Manchester Food Futures

Job title	Interview mode/location	Data code
Public	In person/workplace	M-Pub1
Public	Telephone	M-Pub2
Civil society	Telephone	M-CS1
Civil society	Telephone	M-CS2

Bristol Food Policy Council

Job title	Interview mode/location	Data code
Public	Telephone	B-Pub1
Public	In person/workplace	B-Pub2
Civil society	In person/cafe	B-CS1
Civil society	In person/cafe	B-CS2
Private	Telephone	B-Private1
Private	In person/workplace	B-Private2

County Durham Food Strategy Steering Group

Job title	Interview mode/location	Data code
Public	In person/workplace	CD-Pub1
Public	In person/workplace	CD-Pub2
Civil society	In person/cafe	CD-CS1
Civil society	In person/cafe	CD-CS2

Appendix F: Ethical approval

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Senate Research Ethics Committee
Application for Approval of Research Involving Human Participants

Please tick the box for which Committee you are submitting your application to

☐	Senate Research Ethics Committee
☐	School of Arts & School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
☒	School of Health Sciences Research Ethics Committee
☐	Learning Development Centre
☐	Optometry Research Committee

For **Senate** applications: return one original and 17 additional copies of the completed form and any accompanying documents to Anna Ramberg, Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee, City Research Development and International Relations Office, Northampton Square, London, EC1V 0HB.

For **School of Arts & School of Social Sciences** Research Ethics Committee submit a single copy of the application form and all supporting documentation to Andrea Tinson (Social Sciences) and Gail Marsom (Arts) by email..

For **School of Health Sciences**applications: submit all forms (including the Research Registration form) electronically (in Word format in a single document) to A.Welton@city.ac.uk, followed up by a single hard copy with signatures.

For **Optometry** applications: submit A SINGLE COPY OF THE APPLICATION FORM AND ALL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION to Ron Douglas by email.

Refer to the separate guidelines (for students) guidelines (for staff) while completing this form.

PLEASE NOTE
- Please determine whether an application is required by going through the checklist (for students) checklist (for staff) before filling out this form.
- Ethical approval **MUST** be obtained before any research involving human participants is undertaken. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary procedures being instigated, and you will not be covered by the University's indemnity if you do not have approval in place.
- You should have completed every section of the form
- The Signature Sections mustbe completed by the Principal Investigator (the supervisor and the student if it is a student project)

Project Title:
Governance barriers and enablers to the effective development and implementation of urban food strategies at local authority level in England

Short Project Title (no more than 80 characters):
Governance of urban food strategies in England

Name of Principal Investigator(s) (*all* students are require to apply jointly with their supervisor and all correspondence will be with the supervisor):
Dr. David Barling (Supervisor)   Jess Halliday (Research assistant/PhD student)

Post Held (including staff/student number):
Dr David Barling – Reader in Food Policy – ███████   Jess Halliday – Research assistant/PhD student – Centre for Food Policy – ███████████

Department(s)/School(s) involved at City University London:
Centre for Food Policy, School of Health Sciences

If this is part of a degree please specify type of degree and year
PhD 2011-2014

Date of Submission of Application:
26 June 2012

1. Information for Non-Experts

Lay Title (no more than 80 characters)

Governance of urban food strategies in England

Lay Summary / Plain Language Statement (no more than 400 words)

A number of English cities and countiesare developing urban food strategies to address the planning and policy needs and means to achieve more sustainable food provision within their local and regional areas. This trend has emerged as governments at all levels are realising the need to address the sustainability of their food provision, from production through to consumption, as signalled in the UK with the Cabinet Office's *Food Matters* report in 2008. The current UK government has struggled in its efforts to achieve an integrated food policy at the national level that responds to the challenges that the food system faces, the 'new fundamentals' of climate change; water; biodiversity and eco-systems support; energy and non-renewable fossil fuels; population growth; land use; soil; labour; and dietary change and public health.

The visions and priorities of English urban food strategies vary, and are dependent on the institutional origins of the strategy and a variety of political, socio-economic, and geographical factors contributing to the urban governance context. In some cases there is a misfit between the aspirations of urban food strategies on the one hand, and those of policies relating to food within the multilevel governance that frames powers and responsibilities at the local level on the other. While warnings have started to emerge in the academic literature that urban food strategies that are not cognisant of governance will struggle to implement their action plans and achieve their objectives, no study has explored the role of governance in the development and implementation of urban food strategies in England.

The principle objective of this project is to explore how forms and processes of governance shape food strategies in English cities. Specifically, it will explore how the composition of food policy networks (food policy councils or steering groups) affects the vision and aspirations, and the implementation, of urban food strategies; how urban governance interactions affects the visions and aspirations, and implementation, of strategies; how urban food strategies are constrained by or seek to influence the vertical policy framework; and how a national network can influence visions and aspirations of urban food strategies, and present a united front for lobbying on food policy at the national and European levels.

The findings of this project may be used to strengthen food strategies, and help inform the development of effective new strategies that are appropriate to their governance context. It may also lead some actors in urban governance to adapt their processes and frameworks to increase the potential effectiveness of strategies.

2. Applicant Details

This project involves:
(*tick as many as apply*)

☒	Staff Research	☒	Doctoral Student
☐	Undergraduate	☐	M-level Project
☐	Externally funded	☐	External investigators
☐	Collaboration	☐	Other
Provide details of collaboration and/or other			

Address for correspondence (including email address and telephone number)
(Principal Investigator)

Dr David Barling
Centre for Food Policy,
School of Community and Health Sciences,
City University London,
Northampton Square,
London EC1V 0HB.

tel: +███████████████

████████████████

Other staff members involved

Title, Name & Staff Number	Post	Dept& School	Phone	Email
Prof. Tim Lang	Professor of Food Policy	Centre for Food Policy, School of Health Sciences	+██████ ████████	████████████

All students involved in carrying out the investigation

Name & Student Number	Course / Year	Dept& School	Email
Jess Halliday 110060234	PhD Food Policy, 2011-2014	Centre for Food Policy, School of Health Sciences	████████████████

External co-investigators

Title & Name	Post	Institution	Phone	Email

Please describe the role(s) of all the investigators including all student(s)/external co-investigator(s) in the project, especially with regards to interaction with study participants.

Jess Halliday will review relevant literature and data and will manage and undertake all interactions (including interviews) with the study participants. She will also be responsible for data handling/ storage and for protecting the data for period following the research project.

If external investigators are involved, please provide details of their indemnity cover.

Application Details

2.1 Is this application being submitted to another ethics committee, or has it been previously submitted to an ethics committee? *This includes an NHS local Research Ethics Committee or a City University London School Research Ethics Committee or any other institutional committee or collaborating partners or research site.* (See the guidelines for more information on research involving NHS staff/patients/ premises.) **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

If yes, please provide details for the Secretary for the relevant authority/committee, as well as copies of any correspondence setting out conditions of approval.

N/A

2.2 If any part of the investigation will be carried out under the auspices of an outside organisation, e.g. a teaching hospital, please give details and address of organisation.

N/A

2.3 Other approvals required – has permission to conduct research in, at or through another institution or organisation been obtained? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

If yes, please provide details and include correspondence

N/A

2.4 Is any part of this research project being considered by another research ethics committee? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

If yes, please give details and justification for going to separate committees, and attach correspondence and outcome

N/A

2.5 Duration of Project
Start date: June 2011   Estimated end date: May 2014

Funding Details

2.6 Please provide details of the source of financial support (if any) for the proposed investigation.

This is a PhD research project funded under the PUREFOOD (Grant Agreement Number 264719) is a Marie Curie Initial Training Network funded by the European Commission's Seventh Framework PEOPLE program.

2.6a Total amount of funding being sought: N/A

2.6b Has funding been approved? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☐

If no, please provide details of when the outcome can be expected

N/A

2.6c Does the funding body have any requirements regarding retention, access and storage of the data? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

If yes, please provide details

N/A

3. Project Details

3.1 Provide the background, aim and justification for the proposed research.

This research is a requirement for the PhD in Food Policy. The research builds on prior work undertaken

by the applicants investigating multi-level governance of food policy in the United Kingdom, and particularly the emergence of urban food strategies at the local authority level. At this stage, relevant literature has been reviewed, and the methodology has been outlined.

The aim of the research is to understand:

- How governance of urban food strategies in English cities affects their vision and objectives, and the implementation of action plans to achieve them
- Whether the visions and objectives of urban food strategies are taken up and represented in other policies and strategies for city
- How the vertical governance context of urban food strategies in England – and in particular the different local authority structures in which they reside – affects their visions and aspirations, and implementation of action plans
- How knowledge-sharing between cities with urban food strategies influences their visions, aspirations, and action plans

It is hoped that this research will help inform the design and implementation of urban food strategies in England that are conscious of their governance context and can therefore best exploit the opportunities this governance context offers and mitigate the impact of any obstacles.

Although there is a recent, growing body of literature on urban food strategies, no in-depth analysis has been carried out of how the governance context of urban food strategies in England that reside within different local authority structures affects the visions and aspirations contained within them, and how they are implemented.

3.2 Provide a summary and brief justification of the design, methodology and plan for analysis that you propose to use.

The aim of this study is to explore the governance of urban food strategies; which actors are involved in developing and implementing strategies; how the strategies relate to the multi-level food policies and their urban governance contexts; and how knowledge is shared between local authorities with urban food strategies.

The study will involve: a literature review (underway); a review of the multi-level policy context to establish drivers and constraints; scoping work to find out which local authorities currently have or are developing urban food strategies (already done); a review of published documents and online resources to investigate the visions, aspirations, and action plans of urban food strategies (underway); and a first-hand investigation of actors' objectives, perceptions, and interactions.

The research will focus on urban food strategies in England and will take up to five case study cities, each representing a different local authority structure. A balance will be sought between strategies in development and being implemented. A nascent national network of cities working on food policy at the local level will be an additional point of focus.

Methods will include desk research, direct observation, participant observation, a questionnaire, and elite interviews. Publically available documents from state, non-state and academic sources will be studied to find out how (and by whom) urban food strategies are being framed, implemented and discussed, and also to help identify potential interviewees.

Direct observation will be carried out at meetings of urban food strategy steering groups at which a small group of actors discusses the aims and aspirations of the strategy and/or its implementation. The researcher will not contribute to the discussion in order to avoid influencing the participants and their decision-making processes. The researcher will collect data on the visions for the food strategy represented by the participants, how the actors plan to achieve their objectives, and how they measure results. Observations will also be recorded on which participants play a leading role in discussions, how participants interact and negotiate with each other, and the mechanisms by which decisions are made.

Participant observation will be carried out at consultation meetings of wider issue networks and a national conference on urban food strategies, which are convened in order to gather ideas from a wide pool of actors with a professional or activist interest in food. Due to the workshop style of these meetings, the researcher will be expected to participate by sharing ideas. In the case of the national conference, the researcher will also be involved in the organisation of the conference, including preparation of discussion

materials. The researcher will collect data on the meeting/conference programme, the visions shared by the organisers and invited speakers, and the mechanisms by which the organisers elicit the ideas and contributions of participants. Observations will also be recorded on which participants play a leading role in discussions, how participants interact and negotiate with each other, and the mechanisms by which decisions are made.

For both the participant observation and direct observation meetings, detailed notes on observations will be taken and transcribed. Where observations are subjective, the findings will help inform interview questions and corroboration will be sought. The meetings will not be audio recorded, but any transcripts, minutes or proceedings published by the organisers may be subject to documentary content analysis.

