

30. This meant that there were an unusually large number of new councillors, including myself, which meant unusually, newly elected councillors found themselves in senior positions, for example I was appointed Chair of Management Services Committee.

31. Furthermore, as Chair of Management Services, I formed the view that the trade unions had obtained a great deal of influence. I gained the impression that middle management council officers were hesitant to discipline staff because the political leadership might be perceived to side with the trade unions. This issue was detailed in the summary of the report of Elizabeth Appleby QC, dated July 1995, [LAM000025], which was commissioned at my request when I later became Council Leader, at paragraph 6:

*During the period 1979 to April 1991, the Labour administration itself was unstable and turbulent, with the unions, at times, having far too much influence and control over the party and the Council.*

32. This was a serious issue in my view, as it had the potential to hamper or prevent good management and improvements to poor service.

33. During my three years as Leader of the Council, I only ever ran a minority administration, as the Labour Party had suspended about 13 councillors in relation to issues such rate-capping and the non-payment of poll tax.

34. This meant that there were approximately 25 Councillors in the Labour Group and around the same in the Conservative Group. The independents (suspended Labour Party members) held the balance of power.

35. Therefore I was constrained in what I could achieve, as I had to build a majority for each individual decision that had to be put through the Council. This often led to long, protracted council meetings that lasted through the entire night and to the next morning. On at least two occasions a budget was only passed when some councillors had to leave for work at 9am, the morning after the meeting had first started. Needless to say, this was not an easy or conducive environment to making sweeping reforms in the Council.

36. I again refer the Inquiry to the Appleby report [LAM000025], which details to these events at paragraph 17: