

Who Governs Merseyside?



A Democratic Audit Briefing Paper

Stuart Wilks-Heeg, Dave Ellis
and Alex Nurse



the
Bluecoat.

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Dave Sinclair School students' strike, 1985, from the exhibition *Democratic Promenade*, at the Bluecoat

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Key points

- Just under half of identifiable spending by public service organisations on Merseyside is controlled by elected local authorities.
- Taken together, local councils and local NHS Trusts account for 80 per cent of direct local public service spending on Merseyside.
- There are almost 40,000 businesses on Merseyside, of which around 10 per cent are members of one of the five local chambers of commerce.
- Significant business power is likely to be located in individual companies which are major employers or which have substantial development interests in the region. Some, but by no means all, of these interests are represented on the 'shadow board' of the proposed Local Economic Partnership for Merseyside.
- Merseyside has a large and diverse voluntary sector, made up of thousands of individual organisations. However, the extent of voluntary sector influence on public policy is difficult to gauge.
- Analysis of some 1,100 governing positions in the city-region suggests that these roles are quite widely dispersed, although 64 per cent are occupied by men. A small number of individuals occupy three or more such roles – 16 of these 18 individuals are councillors, and the gender balance is roughly equal (ten men, eight women).
- The Labour Party is currently the dominant political force in the city-region by some margin. Compared to the composition of councils across Merseyside, councillors who take up multiple governing roles are more likely both to be Labour and to be male.
- The city-region's two daily newspapers serve contrasting readerships and are likely to influence local politics in distinctive ways.
- Ownership of the local press is dominated by the Trinity Mirror Group, which owns both the *Liverpool Echo* and the *Liverpool Daily Post*, as well as 13 weekly titles published in the city-region.
- BBC Radio Merseyside has the largest market share among radio broadcasters in the city-region, closely followed by Radio City 96.7.

Introduction

This briefing has been produced to inform a unique project set up to explore who wields political power on Merseyside in 2011, and how they are accountable to local people. Representing an amalgam of academic study, public inquiry and theatre, the project has been co-organised by Democratic Audit and the Bluecoat, a Liverpool-based arts centre. Based around a two-stage event, the project forms part of the Bluecoat's *Democratic Promenade* exhibition, taking place from 30 September to 27 November 2011.

The purpose of this briefing is to provide an initial evidence base for the first event, to be held at the Bluecoat on 6 October 2011, when a panel of experts will be asked for their views on who has the power to shape public policy on Merseyside. Intended to inform discussion and debate, rather than to advance a view on who governs Merseyside, this briefing draws on Democratic Audit research into the following five key aspects of governance and politics in the city-region:

- The extent of public sector spending on Merseyside and the relative significance of the 29 main public service organisations identified, as measured by their 'spending power';
- The scale and organisation of the private sector on Merseyside, including the number of companies, the role of large corporations in the local economy and the representation of local businesses through the local chambers of commerce;
- The organisation and representation of the voluntary sector on Merseyside;

- A detailed analysis of who occupies a total of 1,100 places on governing boards across Merseyside, encompassing local government, NHS trusts, single-purpose agencies for policing, fire and waste disposal, universities, colleges, chambers of commerce and others;
- The structure and ownership of the local media, including the circulation of local newspapers, and the audience shares gained by regional radio broadcasters.

Before turning to the research findings directly, the briefing begins with a short discussion of the wider issues raised by attempts to study power in city-regional politics. It also provides a brief assessment of the previous role of Merseyside County Council, the elected city-regional authority abolished twenty-five years ago, in 1986, and an account of recent developments in (unelected) city-regional governance for the Liverpool city-region.

Throughout this briefing, the terms 'Merseyside' and 'Liverpool City-Region' are used interchangeably. In both cases, these terms refer to the area covered by the former Merseyside County Council, namely the five Metropolitan Borough Councils of Liverpool, Sefton, Knowsley, St. Helens and the Wirral (although some definitions of the Liverpool city-region also include Halton Borough Council).



Who governs?

The apparently straightforward question of 'who governs?' is, in fact, one of the most complex and most controversial in political science. Originally posed by classic American academic studies of city politics,¹ it is a question which clearly requires us to go beyond the formal, visible structures of democratic politics and public governance, important as these are. When we ask 'who governs?' we are really trying to ascertain who has the power to shape and determine public policy, including the power to keep issues off the policy agenda altogether. Elected representatives and civil servants are clearly an important part of the story of 'who governs?' – but so too are a range of individuals and organisations beyond the political parties and the state. In a democracy, power does not begin and end with periodic elections. Organised pressure groups also play a role, as do forms of systemic power exercised, for instance, by individual corporations and media organisations.

All of these issues come to the fore when we try to establish who governs a city-region like Merseyside. But studying power locally raises other issues too. Unlike in centuries past, cities are not self-governing 'city-states'. The UK government largely defines the parameters of local democracy on Merseyside, as it does in all localities, and 'supra-national' organisations such as the European Union also have a role.

If we are required to 'look up' to understand how Merseyside is governed, then we must also 'look down'. We cannot reach a view on who governs Merseyside without examining its various sub-units, not just the city of Liverpool as its core city, but also the four other Metropolitan Boroughs of Sefton, the Wirral, Knowsley and St. Helens. Indeed, the governance structures for Merseyside as a whole are remarkably 'light touch', amounting to a small number of statutory authorities for policing, fire and waste disposal, together with some non-statutory partnership arrangements. The power of Liverpool-based individuals and organisations relative to those in the other constituent parts of Merseyside is therefore another important factor to consider.

It is perhaps fitting, therefore, that we are posing the question of who governs Merseyside in the 25th anniversary year of the abolition of Merseyside County Council (MCC). Formally abolished on 31 March 1986, MCC had been created only 12 years previously as a 'strategic authority' for Merseyside – one of six Metropolitan County Councils established in the largest English conurbations on 1 April 1974.² Following the model of the Greater London Council, which had been established in 1965, the 'Met Counties' were mostly charged with providing strategic policy co-ordination in areas such as land-use planning, public transport and policing.



¹ See Robert Dahl (1961) *Who Governs? Democracy and power in an American city*, New Haven: Yale University Press.

² The other Metropolitan County Councils served Greater Manchester, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear, the West Midlands and West Yorkshire.

The rise and fall of Merseyside County Council

As one of six Metropolitan County Councils created by the Local Government Act 1972, the main responsibilities of Merseyside County Council were transport, policing, the fire service, arts and museums, waste disposal and land-use planning. Like the other Metropolitan Counties and the GLC, Merseyside County Council was accountable to the local electorate, with elections held every four years. Labour won the first elections to MCC in 1974, but lost control of the council to the Conservatives in 1977, before regaining its majority at the 1981 elections. However, the elections scheduled for 1985 were cancelled because of the provisions made in the Local Government Act 1985 to abolish the GLC and the Metropolitan Counties. The last leader of the council, from 1981 through to its abolition on 31 March 1986, was Labour's Keva Coombes.

Why was MCC abolished?

The formal reasons given by the Thatcher government of 1983-87 for abolishing the GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils was that they were a costly and unnecessary layer of additional bureaucracy and that 'single-tier' local government in metropolitan areas would be more efficient and cost-effective. This represented something of a *volte-face* for the Conservative Party since the Metropolitan County Councils had been created by Edward Heath's government of 1970-74, after it had accepted the recommendations of the

Redcliffe Maud Commission (1969) in favour of two-tier local government, including in metropolitan areas.³

In truth, the reasons for the abolition of the Metropolitan Counties almost certainly had more to do with the political conflict between Margaret Thatcher and Labour-controlled local authorities, particularly the GLC under Ken Livingstone, in the early 1980s. As one academic account from the period notes the Metropolitan Counties 'have, perhaps, rather unluckily been included in the abolition proposal because of their structural and functional similarity to the GLC and, as several have argued, because they all at the moment happen to be Labour-controlled'.⁴ It is also worth noting that some of the Metropolitan Counties, most notably Merseyside, had adopted policies similar to those advocated by Livingstone's GLC. Under Coombes, Merseyside County Council had developed an equivalent of the GLC's popular 'fares fare' policy, for instance, through which the council sought to increase the use of public transport by radically cutting bus and train fares within Merseyside.

The impact of MCC's abolition

The functions which had been undertaken by Merseyside County Council were either transferred to the individual Metropolitan Borough Councils or transferred to new joint boards with representation from all five boroughs (similar arrangements were made in the other English metropolitan areas). Thus, policing and the fire service became the respective responsibilities of the Merseyside Police Authority and the Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority; public transport matters were transferred to a new passenger transport authority

³ Hugh Atkinson and Stuart Wilks-Heeg (2000) *Local Government from Thatcher to Blair: The Politics of Creative Autonomy*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁴ Norman Flynn, Steve Leach and Carol Vielba (1985) *Abolition of Reform? The GLC and the Metropolitan County Councils*, London: George Allen and Unwin, p.74.



and executive; and a Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority was created to coordinate the disposal of the city-region's waste. Responsibility for Merseyside's art galleries and museums was transferred to a new organisation called National Museums and Galleries on Merseyside (NMGM; now National Museums Liverpool, NML), which was to be completely independent from local government.⁵ The abolition of Merseyside County Council therefore resulted in the individual boroughs gaining additional powers and functions, but also created a more fragmented set of governance arrangements, in which many of the core roles of MCC were split among several new, single-purpose bodies. It has often been suggested that the city-region would benefit from a return to some type of more formal governance arrangements. While the problems raised by the absence of a strategic authority in Greater London ultimately prompted the introduction of an elected mayor and Assembly for Greater London in 2000, no equivalent arrangements have been formally proposed, as yet, for provincial city-regions such as Merseyside.

The emergence of unelected city-regional governance?

Given this 'strategic void', the case for some form of city-regional collaboration, particularly in economic development, has been made for many years. The Mersey Partnership, a public-private partnership, established in 1992 by private sector interests and focussed on place marketing, inward investment and tourism promotion, has provided one focus for these efforts. A more recent development was the creation, in 2008, of a 'super cabinet'

⁵ This creation of NMGM was an arrangement that was unique to Merseyside. In the other metropolitan areas, museums and galleries became the responsibility of the borough in which they were located. The formal reason given for the creation of NMGM was that Merseyside's collections were especially significant and warranted national museum status. However, it is widely believed that the primary motivation was to prevent the transfer of valuable artefacts and works of art to Liverpool City Council at a time when it was dominated by the Militant tendency.



Merseyside County Council's coat of arms

for the Liverpool city-region, attended by the leaders of the five Merseyside local authorities, as well as the leader of Halton Borough Council (currently all members of the super cabinet represent the Labour Party). Relatively little information is available about the super cabinet, which does not meet in public and does not publish minutes of its meetings. The principal source of information which is available is the 248 page Multi-Area Agreement (MAA) for Merseyside, which the super cabinet agreed, on a voluntary basis, with the last Labour government in 2009.⁶

The production of the MAA was coordinated by the Mersey Partnership and the document outlined six areas of city-regional collaboration (economic development; employment and skills; environment and waste; transport; housing and spatial planning; and safer, healthier communities) with each of these 'platforms' being the responsibility of a dedicated super cabinet policy board. However, following the change of government nationally in 2010, there has been a shift in emphasis. Strategic economic development for the city-region will now be taken forward by a Local Economic Partnership, on which

⁶ Liverpool City Region, Multi Area Agreement, June 2009.

private sector interests will play a significant role.⁷ The economic development elements of the MAA will almost certainly provide much of the basis for this Local Economic Partnership, which will be supported by The Mersey Partnership and report directly to the super cabinet. However, it is not clear to the authors what, if anything, will be carried over from the wider policy development undertaken by the super cabinet's other five policy boards. Neither is it apparent how the respective roles of the Local Economic Partnership, the Mersey Partnership and the Liverpool City Region Super Cabinet relate to the existing mechanisms for democratic accountability at the level of each of the six councils which are engaged in the process.

The public sector on Merseyside



The public sector plays a crucial role on Merseyside, accounting for around one-third of all employment in the city-region.⁸ In total, there are more than 50 organisations which are collectively responsible for public services on Merseyside, although not all of these are part of the state. Universities, for instance, receive significant state funding but are fully independent organisations. Likewise, a substantial proportion of social housing, much of it originally built by the state, is now owned and managed by housing associations and other registered social landlords. Nonetheless, the providers of key public services on Merseyside can be divided into six main categories as follows:

- 1** Elected local authorities: uniquely among the organisations delivering public services on Merseyside, the five Metropolitan Borough Councils (Liverpool, Sefton, the Wirral, Knowsley and St. Helens) are run by directly elected representatives and deliver a range of services. The principal responsibilities of these councils include education, social services, highways, refuse collection, parks, leisure and recreation, planning, development control and economic development.
- 2** Local NHS bodies: health services on Merseyside are delivered by five Primary Care Trusts and a number of additional trusts providing hospital, mental health, and ambulance services. Each trust has its own governing board and, in the main, these boards are made up of appointees.

⁷ Local Economic Partnerships (LEPs) are intended to replace the eight Regional Development Agencies in England and will provide a sub-regional focus for economic development activity. The current government has so far given approval to a total of 38 LEPs.

⁸ Mersey Partnership (2011) *Economic Review 2011*, Liverpool: The Mersey Partnership.

However, in the case of Foundation Hospital Trusts, such as the Liverpool Women’s Hospital, board members are elected by the members of the trust (with membership open to any member of the public who has an interest in the work of the hospital).

- 3** Organisations charged with delivery of former Merseyside County Council functions: as noted above, special Merseyside-wide arrangements exist for functions previously discharged by Merseyside County Council. With the exception of National Museums Liverpool and the partial exception of Merseyside Police, these agencies are governed by boards comprised of councillors nominated by each of the Metropolitan Borough Councils.
- 4** Institutions of further and higher education: Merseyside is home to three universities and colleges of higher education, all of which are fully independent from local or central government and have their own governing boards, made up primarily of appointed members. A fourth university, Edge Hill, is located just outside Merseyside, from which it draws many of its students.
- 5** Regeneration and economic development agencies: a variety of organisations are charged with regeneration and economic development functions across Merseyside. Many operate as partnerships and most have governing boards made up of appointees.
- 6** Housing associations : there are a large number of housing associations on Merseyside, several of which were created following transfers of housing stock from individual borough councils. Housing associations are independent of local government and their boards include a significant role for tenants’ representatives.

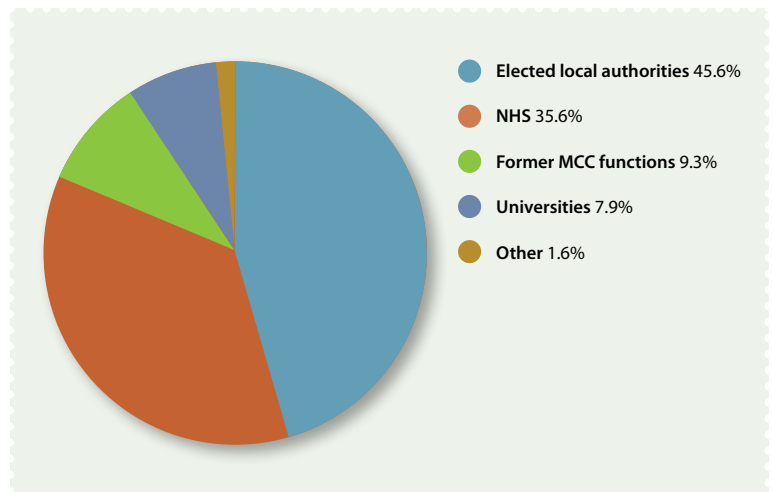
Having identified the major public service organisations operating on Merseyside, we examined the annual accounts of 29 of these agencies to establish how much each spent on Merseyside in 2010/11 (or 2009/10 if the most recent set of accounts was not yet available). The areas of service delivery for which spending data were

collected comprised all organisations across local government, the NHS, higher education, public transport, policing, probation, fire and rescue, and waste disposal. We were also able to include the largest economic development and regeneration agencies and some, but not all, colleges of further education. However, given time and resource constraints, housing associations had to be excluded from the analysis.

In total, we identified around £11 billion of direct public expenditure committed annually by these 29 public service providers, although it is important to note that this figure over-estimates total spending in the service areas concerned. Within the NHS, for instance, there are significant transfers between trusts, meaning that much spending will be ‘double-counted’ if we simply add together the total expenditure of each organisation. Some similar considerations need to be taken into account in relation to regeneration and economic development expenditure. In addition, we had to assume ‘pro rata’ spending levels for agencies whose activities reach beyond Merseyside, such as the Halton and St Helens Primary Care Trust. Having made adjustments for these factors, our rough estimate is that ‘net’ public



Figure 1: Share of public service spending on Merseyside by type of organisation



Source: Calculated from annual accounts of 29 major providers of public services on Merseyside (excludes Housing Associations).

spending by the 29 public sector bodies identified is around £8.8 billion.

In line with the categories listed above, Figure 1 shows how this spending breaks down among different types of public sector provider. Elected local authorities and NHS Trusts dominate, accounting respectively for 46 and 36 per cent of all spending by public service providers in the city-region. By contrast, the aggregated spending of organisations delivering functions for which MCC had once been responsible accounts for only 9 per cent of the total. The figures in Figure 2, which lists the largest 10 public service organisations, ranked by total spending, reinforces this picture. This 'top 10' is dominated by local councils and NHS Trusts (note: in this table, the figure for total spending by each NHS Trust does not take account of likely 'double-counting').

We can derive two key points from this analysis of public spending on Merseyside. First, local government plays a hugely significant role in the governance of the city-region. Whether we measure the relative importance of public sector bodies by their total expenditure or their staffing levels, or indeed by their range of functions, it is Merseyside's five local councils which emerge as the dominant public sector players in the city-region. Second, Liverpool's role as the 'core city' for the wider city-region is reflected in the fact that four of the top 10 local public spending bodies are Liverpool-based. With an annual expenditure of £1.5 billion and almost 18,000 employees, Liverpool City Council is the largest public service organisation on Merseyside by some margin, and it is joined in the list of the highest spenders on Merseyside by Liverpool Primary Care Trust, Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust and the University of Liverpool.

Figure 2: Top 10 public service organisations on Merseyside, ranked by total expenditure, 2010/11

Rank	Name of Public Body	Area Served	No. of Staff	Total spend (£m)
1	Liverpool City Council	Liverpool	17,800	1,481
2	Liverpool Primary Care Trust*	Liverpool	2,900	991
3	Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council	Wirral	13,200	842
4	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	Sefton	11,800	666
5	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	Knowsley	7,300	640
6	NHS Wirral*	Wirral	1,500	597
7	NHS Sefton	Sefton	1,200	530
8	Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust*	Merseyside and beyond	5,600	409
9	St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	St Helens	8,300	407
10	University of Liverpool*	N/a	4,718	392

*Expenditure for these organisations is for 2009/10

Source: Information obtained from annual reports and accounts and from websites of each organisation.

The private sector on Merseyside

Merseyside contains nearly 40,000 businesses, ranging from single person companies to multi-national corporations. Liverpool has the largest amount of companies of all the Merseyside boroughs, yet much of the heavy industry in the region is located in the other four boroughs. The five chambers of commerce – which represent private sector interests – count over 4,000 of those businesses amongst their membership. This represents approximately 10 per cent of business interests in Merseyside, with each chamber representing between 5-15 per cent of business interest in each individual borough. There are also several smaller chambers of commerce style organisations within Merseyside, most notably 'Downtown Liverpool' who represent over 300 businesses. Despite operating on a smaller scale and with a degree of crossover with the Chamber's membership, these organisations do represent a

significant number of companies in the area. However, alternative business groupings have traditionally failed to make much impact with regard to membership on the various Public-Private Partnerships that have been in place across Merseyside.

The relative power of individual business people or companies cannot be 'read off' from patterns of local business representation on boards of chambers of commerce or economic development partnerships. Senior representatives of major companies are rarely found in such roles. Traditionally the chambers of commerce have represented private sector interest on the various public-private partnerships, but the emerging Local Enterprise Partnership has now moved to include some of the major companies across Merseyside in its governance structure, particularly on its 'shadow board' which includes representatives from Tesco, Peel Holdings, Jaguar Land Rover and Pilkington. As Figure 4 shows, the full list of 'shadow board' members includes individuals drawn from some, although by no means all, of the most significant companies in interests in the Merseyside area.

It should also be noted that while the chambers of commerce do represent significant business interest across Merseyside, it is not essential for a business to be a member of a chamber in order to wield power and



Figure 3: The structure of the private sector across Merseyside

Authority	Members	Total Businesses by Unit	Total Businesses by Enterprise	Major Infrastructure	Major Companies/Employers
Knowsley	201	3070	2,220	Kirkby Town Centre (Spenhill Regeneration (Tesco))	Halewood International Jaguar Land Rover
Liverpool	1,600	13,565	9,815	Liverpool Waters (Proposed)	Riverside Group Limited Mersey Docks and Harbour Company
Sefton	~500	4,675	3,535	Super port – Panamax Container Facility (Peel)	
St Helens	1,250	8,310	6,355	Destination St Helens (Langtree Development)	Pilkington
Wirral	480	8,600	6,760	Wirral Waters (Peel)	Vauxhall

Note: Total business 'by unit' includes all registered companies, whereas total business 'by enterprise' includes only those which have a payroll function and/or are VAT-registered.

Sources: Individual chambers of commerce; Office for National Statistics (2010) *UK Business: Activity, Size and Location*; Liverpool Daily Post (2011) *The Top 100 List*; The Mersey Partnership (2011) *Economic Review 2011*.

influence. The size of some of the larger companies and their ability to invest in infrastructure and large scale development projects makes them powerful in their own right. Across Merseyside there are significant major infrastructure projects currently underway or scheduled to begin. Peel Holdings represent one of the more significant developers in this regard, with the proposed Liverpool and Wirral Waters developments, as well as the proposed 'Superport' which will improve the Port of Liverpool in Sefton as well as the Mersey Gateway Bridge in Halton. Other major projects include the redevelopment of two major town centres in Merseyside, with Kirkby Town Centre and St Helens being the focus of these developments.

Figure 4: Membership of the 'shadow board' of the Merseyside Local Economic Partnership (LEP)

- Sir Terry Leahy, Chief Executive of Tesco
- Rod Holmes, The Mersey Partnership
- Asif Hamid, The Contact Company
- Peter Nears, Peel Holdings and Superport Chair
- Michael Straghan, Managing Director, Jaguar Land Rover
- Mike Blackburn, Chairman of BT North West
- Steve O Connor, Managing Director, Stobarts
- Alistair Poole, NGF/Pilkington
- Sir Howard Newby, Liverpool University

The role of the voluntary sector

The Voluntary Sector in Merseyside shows many similarities to that of the private sector in the way that it is organised. Like the chambers of commerce, each borough has its own Council for Voluntary Services (CVS) which takes responsibility – as an umbrella group – for the sector. The Liverpool Council for Voluntary Services (LCVS) alone counts some 1,800 charitable and voluntary organisations as members, giving an idea of the extent of voluntary service in Merseyside, although there is some degree of overlap given that many charities operate across local government boundaries. It is also important to recognise that, like private companies, voluntary sector organisations are hugely diverse, varying greatly in their size and in the character and focus of their operations. In a similar way to the private sector, therefore, some voluntary sector actors clearly wield more governance power than others due to their size and scale of working. However, it is fair to say that the sector's influence is much more limited in scope than the private sector.

When it comes to formal representation on partnerships, umbrella organisations such as LCVS often play a significant role. Indeed, the various CVSs have previously been present on the boards of the various public-private partnerships including most recently the Local Strategic Partnership. However, given their umbrella status, they can face issues around developing a position which



accurately reflects the competing views of numerous different charitable and voluntary organisations. In addition, since voluntary sector representatives tend to bring relatively limited financial resources to the table, their capacity to influence decision-making, whether through formal partnerships arrangements or other mechanisms, tends to be limited.

So, who's in charge?



From our sample of 57 public bodies, agencies and organisations on Merseyside – including, among others, five local authorities, 12 NHS Trusts, 10 Housing Associations, eight Further Education Colleges, four Universities and five chambers of commerce – we identified a total of 1,101 places on governing boards across the city-region. Inevitably, the organisations concerned are primarily those delivering public services, but the analysis nonetheless provides some useful indications of how these governing roles are distributed.

Local Authorities

There is a combined total of 333 councillors on Merseyside's five elected councils. The leaders of the five councils are: Councillor Joe Anderson (Liverpool), Councillor Peter Dowd (Sefton), Councillor Ron Round (Knowsley), Councillor Marie Rimmer (St Helens), and Councillor

Figure 5: Gender and political composition on Merseyside councils

Council	No. of councillors	Gender (%)		Political Parties (%)			
		Females	Males	Lab	Lib Dem	Cons	Other
Liverpool City Council	90	46.7%	53.3%	68.9%	24.4%	0.0%	6.7%
Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council	66	27.3%	72.7%	42.4%	36.4%	15.2%	6.1%
Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council	63	34.9%	65.1%	93.7%	6.3%	0.0%	0.0%
St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council	48	37.5%	62.5%	72.9%	18.8%	8.3%	0.0%
Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council	66	28.8%	71.2%	45.5%	13.6%	40.9%	0.0%
Total	333	35.7%	64.3%	64.3%	20.1%	12.3%	3.3%

Source: Local authority websites.

Steve Foulkes (Wirral). All five council leaders represent the Labour Party, although Labour does not have a majority on each council (see below).

Figure 5 shows the percentages of female and male councillors on each council, as well as the party political balance on each. As is shown, only 35.7 per cent of Merseyside councillors are female, whereas 64.3 per cent are male. All of the councils on Merseyside have a majority of male councillors, but there are also some clear contrasts between them, as Figure 6 illustrates in graphic form. Out of the five councils, Liverpool has the most equal gender distribution

– 46.7 per cent of Liverpool councillors are female, while 53.3 per cent are male. Sefton has the most unequal gender distribution: 27.3 per cent of its councillors are women, compared to 72.7 men.

The political balance on Merseyside's councils is strongly skewed towards the Labour Party, with 64.3 per cent of all councillors representing Labour and all the other parties combined making up the remaining 35.7 per cent of councillors (see Figure 5). However, there are again clear contrasts between the five local authorities. Figure 7 shows