A questionnaire will be sent out in advance, during or after the national conference on urban food strategies to all registered delegates, expected to be over 150 in total. This method will allow for data to be gathered from a wider pool of actors than can be interviewed individually. Questions will be a mixture of multiple choice and open-ended questions. The findings will be compiled and subject to quantitative analysis, and content analysis will be carried out of responses to open-ended questions. The findings will help inform interview questions and corroboration will be sought. All protocols relating to research ethics (covering informed consent, confidentiality, data handling, data storage and health and safety) will be observed, as described below.

Interviews will be conducted with actors involved in the steering committees of urban food strategies. Target interviewees will be identified from desk research and networking. Interviews will be semi-structured to ensure that while core questions are covered, there is latitude for interviewees to raise issues not anticipated in the interview guide so as to avoid pre-defining the subject under discussion. Ideally, interviews will be conducted face-to-face, but given that interviewees are likely to be busy and time and financial resources may not be allow for travel to the case study city to conduct just one interview, in some cases telephone interviews may have to be substituted.

Interviews will be digitally recorded and transcribed. They will last no longer than one hour. Confidentiality will be assured. All protocols relating to research ethics (covering informed consent, confidentiality, data handling, data storage and health and safety) will be observed, as described below.

The PhD thesis will include a content analysis of documentary, questionnaire, and interview data to shed light on the research questions and set these within the context of theoretical debate. The data will primarily be used for the PhD study, but may also inform journal articles or presentations.

3.3 Please explain your plans for dissemination, including whether participants will be provided with any information on the findings or outcomes of the project.

The main output of this research will be the student researcher's PhD thesis. In addition, material may be disseminated in academic journals, conference presentations and lectures.

Interviewees will be asked whether they wish to receive feedback on the outputs of the research. Provision will be made for them to receive a short report based on the analysis of the research, which will be an abridged version of the analysis presented in the PhD thesis. This will be supplied electronically.

3.4 What do you consider are the ethical issues associated with conducting this research and how do you propose to address them?

Participants in this study will not experience risks greater than those they encounter in their daily lives. Interviewees will be actors with a seat on the steering committees of urban food strategies in case study cities, who are employed in the public, private, or civil society sectors, interviewed either at their workplace or in a mutually agreed public setting. They will be interviewed on issues relating to their professional, not their personal, lives.

Because interviewees are likely to include senior members of organisations which may take oppositional positions in the governance process, anonymity and confidentiality of data are likely to be the most important ethical issues in this research. Given that many of the interviewees will probably be known to each other in what is still a relatively small field, maintaining anonymity while providing a nuanced analysis of the data could prove challenging, but the study is similar in this respect to earlier studies which the researchers have conducted successfully.

Interviews will commence after informed consent is gained from the participants. Informed consent involves providing participants with relevant information regarding the aims and scope of the project. Contributions made by participants will remain confidential, and data will be made anonymous and will be stored securely.

In the case of meetings and conferences at which direct observation or participant observation is to take place, a potential ethical issue arises in the need to ensure all participants are aware and agree to be observed. The researcher (Jess Halliday) will seek written informed consent from the organiser or chair of the meeting in advance. In addition, verbal assent will be established from participants before the start of the meeting by the chair.

Another concern relates to health and safety issues during the interviews. For face-to-face interviews, the researcher will ensure that the interview location, arrival and departure plans are known to a family member or colleague. This will ensure the safe travel and return of the researcher.

3.5 How is the research intended to benefit the participants, third parties and/or local community?

The research is intended to benefit participants in the governance process around urban food strategies, and in the wider research community, by adding to knowledge on how urban food strategies can be designed and implemented so as to take advantage of enabling factors and mitigate the impact of any barriers.

3.6a Will invasive procedures (for example medical or surgical) be used?
YES ☐ NO ☒

3.6b If yes, what precautions will you take to minimise any potential harm?

N/A

3.7a Will intrusive procedures (for example psychological or social) be used?
YES ☐ NO ☒

3.7b If yes, what precautions will you take to minimise any potential harm?

N/A

3.8a In the course of the investigation might pain, discomfort (including psychological discomfort), inconvenience or danger be caused?
YES ☐ NO ☒

3.8b If yes, what precautions will you take to minimise any potential harm?

N/A

3.9 Please describe the nature, duration and frequency of the procedures?

N/A

4. Information on participants

4.1a How many participants will be involved?

The final interview sample size will not exceed 39 interviews – if saturation is reached or if the number of case studies is reduced the number may be smaller.

4.1b What is the age group and gender of the participants?

The participants will all be adults (18+) and will be both female and male.

4.1c Explain how you will determine your sample size and the selection criteria you will be using. Specify inclusion and exclusion criteria. If exclusion of participants is made on the basis of age, gender, ethnicity, race, disability, sexuality, religion or any other factor, please explain and justify why.

The nature of the topic and the food policy networks under investigation means the number of potential interviewees for each case study is quite large. The number of actors with a seat on the steering committee of urban food strategies varies between 10 and 30, giving an eligible pool of between 60 and 180 potential subjects across the six planned case studies; in addition, three civil society groups are involved in the national network of cities with urban food strategies, each with their own team leader. Past experience of the supervisor (David Barling) has suggested that excessive numbers of in-depth interviews produce an amount of material that cannot be meaningfully analysed in a study of this scope and duration. Conducting interviews which generate material that cannot be used effectively is an unethical use of interviewees' time.

The sample will be purposive and drawn from actors in the steering committees of urban food strategies. Care will be taken to ensure that at least one actor from each of the public, private, and civil society sectors is interviewed for each case study in order to have a balance of viewpoints. Where there is an apparent need for corroboration of responses a second interviewee from the same sector will be sought in order to ensure that findings are representative. One individual will be interviewed from each of the three civil society organisations convening the national network.

There is no exclusion or discrimination based on gender, ethnicity, race, disability, sexuality, religion or age, with the exception of those under the age of 18 who will not be eligible to be interviewed.

4.2 How are the participants to be identified, approached and recruited, and by whom?

Names of potential interviewees will emerge from desk research and networking. In some cases the names of steering committee members are published in the urban food strategy; in other cases a list of actors' names will be requested from the local authority that is supporting the strategy or from a strategy coordinator.

Interviewees will be contacted in the first instance by email, followed up by phone; or directly by phone where this is the only means of contact available; contact will be made by the researcher (Jess Halliday).

4.3 Describe the procedure that will be used when seeking and obtaining consent, including when consent will obtained. Include details of who will obtain the consent, how are you intending to arrange for a copy of the signed consent form for the participants, when will they receive it and how long the participants have between receiving information about the study and giving consent.

For interviews, the initial email contact will include a summary of the nature and purpose of the research, as well as a description of how the interview will be conducted and how the data will be used and stored. If the initial contact is by phone, arrangements will be made for this material to be supplied by email or post. Once candidates have agreed to be interviewed, the researcher will arrange the interview, at a time and place to suit the interviewee. It is
anticipated that a few days may intervene between the arrangement and the interview.

Face-to-Face:
If the interview is face-to-face, the participants will be emailed a copy of the consent form in advance and they will read through it with the researcher at the interview. An opportunity for questions and refusal will be given. The participant will sign two copies of the consent form: one to be retained by the participant, one for the researcher. The researcher will keep all consent forms in a locked file separate from the data.

Phone:
If the interview takes place by phone, the consent form will be sent in advance by email, and at the start of the call, the form will be reviewed. An opportunity for questions and refusal will be given. Participants will be asked to tick the consent boxes, retain a copy of the completed form and return a copy of the completed form to the researcher as an email attachment. If the interviewee does not have computer access, the forms will be supplied by post, along with a stamped envelope addressed to the researcher, so the signed form may be returned this way. The researcher will keep all consent forms in a locked file separate from the data.

For direct observation/participant observation at meetings and conferences, initial contact will be made

with the organiser or chair by email, including a summary of the nature and purpose of the research, as well as a description of the observation activities and how the data will be used and stored. The chair or organiser will have the opportunity to ask questions by email or phone, and once they have agreed they will be asked to sign an informed consent form. In addition, verbal assent will be established from participants before the start of the meeting through an announcement by the chair and a footnote to the agenda.

4.4 How will the participant's physical and mental suitability for participation be assessed?

N/A

4.5 Are there any special pressures that might make it difficult to refuse to take part in the study? Are any of the potential participants in a dependent relationship with any of the investigators (for instance student, colleague or employee) particularly those involved in recruiting for or conducting the project?

No

4.6 Are there any issues related to the ability of participants to give informed consent themselves or are you relying on gatekeepers on their behalf?

No. All participants will be able to give informed consent by themselves.

4.7 Will the participant's doctor be notified? **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒
(If so, provide a sample letter to the subject's GP.)

4.8 What procedures are in place for the appropriate referral of a study participant who discloses an emotional, psychological, health, education or other issue during the course of the research or is identified by the researcher to have such a need?

N/A

4.9 What steps will be taken to safeguard the participants from over-research? (I.e. to ensure that the participants are not being used in multiple research project.)

The researcher will avoid re-interviewing people who are known to have been repeatedly interviewed. Given that the governance of urban food strategies in England has received little attention, it is unlikely that participants will have been interviewed on the topic. However, the researcher will take care to avoid abusing the goodwill of contacts and potential participants.

4.10 Where will the research take place?

The research will take place in the UK. Interviews will be asked to designate a convenient meeting place, which may be their place of work or a mutually agreed public space which is suitable for interviews. Participants will also be able offered the opportunity to have the interview at City University, in which case a meeting room will be reserved by the researchers.

4.11 What health and safety issues, if any, are there to consider?

The main health and safety issues are the safety of the room where interviews are taking place, the personal safety of the researcher travelling to and from interview sites and general health and safety issues such as fire safety.

4.12 How have you addressed the health and safety concerns of the participants, researchers and any other people impacted by this study? Have you conducted a risk assessment?

As interviews are to be conducted at a convenient place nominated by the interviewee, it will not be possible to risk-assess these spaces in advance. Interview locations are likely to be either the interviewee's office, a public meeting room at their workplace, a convenient public space (such as a cafe), or a room at City University. In the latter case, rooms comply with university-wide safety policies, and

the researcher will escort interviewees from reception to the interview room, check the rooms in advance for possible hazards, and inform interviewees of emergency exit routes.

For interviews conducted away from City University, the researcher will inform a family member or colleague of her travel plans and estimated interview timings.

The use of mobile phones will ensure contact can be maintained between the research student (Jess Halliday) and the research supervisor (David Barling).

4.13 Are you offering any incentives or rewards for participating?   YES ☐ NO ☒
If yes please give details

5. Vulnerable groups

5.1 Will persons from any of the following groups be participating in the study? (if not go to section 6) NO

Adults without capacity to consent	☐
Children under the age of 18	☐
Those with learning disabilities	☐
Prisoners	☐
Vulnerable adults	☐
Young offenders (16-21 years)	☐
Those who would be considered to have a particular dependent relationship with the investigator (e.g. those in care homes, students, employees, colleagues)	☐

5.2 Will you be recruiting or have direct contact with any children under the age of 18?
YES ☐ NO ☒

5.2a If yes, please give details of the child protection procedures you propose to adopt should there be any evidence of or suspicion of harm (physical, emotional or sexual) to a young person. Include a referral protocol identifying what to do and who should be contacted.

N/A

5.2b Please give details of how you propose to ensure the well-being of the young person, particularly with respect to ensuring that they do not feel pressured to take part in the research and that they are free to withdraw from the study without any prejudice to themselves at anytime.

N/A

5.2c Please give details of any City staff or students who will have contact with young people (under the age of 18) and details of current (within the last 3 years) enhanced City University London CRB clearance.

Name	Dept& School	Student/Staff Number	Date of CRB disclosure	Type of disclosure

5.2d Please give details of any non-City staff or students who will have contact with young people (under the age of 18) and details of current (within the last 1 year) enhanced CRB clearance.

