

CHAPTER 1: THE CONTEXT OF MUNICIPAL SERVICES IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT SPHERE

Local authorities in all parts of the world play an increasingly important role in the delivery of fundamental basic public services (Palmary, 2002; Resnick 2014; Bel *et al.*, 2018). However, most local authorities in developing countries are facing increasingly greater challenges as a result of rapid and chaotic urbanisation, recent global financial and economic crisis and varied socio-economic and structural fundamentals. This is further exacerbated by the widening gap between the availability of financial resources and municipal spending needs usually reflected in the increasing fiscal gap mostly explained by the rapid growth of urban populations that creates an ever-increasing demand for public services, new public infrastructure, and its maintenance. The decline in central government transfers conjoined with compressed revenues derived from property taxation and service charges has depreciated the capacity of not only Gweru City Council (GCC) but all local authorities in Zimbabwe's service delivery potential. Coupled with this, the more lucrative sources of revenue potentially suitable for financing urban services, such as income taxes, sales taxes and business taxes continue to be controlled by the central governments.

This study therefore seeks to examine the dynamics of sub-national service delivery, focusing on structural and non-structural factors and the brevity of the related challenges using the qualitative paradigm. Nyikadzino and Vyas-Doorgapersad (2022) observes that the devolution drive in Zimbabwe remains a fundamental plank in alleviating poverty and addressing regional inequalities by providing efficient service delivery. Dube (2017) observes that the central government centralisation strategies have crippled service delivery in local councils. Where local authorities are able to derive revenues from property taxes and service charges, meaningful tax increases are sometimes refused or delayed by central government for fear of eroding political support from the urban population; or even rejected by the local authorities themselves for fear of political backlash from local taxpayers. Generally, there are huge vertical imbalances in terms of sharing responsibilities and available

fiscal resources. Stated differently, central governments refuse to pay the political and financial costs of the decentralisation and devolution of roles and responsibilities.

Sub-national governments that are constitutive of the focus of this study, are urban local authorities or local governments provided for in Section 5 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013 as the third tier of government below national government and provincial and metropolitan councils respectively. Section 274 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and Section 4 of the Urban Councils Act [chapter 29:15] establish urban local authorities which are also referred to as urban councils. The terms local authorities, local governments and urban councils will be used interchangeably in this study. The powers and functions of urban councils are provided for in Section 276 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe and the Second Schedule of the Urban Councils Act. These powers and functions revolve around service delivery which is the focus of the study. The powers and functions of local authorities will be unpacked in the ensuing pages. Local authorities are also referred to as sub-national governments. City of Gweru, which is constitutive of the subject of this study constitutes one of the 32 urban councils in Zimbabwe. The enabling legislation, the Urban Councils Act, classifies urban council's hierarchically into city councils, municipalities, town councils and local boards, based on population, revenue base, value of land and improvements on the land and the range of economic and social activities. Table 1 shows the hierarchy of urban councils in Zimbabwe.

Table 1:1 - Hierarchy of Urban Councils in Zimbabwe.

Level I	Level II	Level III	Level IV	Total
Cities Harare Bulawayo Gweru Masvingo Kadoma Kwekwe Mutare	Municipalities Redcliff Chegutu Chitungwiza Victoria Falls Chinhoyi Gwanda Marondera Bindura Kariba	Town councils Chiredzi Norton Shurugwi Zvishavane Gokwe Beitbridge Rusape Mvurwi Karozi Chipinge Plumtree Lupane	Local Boards Ruwa Chirundu Epworth Hwange	
7	9	12	4	32

The study of local government service delivery in Zimbabwe presents a complex discourse with a dynamic institutional and constitutional context. Local government institutions in Zimbabwe are poised to foster development since their mandate is to address and meet public needs (Davey, 1996; Chirisa *et al.*, 2018). A Davey (1996) posits that in Zimbabwe comprehensive responsibility for urban services lies with local government as the undisputed lead agency. Thus, the capacity and ability of local government as a tier/sphere of government to provide services efficiently has been one central questions in the Public Administration discourse the world over. This is because the state of service delivery in council areas has a direct impact on residents' lives. Various reforms have been implemented by governments to broaden the service delivery scope of local government (Murimoga and Musingafi, 2014). Chukwuemeka *et al.*, (2014) have argued that it is, to a large extent, the zeal and need to reposition local government for greater and more effective service delivery that perhaps provides the impetus and imperative for the various local government reforms in most political systems.

In Zimbabwe, local government sector's role is to stimulate good governance and development, courtesy of the decentralisation policy adopted by government at independence in 1980 (Dewa, Dziva and Mukwashi, 2014). Since then, decentralised local authorities strived to service all areas under their jurisdiction adequately. However, the new millennium saw deterioration in service provision by local authorities largely due to the socio-economic and political dynamics and dimensions enveloping Zimbabwe.

Since the turn of the millennium, there have been widespread complaints over municipal and local governance service delivery. Several stakeholders (among them residents' associations, the non-governmental organisation (NGO) communities, residents and the Ministry responsible for Local Government have also testified to the fact that there has been a general decline in municipal service delivery and capital development in local authority governed areas. The Ministry of Local Government (2001) has observed that:

The situation of infrastructure and service delivery in all urban centres in Zimbabwe is in a state of 'crisis'. The most worrying aspect of this 'crisis' is that the accelerated demands for urban services is occurring against the background of increasing failure to plan, mobilise finance and make new investment in critical urban infrastructure, let alone maintain existing networks.