Figure 6: Percentage of females and males represented on Merseyside councils

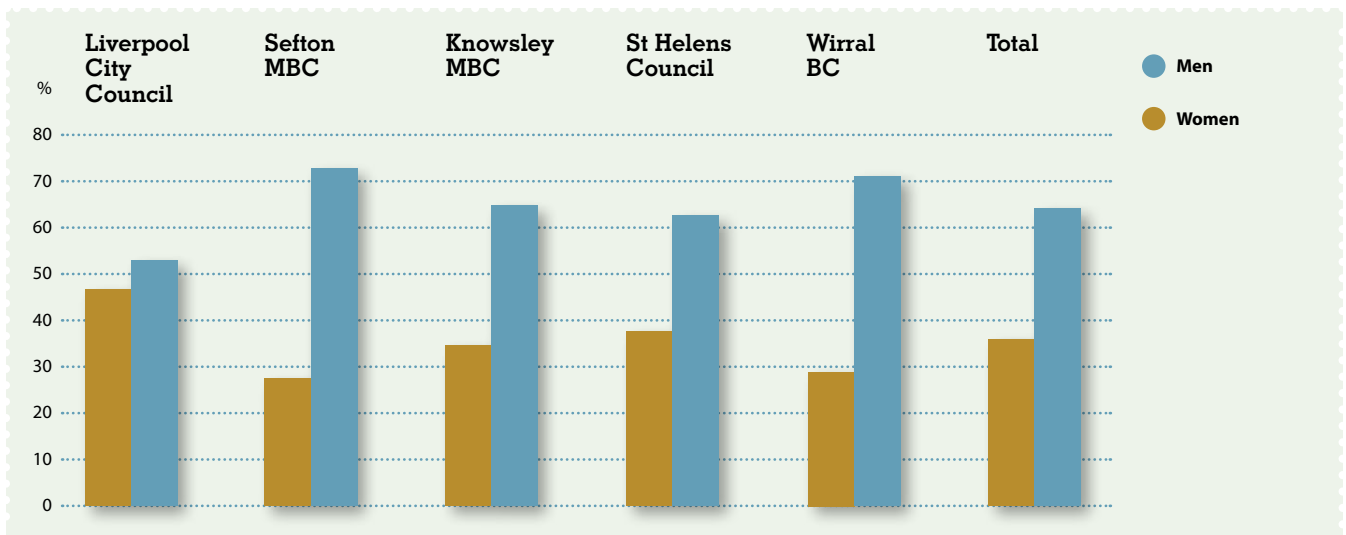


Figure 7: Party political representation on Merseyside councils

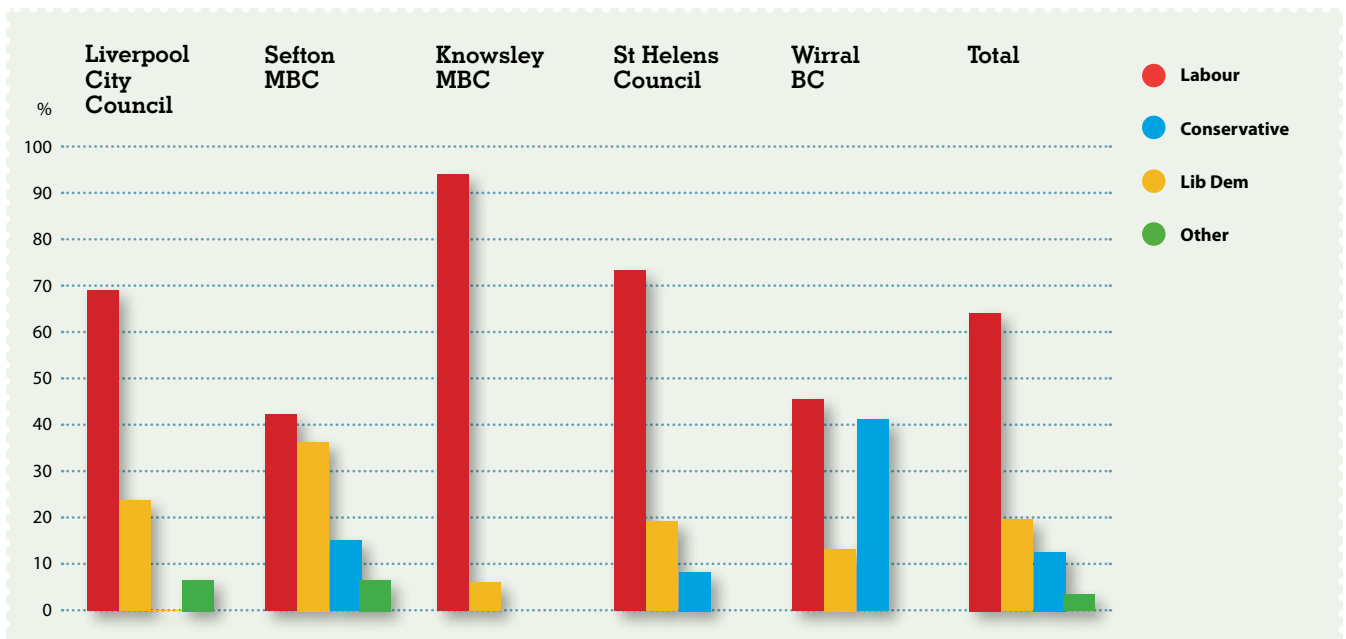


Figure 8: People with three or more governing roles on Merseyside

Name	Party	No. of roles	Organisations
Cllr Joe Anderson	Lab	5	Liverpool City Council; Liverpool Vision; Liverpool First; Mersey Partnership; Liverpool City Region Cabinet
Cllr Dave Hanratty	Lab	4	Liverpool City Council; Cobalt Housing; Aintree University Hospitals NHS Trust; Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
Mrs Deborah Shackleton	N/A	4	Liverpool John Moores University; Riverside Group; National Museums Liverpool; NHS Sefton
Cllr Nick Small	Lab	4	Liverpool City Council; Liverpool Community College; Liverpool Vision; Liverpool Hope University Council
Cllr Jayne Aston	Lab	4	Knowsley MBC; Liverpool Women’s Hospital; Aintree University Hospitals NHS Trust; NHS Knowsley
Cllr Graham Wright	Lab	4	Knowsley MBC; Knowsley Community College; Liverpool Primary Care Trust; NHS Knowsley
Cllr Chris Blakely	Cons	3	Wirral Borough Council; New Heartlands; Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority
Cllr Leslie Byrom	Lab	3	Sefton MBC; Merseycare NHS Trust; Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Kevin Cluskey	Lab	3	Sefton MBC; Sefton Chamber of Commerce; Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority
Cllr Lord Ronnie Fearn	Lib Dem	3	Sefton MBC; Sefton Chamber of Commerce; King George V Sixth Form College
Cllr Roz Gladden	Lab	3	Liverpool City Council; Liverpool Women’s Hospital; Alder Hey Children’s Hospital
Cllr Barry Griffiths	Cons	3	Sefton MBC; Aintree University Hospitals NHS Trust; Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority
Cllr Paula Keaveney	Lib Dem	3	Liverpool City Council; Liverpool Vision; Merseyside Waste Disposal Authority
Cllr Brenda Porter	Cons	3	Sefton MBC; Sefton Chamber of Commerce; Aintree University Hospitals NHS Trust
Cllr Denise Roberts	Lab	3	Wirral Borough Council; Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority; Birkenhead Sixth Form College
Cllr Colin Strickland	Lab	3	Liverpool City Council; South Liverpool Housing; Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
Cllr Sharon Sullivan	Lab	3	Liverpool City Council; Liverpool Mutual Homes; Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority
Ms Jane Raven	N/A	3	Liverpool Primary Care Trust; Knowsley Community College; NHS Knowsley

Source: Local authority websites.

Figure 9: Percentage of individuals with multiple governance roles on Merseyside

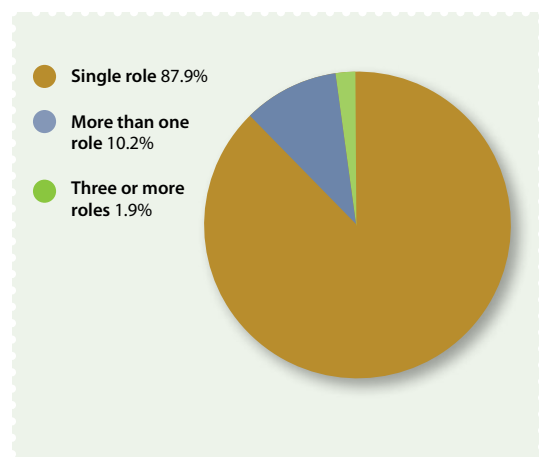
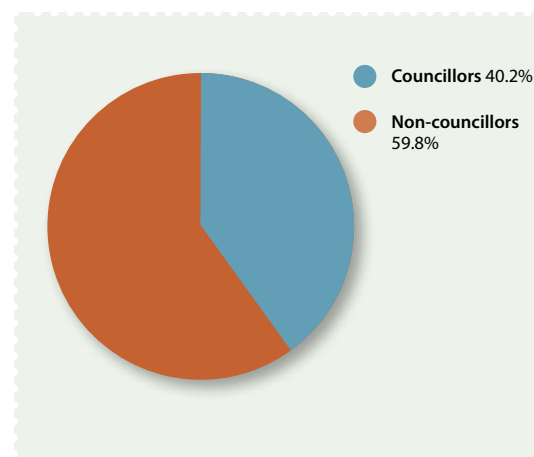


Figure 10: Percentage of governing roles occupied by councillors and non-councillors



that while the councils of Liverpool, Knowsley and St Helens are dominated by large Labour majorities, Sefton and Wirral are more balanced with Labour having only a plurality of seats ahead of the Liberal Democrats in Sefton and the Conservatives on the Wirral.

Governance roles

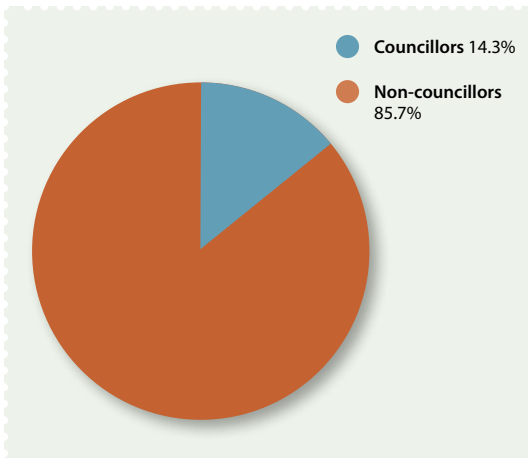
A total of 951 different people occupy the 1,101 governing roles we identified across the 57 organisations studied. There are 115 people who occupying more than one role, of which 18 occupy three or more roles. Figure 8 lists the

individuals who have three or more roles – 16 of the 18 are councillors and the gender balance is relatively even (10 men, eight women).