Name	Institution	Address of organisation that requested the disclosure	Date of CRB disclosure	Type of disclosure

5.3 Will you be recruiting or have direct contact with vulnerable adults? YES ☐ NO☒

5.3a If yes, please give details of the protection procedures you propose to adopt should there be any evidence of or suspicion of harm (physical, emotional or sexual) to a vulnerable adult. Include a referral protocol identifying what to do and who should be contacted.

N/A

5.3b Please give details of how you propose to ensure the well-being of the vulnerable adult, particularly with respect to ensuring that they do not feel pressured to take part in the research and that they are free to withdraw from the study without any prejudice to themselves at anytime. You should indicate how you intend to ascertain that person's views and wishes.

N/A

5.3c Please give details of any City staff or students who will have contact with vulnerable adults and details of current (within the last 3 years) enhanced City University London CRB clearance.

Name	Dept& School	Student/Staff Number	Date of CRB disclosure	Type of disclosure

5.3d Please give details of any non-City staff or students who will have contact with vulnerable adults and details of current (within the last 1 year) enhanced CRB clearance.

Name	Institution	Address of organisation that requested the disclosure	Date of CRB disclosure	Type of disclosure

5.4 Will you be recruiting any participants who fall under the Mental Capacity Act 2005?
YES ☐ NO ☒

If so you MUST get approval from an NHS COREC approved committee (see separate guidelines for more information).

---

6. Data Collection

6.1a Please indicate which of the following you will be using to collect your data
Please tick all that apply

Questionnaire	☒
Interviews	☒
Participant observation	☒
Focus groups	☐
Audio/digital-recording interviewees or events	☒
Video recording	☐
Physiological measurements	☐
Quantitative research (please provide details)	☒
Other	☒
Please give details	Desk research – review of academic literature and other publically available material Direct observation – will take place at meetings of steering committees of urban food strategies Quantitative research – a small amount of quantitative data will be collected via check-box questionnaire responses. This will be used to identify trends in participant work sectors, locations, and points of view.

6.1b What steps, if any, will be taken to safeguard the confidentiality of the participants (including companies)?

The researcher, Jess Halliday, will not disclose the identity of the interviewees or their organisations to anyone other than her supervisors.

Identifying information will not be attached to recorded interviews or transcripts. All electronic data (audio files, transcripts, emails) will be held on a password protected computer. Once uploaded to the computer, interviews will be deleted from the recording device. Hard copies of anonymised transcripts and consent forms will be held in separate locked files. Interviewees will be asked to suggest the short description by which they wish to be identified (eg 'retail buyer').

Data will be recorded on Windows Media Audio (WMA) files and will be transcribed by Jess Halliday.

The master record reconciling interviewees' identities, the date and place of interview, and occupation or other description, will be handwritten, and will be stored in a locked file separate from other data.

Data will be stored for seven years.

6.1c If you are using interviews or focus groups, please provide a topic guide

Preliminaries (before tape switched on):
 Confirm interviewee has read background information – any questions? Read through Consent Form: opportunity to withdraw. Sign two copies, retain one. Ask interviewee to suggest short form of job description to use as identifier (eg, 'local government employee').
 Switch tape on.

(The following are intended to provide an indicative guide of interview questions)

The food policy network aspect
- (i)   What sort of work does your main employment activity involve (not urban food strategy work, unless this is the subjects main occupation)?
- (ii)   How did you come to be involved in the urban food strategy?
- (iii)   What is your role in devising or implementing the urban food strategy
- (iv)   What is your ideal vision for the food system of [city]?
- (v)   How has your vision for the food system of [city] changed since you became involved in the urban food strategy?
- (vi)   To what extent do you think your views have been used to inform the urban food strategy and its progress to date?
- (vii)   Which actors are most prominent discussions or decision-making (sectors or originating organisations not names)?
- (viii) Are there any points of tension between actors in the network?

The urban governance aspect
- (i)   Are you involved in any other policy networks or strategies of [city]?
- (ii)   Are the vision and aspirations of the urban food strategy taken up by other policies/strategies for [city]?
- (iii)   What problems have been encountered in trying to implement the urban food strategy?
- (iv)   What enabling factors have been encountered in implementing the urban food strategy?

The national aspect
- (i)   Are you aware of the national network of cities with urban food strategies?
- (ii)   Have you been involved in the national network? Why/why not?
- (iii)   What should such a network be for?
- (iv)   Have you (or the food policy network you belong to) received guidance from another city/local authority with an urban food strategy?
- (v)   Have you (or the food policy network you belong to) given advice or guidance to another city/local authority with an urban food strategy?
- (vi)   How applicable was the advice you received or gave to a different city/local authority?
- (vii)   In what ways does the national food policy in the UK help and hinder urban food strategies achieve their aspirations?
- (viii) In what ways can cities, individually or collaboratively, influence national, European or international food policy?

Thanks, switch off recorder.

7.1a Will the research involve:

• **complete anonymity of participants**(i.e. researchers will not meet, or know the identity of participants, as participants, as participants are a part of a random sample and are required to return responses with no form of personal identification)**?**	☐
• **anonymised sample or data**(i.e. an *irreversible* process whereby identifiers are removed from data and replaced by a code, with no record retained of how the code relates to the identifiers. It is then impossible to identify the individual to whom the sample of information relates)**?**	☐
• **de-identified samples or data**(i.e. a *reversible* process whereby identifiers are replaced by a code, to which the researcher retains the key, in a secure location)?	☒
• **subjects being referred to by pseudonym in any publication arising from the research?**	☐
• **any other method of protecting the privacy of participants?**(e.g. use of direct quotes with specific permission only; use of real name with specific, written permission only)	☐
Please give details of 'any other method of protecting the privacy of participants' is used	

7.1bWhich of the following methods of assuring confidentiality of data will be implemented?
Please tick all that apply

• data to be kept in a locked filing cabinet	☒
• data and identifiers to be kept in separate, locked filing cabinets	☒
• access to computer files to be available by password only	☒
• storage at City University London	☒
• stored at other site	☐
If stored at another site, please give details	

7.1c Who will have access to the data?
Access by named researcher(s) only   **YES** ☒ **NO** ☐
Access by people other than named researcher(s)   **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

If people other than the named researcher(s), please explain by whom and for what purpose

7.2a Is the data intended for reuse or to be shared as part of longitudinal research?
                                                    YES ☐ **NO** ☒

7.2b Is the data intended for reuse or to be shared as part of a different/wider research project now, or in the future?   **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

7.2c Does the funding body (e.g. ESRC) require that the data be stored and made available for reuse/sharing?   **YES** ☐ **NO** ☒

7.2d If you have responded yes to any of the questions above, explain how you are intending to obtain explicit consent for the reuse and/or sharing of the data.

N/A

7.3 Retention and Destruction of Data

7.3a Does the funding body or your professional organisation/affiliation place obligations or recommendations on the retention and destruction of research data?

YES ☐ **NO** ☒

If yes, what are your affiliations/funding and what are the requirements? (If no, please refer to University guidelines on retention.)

N/A

7.3bHow long are you intending to keep the data?

It is intended that the data will be kept for a period of seven years.

7.3c How are you intending to destroy the data after this period?

At the end of this period, all electronic records will be deleted and hard copies shredded.

8. Curriculum Vitae

CV OF APPLICANTS (**Please duplicate this page for each applicant, including external persons and students involved.**)

NAME:	David Barling
CURRENT POST (from) October 2010	Reader in Food Policy
Title of Post:	
Department:	Centre for Food Policy, School of Health Sciences
Is your post funded for the duration of this proposal?	Yes
Funding source (if not City University London)	
Please give a summary of your training/experience that is relevant to this research project	
Long experience of conducting, collating and analysing elite semi-structured interviews and publishing findings – for a wide variety of public funded research projects and charitable funded consultancies. Currently PI on 3 EU 7th framework funded interdisciplinary projects Research outputs peer reviewed as world class and internationally significant by RAE 2008. Former member of SCHS research ethics committee.	

CV OF APPLICANTS (**Please duplicate this page for each applicant, including external persons and students involved.**)

NAME:	Jess Halliday
CURRENT POST (from) June 2011	Research assistant/PhD candidate
Title of Post:	
Department:	Centre for Food Policy, School of Health Sciences
Is your post funded for the duration of this proposal?	Yes
Funding source (if not City University London)	PhD research project funded under the PUREFOOD (Grant Agreement Number 264719) is a Marie Curie Initial Training Network funded by the European Commission's Seventh Framework PEOPLE program.
Please give a summary of your training/experience that is relevant to this research project	

Prior to embarking on this PhD research study, I completed the MSc Food Policy programme at the Centre for Food Policy over two years, via distance learning. As part of this course of study I completed a dissertation on the contribution of food flavour companies' contribution to development through their procurement-related corporate social responsibility initiatives.

This project involved the collection of qualitative data by means of document analysis. My responsibilities included identifying suitable companies; accessing reports and published materials, including contact with the companies to request materials in some cases; analysing data; and writing up reports. Ethical approval was not required as the study did not involve human subjects.

Since embarking on the PhD programme I have attended a total of 7 weeks of training under the Purefood programme, on: Food and the City: a historical and conceptual introduction; contemporary sociological and economic theories of food dynamics, contemporary food policy and governance theories; contemporary food planning theories; interdisciplinarity in agro-food studies; translating empirical findings into recommendations for practitioners and policy makers; research methodology; techniques for writing a scientific paper; presentation skills; project management. I have also attended two conferences on urban food and planning in the UK and one conference on 'Agriculture in an Urbanising Society' in The Netherlands.

The selection of my current research topic arises from knowledge gained during the course of the MSc programme, the Purefood training programme, and the conferences. My choice of methods arises from the Purefood training programme and independent study of research methods.

Before joining the Centre for Food Policy, I worked as a journalist, which involved identifying interviewees, networking and making contacts, conducting interviews, data handling and writing.

In addition to an MSC in Food Policy (City University London), I have a Postgraduate Diploma in Periodical Journalism (London College of Printing) and a BA in Classics (Cambridge University).

8.1 Supervisor's statement on the student's skills and ability to carry out the proposed research, as well as the merits of the research topic (up to 500 words)

This research explores an emerging and important area of study for food policy and governance and places it firmly within the institutional and legal parameters of local government in England. The proposal is part of an EU funded 7th framework Marie Curie People project Purefood and has undergone a thorough review as part of the competitive process of winning the grant. This student was appointed as an Early Stage Researcher on the project in a competitive process over around 70 other applicants. The proposed interviews are an important step in the data collection stage of the research project. The student has extensive experience of elite interviewing and of observing confidentiality requirements of participants. The student has recently successfully presented on her work to fellow PhD students and Masters students in food policy and to other members of the Purefood project. See http://purefoodnetwork.eu

Supervisor's Signature	
Print Name	Dr. David Barling

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Centre for Food Policy
Room C307, Northampton Square

London EC1V 0HB

Participant information sheet

I have contacted you to ask whether you would be willing to be interviewed for a study I am conducting at the Centre for Food Policy, at City University London, as part of my PhD research. This sheet provides you with more information about the project, and about what your participation would involve. If you would like more information, please contact me via the email or phone number below, or at the above address.

Project Title: Barriers and enablers to the effective development and implementation of urban food strategies at local authority level in England

Principal Investigators: Jess Halliday, Dr David Barling
Contact details for Jess Halliday: ████████████████████████

Why you are being asked for an interview:

The purpose of the research is to explore the governance of urban food strategies in England, and to identify barriers and enablers to their effective development and implementation. As you may know, urban food strategies have been devised in cities and local authorities containing urban areas in England in recent years, and more are currently in development. The governance of these strategies has not yet been explored, and as part of the Centre for Food Policy's work on multi-level governance of food policy we are interested to how governance within food policy networks affects what urban food strategies set out to achieve, how they relate to other policies and strategies of the city or area they concern, as well as other policy levels, and how knowledge is shared between cities/local authorities with such strategies. The interview will cover questions about your involvement in this area, and interviewees have been chosen because of their known interest and expertise in this field. We do not expect you to be the repository of definitive wisdom – we realise that urban food strategies are often works in continual process and that many actors are involved in them. We are interested in your thoughts as an informed observer and participant. We are not seeking any personal or commercially sensitive information.