Among the 115 people with more than one governing role, councillors predominate, making up 72.2 per cent of the total. As a result, councillors occupy a total of 443 (40.2 per cent) of the 1,101 governing roles we identified on Merseyside.

However, as Figure 11 shows, by excluding the role councillors play in their respective councils, the balance between councillors and non-

Figure 11: Percentage of governing roles occupied by councillors and non-councillors on bodies other than local authorities on Merseyside

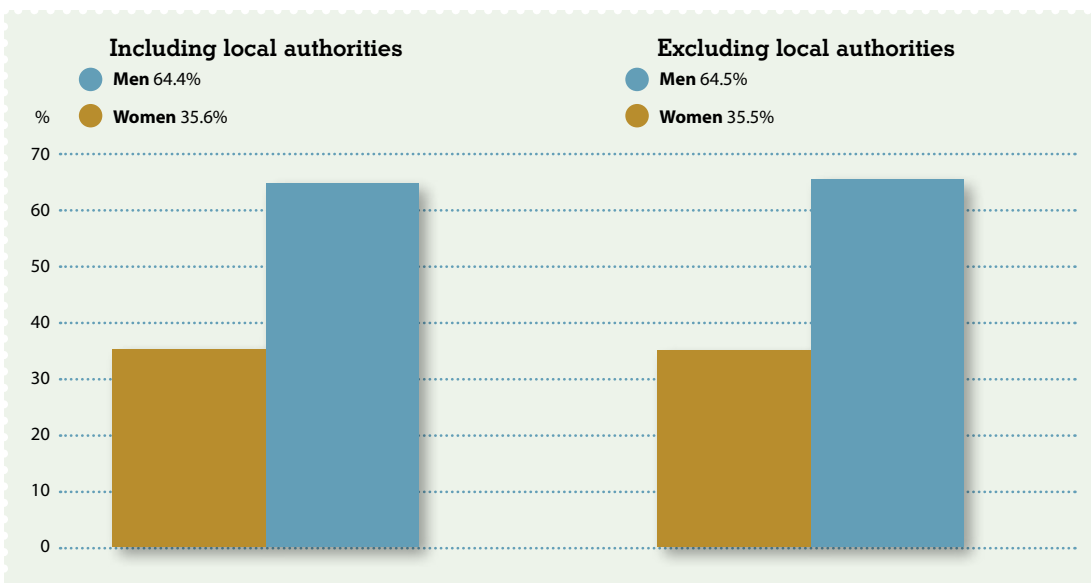


councillors changes significantly. Councillors occupy only 110 (14.3 per cent) of the 768 governing roles in organisations external to local authorities.

Figure 12 shows that the gender distribution of the 1,101 governing roles is split between 35.6 per cent females compared to 64.4 per cent males. Excluding the councillors' roles on the five local authorities leaves the split virtually identical, at 35.5 per cent females compared to 64.5 per cent males.

When the governing roles on organisations external to local authorities are divided between councillors and non-councillors, however, there is a significant difference. While the gender distribution of councillors in these governing roles is split between 28.7 per cent females compared to 71.3 per cent males, the gender difference is slightly reduced for non-councillors with 36.7 per cent of roles occupied by women and 63.3 per cent by men. Furthermore, if we look back at the total gender distribution of local authorities in Merseyside (see Figure 5), it would suggest that a higher proportion of male councillors take up governing

Figure 12: Percentage of females and males in governing roles on Merseyside (including and excluding local authorities)



roles in external organisations than female councillors.

Finally, by looking at the political representation of those councillors who take up governing roles outside of their local authorities, we can see that representatives of the Labour party occupy 76.9 per cent of the 'external' roles taken up by councillors on Merseyside. However, when compared to the overall political balance on Merseyside (see Figure 5), we can see that this figure exceeds Labour's total 64.3 per cent representation across the five local authorities. Both the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives are underrepresented among the

councillors who hold governing roles outside of the local authorities.

We have focussed in this analysis on the membership of governing boards. It is important to note, however, that power is not only vested in governing boards. The day-to-day running of an organisation is the responsibility of the senior executive officer, who will also have a very significant role in shaping the decisions made by the governing body. In this sense, it is also important to consider who occupies the most senior management roles in the city-region's key organisations. By way of illustration, Figure 15 provides an alphabetical list of the



Figure 13: Percentage of females and males in non-local authority governing roles on Merseyside

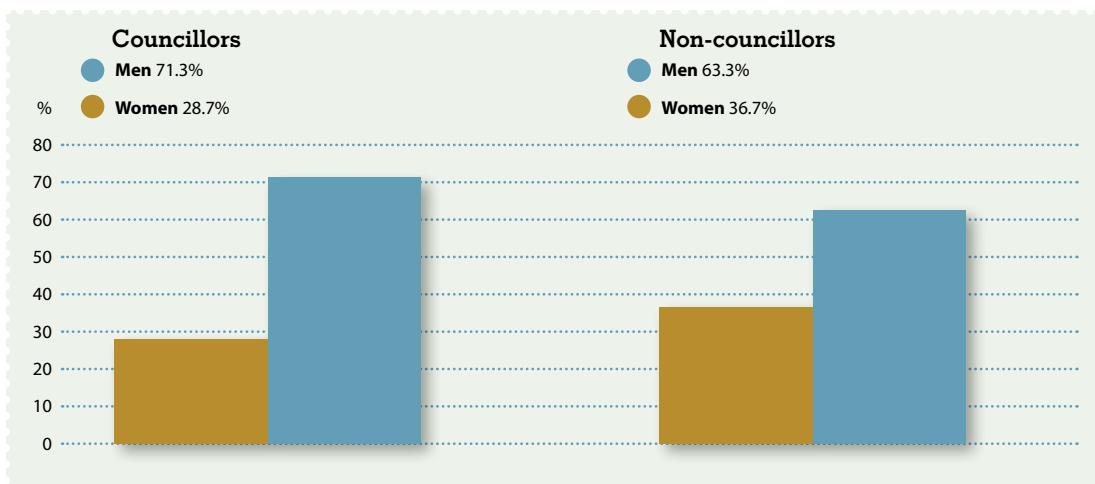
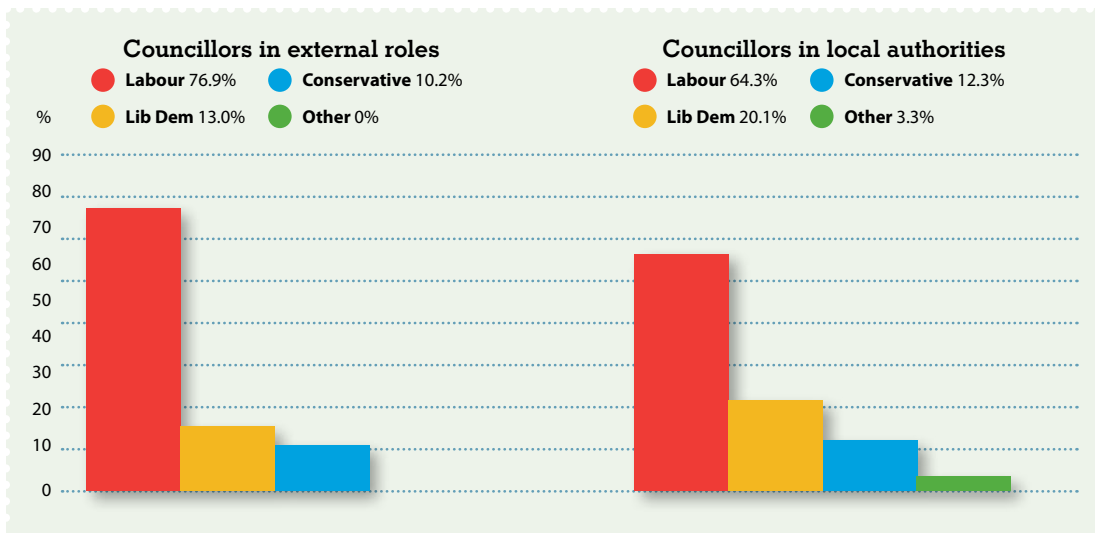