Procedure

If you agree to be interviewed, please reply to this letter by contacting me by email or phone. I will then get in touch to arrange an interview, at a time and place to suit you. Interviews can be face-to-face, or by telephone. They will take no more than an hour, and will be recorded. Your participation is entirely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time should you change your mind. You will be asked to sign a consent form, agreeing to the terms of the interview, as outlined in this letter.

Potential Benefits

This will be an opportunity for you to 'think aloud' and feed into debate about an important, emerging policy area. At the end of the research, I will compile a summary of the (anonymous) findings and my analysis, which will be made available electronically to participants.

How will the information be used

The main output of this research will be the student researcher's PhD thesis. In addition, material may be disseminated in academic journals, conference presentations and lectures.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality. Interviewees' participation will not be made known to other interviewees. Identifying information will not be attached to interview transcripts. No information that discloses your identity or your organisation's identity will be used in any project outputs (reports, articles, presentations) and all comments made in the interview will be used anonymously. The recorded data will be stored on a password-protected computer and will be transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts and other data will be held securely. The data will be held for seven years, after which time it will be deleted / shredded.

University Complaints Procedure

If there is an aspect of the interview that concerns you, you may make a complaint. If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, City University London has established a complaints procedure via the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee. To complain about the study, you need to phone ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: 'Governance of urban food strategies in England'.

You could also write to the Secretary:

▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee
City University London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB
Email:▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

Centre for Food Policy
Room C307, Northampton Square
London EC1V 0HB

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Participant consent form: (Name)

Project Title: Barriers and enablers to the effective development and implementation of urban food strategies at local authority level in England

Principal Investigators: Jess Halliday, Dr David Barling

Contact details for Jess Halliday: ████████████████████████████████

Principal Investigators: Jess Halliday, Dr David Barling

☐ I agree to take part in the above City University research project. I have read the Information Sheet and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

☐ I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, and that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project and can withdraw at any stage without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

☐ Be interviewed by the researcher
☐ Allow the interview to be audio taped.

Data Protection

This information will be held and processed only for the purposes of the project. The data will be retained for seven years.

I understand that any information I provide is confidential. I agree that the interview can be be tape-recorded and I agree that verbatim quotations from the interview can be used anonymously in presentations, reports and other publications, on the understanding that no information that could identify me or my organisation will be presented or published in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Name	Signature (unless returning by email)	Date
Interviewee: (Print name)		
Interviewer: **Jess Halliday**		

Centre for Food Policy
Room C307, Northampton Square

London EC1V 0HB

Participant information sheet

I have contacted you to ask whether you would be willing to allow direct observation/participant observation to take place at [name and date of meeting] for a study I am conducting at the Centre for Food Policy, at City University London, as part of my PhD research. This sheet provides you with more information about the project, and about what the observation would involve. If you would like more information, please contact me via the email or phone number below, or at the above address.

Project Title: Barriers and enablers to the effective development and implementation of urban food strategies at local authority level in England

Principal Investigators: Jess Halliday, Dr David Barling
Contact details for Jess Halliday:

Why you are being asked to consent to observation:

The purpose of the research is to explore the governance of urban food strategies in England, and to identify barriers and enablers to their effective development and implementation. As you may know, urban food strategies have been devised in cities and local authorities containing urban areas in England in recent years, and more are currently in development. The governance of these strategies has not yet been explored, and as part of the Centre for Food Policy's work on multi-level governance of food policy we are interested to how governance within food policy networks affects what urban food strategies set out to achieve, how they relate to other policies and strategies of the city or area they concern, as well as other policy levels, and how knowledge is shared between cities/local authorities with such strategies.

For direct observation: The researcher will collect data on the visions for the food strategy as represented by the participants, how the actors plan to achieve their objectives, and how they measure results. Observations will also be recorded on which participants play a leading role in discussion, how participants interact and negotiate with each other, and the mechanisms by which decisions are made. The researcher will not contribute to the discussion in order to avoid influencing the decision-making process.

For participant observation: The researcher will collect data on the meeting/conference programme, the visions shared by the organisers and invited speakers, and the mechanisms by which the organisers elicit the ideas and contributions of participants. Observations will also be recorded on which participants play a leading role in discussion, how participants interact and negotiate with each other, and the mechanisms by which decisions are made. The researcher will participate in workshop-type activities.

For the national conference only: The researcher will also be involved in the organisation of the conference, including preparation of discussion materials.

Procedure

If you agree to the observation of the meeting, please reply to this letter by contacting me by email or phone. You may ask questions about the research and the observation activity. Once any questions have been answered to your satisfaction, you will be asked to sign a consent form agreeing to the terms of the observation activities as outlined in this letter. In addition, it is requested that participants' assent to the observation be obtained via a footnote to the agenda and that the observer's presence be mentioned by the chair prior to the start of the meeting. A copy of this information sheet will be provided to participants on request.

Potential Benefits

This will be an opportunity for you to have an independent observer present at the meeting. At the end of the research, I will compile a summary of the (anonymous) findings and my analysis, which will be made available electronically to participants.

How will the information be used

The main output of this research will be my PhD thesis. In addition, material may be disseminated in academic journals, conference presentations and lectures. Detailed notes on observations at the meeting will be taken and transcribed. Where observations are subjective the findings will help inform interview questions and corroboration will be sought. The meetings will not be audio recorded but any transcripts, minutes, proceedings or recordings published by the organisers or made available by them to the researcher may be subject to documentary content analysis.

Confidentiality

Every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality. Identifying information on meeting participants will not be attached to meeting notes. No information that discloses the identity of participants or their organisation's identity will be used in any project outputs (reports, articles, presentations). The recorded data will be stored on a password-protected computer and will be transcribed by the researcher. Transcripts and other data will be held securely. The data will be held for seven years, after which time it will be deleted / shredded.

University Complaints Procedure

If there is an aspect of the interview that concerns you, you may make a complaint. If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, City University London has established a complaints procedure via the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee. To complain about the study, you need to phone ███████████. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is: 'Governance of urban food strategies in England'.

You could also write to the Secretary:

███████████
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee
City University London
Northampton Square
London
EC1V 0HB
Email:███████████████████

12. **Participant Consent Form** – direct observation and participant observation

CITY UNIVERSITY LONDON

Centre for Food Policy
Room C307, Northampton Square
London EC1V 0HB

Participant consent form: (Name)

Project Title: Barriers and enablers to the effective development and implementation of urban food strategies at local authority level in England

Principal Investigators: Jess Halliday, Dr David Barling

Contact details for Jess Halliday: ███████████████████████████

Principal Investigators: Jess Halliday, Dr David Barling

☐　　　I agree to take part in the above City University research project. I have read the Information Sheet and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

☐　　　I understand that my participation is entirely voluntary, and that I can choose not to participate in part or all of the project and can withdraw at any stage without being penalised or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that agreeing to take part means that I am willing to:

☐　　　Allow the researcher to undertake direct observation/participant observation activities at [meeting details and date].

☐　　　Include a footnote to the meeting agenda and make an announcement at the start of the meeting in order to obtain the assent of meeting participants for the observation activities.

Data Protection

This information will be held and processed only for the purposes of the project. The data will be retained for seven years.

I agree to allow the researcher to undertake direct observation/participant observation activities at the meeting or conference [details] on the understanding that no information that could identify participants or their organisations will be presented or published in any reports on the project, or to any other party.

I have received a copy of this consent form for my own records.

Name	Signature (unless returning by email)	Date
Interviewee: (Print name)		
Interviewer: Jess Halliday		

13. Additional Information

14. Declarations by Investigator(s)

• I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information given above, together with any accompanying information, is complete and correct.

• I have read the University's guidelines on human research ethics, and accept the responsibility for the conduct of the procedures set out in the attached application.

- I have attempted to identify all risks related to the research that may arise in conducting the project.
- I understand that **no** research work involving human participants or data can commence until **full** ethical approval has been given

Print Name	Signature	
Principal Investigator(s) (student and supervisor if student project)	David Barling Jess Halliday	
Associate Dean for Research (or equivalent) or authorised signatory		
Date		

Researcher's checklist for compliance with the Data Protection Act, 1998

This checklist is for use alongside the *Guidance notes on Research and the Data Protection Act 1998*. Please refer to the notes for a full explanation of the requirements.

You may choose to keep this form with your research project documentation so that you can prove that you have taken into account the requirements of the Data Protection Act.

	REQUIREMENT	✓	
A	*Meeting the conditions for the research exemptions:*		
1	The information is being used *exclusively* for research purposes.	✓	Mandatory
2	You are not using the information to support measures or decisions relating to *any* identifiable living individual.	✓	Mandatory
3	You are not using the data in a way that will cause, or is likely to cause, substantial damage or substantial distress to any data subject.	✓	Mandatory
4	You will not make the result of your research, or any resulting statistics, available in a form that identifies the data subject.	✓	Mandatory
B	*Meeting the conditions of the First Data Protection Principle:*		
1	You have fulfilled one of the conditions for using personal data, e.g. you have obtained consent from the data subject. Indicate which condition you have fulfilled here: <u>All participants will sign consent forms and will have the opportunity to disassociate themselves from the research project at any time.</u>	✓	Mandatory
2	If you will be using sensitive personal data you have fulfilled one of the conditions for using sensitive personal data, e.g. you have obtained explicit consent from the data subject. Indicate which condition you have fulfilled here:	N/A	Mandatory if using sensitive data
3	You have informed data subjects of: i. What you are doing with the data; ii. Who will hold the data, usually City University London; iii. Who will have access to or receive copies of the data.	✓	Mandatory unless B4 applies
4	You are excused from fulfilling B3 only if all of the following conditions apply: i. The data has been obtained from a third party; ii. Provision of the information would involve disproportionate effort; iii. You record the reasons for believing that disproportionate effort applies, please also give brief details here: _____ _____ _____ _____ N.B. Please see the guidelines above when assessing disproportionate effort.		Required only when claiming disproportionate effort
C	*Meeting the conditions of the Third Data Protection Principle:*		
1	You have designed the project to collect as much information as you need for your research but not more information than you need.	✓	Mandatory
D	*Meeting the conditions of the Fourth Data Protection Principle:*		
1	You will take reasonable measures to ensure that the information you collect is	✓	Mandatory

	accurate.		
2	Where necessary you have put processes in place to keep the information up to date.	✓	Mandatory
E	***Meeting the conditions of the Sixth Data Protection Principle:***		

1	You have made arrangements to comply with the rights of the data subject. In particular you have made arrangements to:
	
	  i. Inform the data subject that you are going to use their personal data.
	  ii. Stop using an individual's data if it is likely to cause unwarranted substantial damage or substantial distress to the data subject or another.
	  iii. Ensure that no decision, which significantly affects a data subject, is based solely on the automatic processing of their data.
	  iv. Stop, rectify, erase or destroy the personal data of an individual, if necessary.
	Please give brief details of the measures you intend to take here:
	  i. <u>All participants will be informed that no personal data will be included in the research and that efforts will be undertaken to protect their identities. At each phase of the research, participants will be informed of how the data is being used.</u>
	  ii. <u>Participants may withdraw their participation from the study at any time. They will be made aware of this at the time of signing the consent form. If they choose with withdraw, none of the data collected through interviews will be used in the study.</u>
		✓	Mandatory