Figure 14: Party political balance of councillors taking up governing roles outside of local authorities



senior executive in 20 of the most significant organisations discussed in this briefing.

Figure 15: Twenty leading Chief Executives on Merseyside

<i>Name</i>	<i>Job Title</i>	<i>Organisation</i>
Janet Atherton	Chief Executive (Acting)	NHS Sefton
Maggie Boyle	Chief Executive	Royal Liverpool and Broadgreen University Hospitals NHS Trust
Andrew Burgess	Chief Executive	Halton and St Helens Primary Care Trust
Derek Campbell	Chief Executive	Liverpool Primary Care Trust
Margaret Carney	Chief Executive	Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council
Kathy Doran	Chief Executive	NHS Wirral
Ged Fitzgerald	Chief Executive	Liverpool City Council
David Fleming	Director	National Museums Liverpool
Carole Hudson	Chief Executive	St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council
Alastair Machray	Editor	<i>Liverpool Echo</i>
Jon Murphy	Chief Constable	Merseyside Police
Prof. Sir Howard Newby	Vice Chancellor	University of Liverpool
Jack Stopforth	Chief Executive	Liverpool Chamber of Commerce
Mark Thomas	Editor	Liverpool Daily Post
Mick Ord	Managing Editor	BBC Radio Merseyside
Sheena Ramsey	Chief Executive	Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
Lorraine Rogers	Chief Executive	The Mersey Partnership
Neil Scales	Chief Executive	Merseyside Integrated Transport Authority
Prof. Nigel P. Weatherill	Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive	Liverpool John Moores University
Jim Wilkie	Chief Executive	Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council



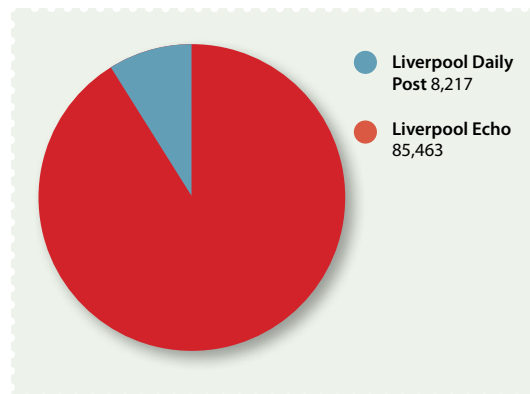
The local media on Merseyside

The influence of the media on local politics is very much under-researched. This lack of attention is surprising since the role of the media in UK politics has been much studied and, moreover, surveys have consistently revealed the significance of the local press, radio and television as the principal sources of information about local affairs. The regional press appears to be particularly important in this regard, and is typically cited as the main source of information about local councils by about three-quarters of people.⁹

The regional press

The Liverpool city-region is virtually unique in retaining two daily newspapers. In circulation terms, the *Liverpool Echo* is by far the largest of two, with more than ten times the readership of the *Liverpool Daily Post*. Among the 88 current regional dailies operating in the UK, the *Liverpool Echo* had the fourth highest circulation in June 2011 (85,463), while the *Daily Post*'s circulation (8,217) was the sixth lowest nationally. However, it is important to note that the two papers serve clearly distinct markets. While the *Liverpool Echo* is predominately bought by readers in social classes C2DE, the *Daily Post* claims that two-thirds of its readers are drawn from social classes ABC1 and therefore 'more likely to have high disposable

Figure 16: Share of Merseyside's daily newspaper circulation, June 2011, by title (Liverpool Echo and Liverpool Daily Post)



Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation data as reported by Holdthefrontpage.co.uk

income and spending power'.¹⁰

With a significant share of its readership drawn from public and private sector professionals, the *Daily Post*'s content is focussed to a far greater degree on reporting political and business news from the city-region. Indeed, the *Daily Post*'s coverage of local business matters is potentially unrivalled among provincial newspapers in England, and it has a strong reputation for its work seeking to hold local political elites to account.

The *Echo*, by contrast, tends to focus to a far greater degree on crime and 'personal interest' stories and has demonstrated considerable influence as a campaigning newspaper. The *Echo* has run a number of high-profile campaigns in recent years, many of which have been instrumental in pushing public agencies to take action or re-consider policy proposals. Key examples include the 'Stop the rot' campaign (to force owners of derelict buildings to take action); 'Biteback' (for tougher action against owners of dangerous dogs); and the 'Save Our Burns Units campaign' (to retain the burns units at Alder Hey and Whiston hospitals).

Both the *Daily Post* and the *Echo*

⁹ Stuart Wilks-Heeg and Steve Clayton (2006) *Whose town is it anyway? The state of local democracy in two northern towns*, York: Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.

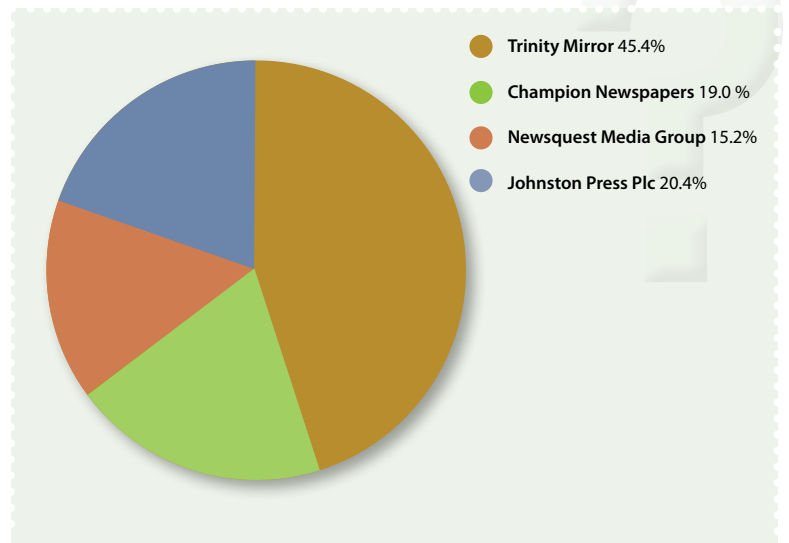
¹⁰ Trinity Mirror North West/Total Media Solutions (2011) *Liverpool Daily Post Media Pack*.

are owned by Trinity Mirror PLC, one of the largest UK media groups. After several decades of takeovers and mergers, the UK's regional press is characterised by high levels of ownership concentration. Four national media groups own the vast majority of the surviving titles – Trinity Mirror, Johnston Press, Newsquest Media and Northcliffe Media. Within North West England, Trinity Mirror became the dominant media group following its acquisition of 32 regional titles owned by the Guardian Media Group, including the *Manchester Evening News*, in 2010. Following this acquisition, Trinity Mirror's share of the UK's regional newspaper market is approximately 23 per cent.¹¹ As well as the *Liverpool Daily Post* and the *Liverpool Echo*, its portfolio on Merseyside includes 13 of Merseyside's 17 weekly titles, among them the *Crosby Herald*, the *Bootle Times*, all editions of *Wirral News* and the *Mersey mart*.

As Figure 17 shows, among the city-region's weekly titles, Trinity Mirror has a 45.4 per cent share of circulation. Three other media groups have market shares of 15-20 per cent each. These are: Johnston Press, which owns the *St Helens Reporter* and the *St Helens Star*; Newsquest Media, as the owners of the *Wirral Globe*; and the Southport-based Champion Newspapers.

The concentrated ownership of the regional press arguably tells us as much about the weakness of the sector as it does about its power and influences. The survival of many regional titles has become dependent upon ever-more concentrated ownership and on attempts by proprietors to achieve significant economies of scale by pooling staff and content across different newspapers. Yet, the future of regional newspapers everywhere is in doubt, largely because of declining circulation and a dramatic

Figure 17: Share of Merseyside's weekly newspaper circulation, June 2011, by media group



Source: Audit Bureau of Circulation data as reported by holdthefrontpage.co.uk

decline in advertising revenue. According to the National Union of Journalists, 60 regional titles closed from May 2008 to May 2009 resulting in more than 1,500 job losses in local newspapers. Among the big media groups, Trinity Mirror closed 35 titles during 2008 and 2009 and it has been predicted by industry experts that as many as half of the UK's 1,300 regional titles could close within five years.¹²

It has been widely noted that these trends pose a real threat to local democracy and that business decisions made by national media groups could have profound repercussions in individual localities. As one of us argued in a letter published in the *Guardian's Media supplement* in 2009: the danger is that 'there will be a loss of local journalistic expertise, closure of local titles, and mounting pressures placed on journalists who manage to retain their jobs. The quality and quantity of reporting on local public services will decline, as will the scope for regional journalists to hold councils and other bodies to account'.¹³

¹¹ Financial Times (2010) Trinity Mirror buys Guardian regional arm, 9 February.

¹² Culture, Media and Sport Select Committee (2010) Future for local and regional media, fourth report of session, 2009/10, London: House of Commons.

¹³ Stuart Wilks-Heeg (2009) *Decline in democracy*, letter to the editor, *MediaGuardian*, 23 March.

Figure 18: Principal local radio stations serving the Merseyside area

Station	Unique weekly listeners	Average weekly listening time	Market share (%)
BBC Radio Merseyside	338,000	16.2 hours	15.7
Radio City 96.7	497,000	8.8 hours	11.4
107.6 Juice FM	193,000	7.7 hours	7.1
Dune FM 107.9	20,000	7.2 hours	3.4
Magic 1548 FM	95,000	9.4 hours	2.3
City Talk 105.9	63,000	4.5 hours	0.8

Source: RAJAR/Ipsos MORI/RSMB listener survey, June 2011, as reported by www.Mediauk.com



Local radio and television

It is rather more difficult to assess the significance of the role of radio and television reporting for the politics and governance of Merseyside. Viewing figures for regional television have proved impossible to obtain, and the focus of regional television news and current affairs is any case for the whole of North West England, rather than Merseyside specifically. Merseyside news is carried regularly by both BBC *North West Tonight* and by ITV's *Granada Reports*, but we have no measure of either the percentage of the content which is Merseyside-focussed nor the percentage of Merseyside residents who regularly watch these bulletins. We know from surveys that television is regarded as the most significant source of information about politics nationally, but no equivalent survey findings exist regarding its importance as a source of information about local politics.

The two most significant local radio stations serving the city-regions are BBC Radio Merseyside and Radio City 96.7, a commercial broadcaster. Direct comparisons are difficult, because of differences in the potential audience reached by the two stations and in average listening time. However, a survey from June 2011 suggests that Radio City reaches 497,000 listeners from a potential 1.8 million weekly, and that the average weekly listening time is 8.8 hours. Meanwhile, BBC Radio Merseyside attracts a smaller 338,000 weekly listeners from a potential 1.6

million, but the average listening time is 16.2 hours per week. Based on these figures, BBC Radio Merseyside is ranked as the most listened to BBC local station outside of London and its 'market share' within the city-region is calculated at 15.7 per cent, compared to 11.4 per cent for Radio City (see Figure 18). The other main commercial radio stations operating on Merseyside include 107.6 Juice FM (7.1 per cent market share), which broadcasts from Liverpool, and Dune FM 107.9 (3.4 per cent market share) which broadcasts from Southport).¹⁴

¹⁴ Mick Ord (2011) Personal communication; RAJAR/Ipsos MORI/RSMB listener survey, June 2011, as reported by www.Mediauk.com

Conclusion



This briefing has not sought to reach a view on who has the greatest power to influence public policy decisions on Merseyside. Instead, it has attempted to provide a broad contextual analysis of: the relative spending power of public service organisations on Merseyside; the structure of the private and voluntary sectors in the city-region; the individuals occupying Merseyside's key governance roles; and the ownership and reach of the city-region's key media outlets. Based on this analysis, we offer the following key conclusions:

- Just under half of identifiable spending by public service organisations on Merseyside is controlled by elected local authorities.
- Taken together, local councils and local NHS Trusts account for 80 per cent of direct local public service spending on Merseyside.
- There are almost 40,000 businesses on Merseyside, of which around 10 per cent are members of one of the five local chambers of commerce.
- Significant business power is likely to be located in individual companies which are major employers or which have substantial development interests in the region. Some, but by no means all, of these interests are represented on the 'shadow board' of the proposed Local Economic Partnership for Merseyside.
- Merseyside has a large and diverse voluntary sector, made up of thousands of individual organisations. However, the extent of voluntary sector influence on public policy is difficult to gauge.
- Analysis of some 1,100 governing positions in the city-region suggests that these roles are quite widely dispersed, although 64 per cent are occupied by men. A small number of individuals occupy three or more such roles – 16 of these 18 individuals are councillors, and the gender balance is roughly equal (10 men, eight women).
- The Labour Party is currently the dominant political force in the city-region by some margin. Compared to the composition of councils across Merseyside, councillors who take up multiple governing roles are more likely both to be Labour and to be male.
- The city-region's two daily newspapers serve contrasting readerships and are likely to influence local politics in distinctive ways.
- Ownership of the local press is dominated by the Trinity Mirror Group, which owns both the *Liverpool Echo* and the *Liverpool Daily Post*, as well as 13 weekly titles published in the city-region.
- BBC Radio Merseyside has the largest market share among radio broadcasters in the city-region, closely followed by Radio City 96.7.

About the authors

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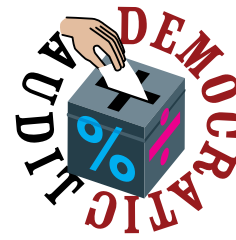
● Any queries about this briefing may be directed to Stuart Wilks-Heeg: swilks@liv.ac.uk

About Democratic Audit

Democratic Audit is an independent research organisation that carries out research into the quality of democracy in the UK. The Audit's methodology for auditing and assessing democracy has won

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Who Governs Merseyside?



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