Further, the former Vice President Joyce Mujuru was quite categoric on the service delivery situation and bemoaned that:

It is a pity that some local authorities are failing to perform key functions such as provision of safe water, refuse collection, infrastructure development, maintenance of roads, sewerage reticulation and street lighting among others. I challenge you to undertake serious introspection and see if, for the sake of your name and family, you are worth to continue sitting in those offices you presently occupy. (Zimbabwe Chronicle 2006).

In July 2010, the Sunday Mail Newspaper Zimbabwe, had this to say about Harare City Council's Mbare suburb's garbage and sewage predicament:

it seems that raw sewage is no longer an issue in parts of Mbare, where it has been forming streams across homes and in front of houses... Apart from raw sewage flowing freely, rubbish heaps at road sides appear to cause their own fair share of problems for Mbare residents. The residents have to hop, skip and jump to avoid sewage on their way to different destinations (Sunday Mail Zimbabwe, July 25-31, 2012).

This is the story in virtually all towns through Zimbabwe. This contrasts sharply with the 1980s and 1990s when Harare used to be dubbed, the 'Sun Shine City' and services were available. Bulawayo was renowned for housing provision. Gweru, popularly known as the 'City of Progress' had high quality water which was available all the time.

In October 2010, the Minister responsible for Local Government declared that:

Government will not stand aloof while councils go on corruption rampage. We will do everything in our power to stop all corruption and abuse of office by local authorities and promote service delivery. Government will never at any time allow service delivery to suffer at the expense of the rot that councillors and council officials are entangled in. The ministry will invoke all its powers to deal with such elements as we try to get rid of all the bad apples from among our local authorities (Ministry of Local Government 2010).

Jonga (2014) concurs with the above arguments and added that the local government system in Zimbabwe has experienced many changes and challenges during the colonial period and after independence in 1980. The Urban Councils Act has particularly been amended several times to initiate efficiency and effectiveness in local governance. The focus of such changes included the need to remove racial discrimination, abolish dual systems of development emphasising white and black areas, and develop democracy.

Good governance, and decentralisation and alignment of local governments institutions, politics and policies in such a way that they support national strategies and visions for development were also part of the reform agenda. Despite many strategies or policies initiated over the years, the commendable local government system inherited from the colonial period has continued to deteriorate (Mutizwa-Mangiza, 1990; Jonga, 2014). Varied challenges have been articulated that include lack of funding, too much central government interventions in local issues, recentralisation, alleged abuse of political power by the Minister responsible for Local Government on dismissal of councillors, councils and mayors and issuance of directives which in some instances have negatively affected Local Authorities.

The economic downturn, post 2000, broadly characterised by high rates of unemployment and hyperinflation, coupled in some cases with increased service demands has contributed to a growing fiscal crisis in Zimbabwe's local government entities (Mawowa and Matongo 2010; Sibanda *et al.*, 2017). An economic status survey conducted by the Confederation of Zimbabwe Industries (2012) revealed that at least 80% of industries in Gweru have closed due to acute viability challenges and an estimated 11% of those functional are operating at below 35% capacity utilisation. This has affected council in terms of both property and other taxes and has seen many employees being retrenched and hence compromising their ability to honour council tax obligations.

While these statistics highlight general fiscal stress across the nation in general, and Gweru in particular, notable symptoms of decay in the governance of city councils, have been a decrease in revenues, increased service demands, and general budgetary constraints (Kusena and Beckedahl, 2016). Income from service charges and property taxes has decreased significantly in many cases due in part to the increase in unemployment, the informalisation of the economy and the decrease in consumer purchasing power. Additionally, increased numbers of foreclosures contributed to a decrease in the assessed value of properties that have significantly reduced property tax collections. Cumulatively, these enmeshed factors have forced GCC to increase taxes, decrease expenditures, or in some case both increase taxes and decrease spending. With limited revenue options and the inability to deficit-spend, this crisis has significantly impacted and crippled council operations. These fiscal constraints, exacerbated by the decreases in state

funding and primary revenue sources (property tax and services charges), and increases in operational costs in particular labour costs and service expenditures, have created enormous challenges for GCC. Tables 2 and 3 are a presentation of the financial position of Gweru from a creditors, debtors and related expenditure accounts.

Table 1:2- Council Budgets 2009 – 2014 (US\$) (Gweru City Council, Finance Department, 2014)

Year	Budgeted Amount	Actual Collected	Collection Efficiency
2009	5,711,610	3,419,301	59.87%
2010	15,634,240	9,537,146	61.00%
2011	19,872,819	10,941,416	55.06%
2012	26,030,532	13,024,460	50.04%
2013	34,045,611	11,952,536	35.11%
2014	36,408,333	14,073,411	38.65%

Table 1:3 - Council Debtors and Creditors 2009 – 2014 (Us Dollars)

Year	Council Debtors	Council Creditors
2009	\$4,494,197	\$2,279,920
2010	\$8,339,419	\$6,953,202
2011	\$11,018,065	\$9,738,862
2012	\$19,931,122	\$11,448,647
2013	\$19,931,122	\$14,208,323
2014	\$25,611,159	\$23,575,962

UNHABITAT (2015) concurs with the above argument and added that currently, many local governments in developing countries face the near-impossible task of funding the infrastructure and services required to meet the basic needs of growing urban populations, while forward looking capital investments are not possible for financial reasons. Equally, the population of

Gweru City has grown exponentially in the last decade due to many factors inter alia, the establishment of one of the fastest growing universities in the country, Midlands State University with an estimated enrolment of 20000 students and vast mining opportunities in the peri-urban (Table 4)

Table 1:4- Gweru Population by Ward (ZimStats, 2012)

Ward 1	7 028
Ward 2	11 117
Ward 3	2 319
Ward 4	8 502
Ward 5	13 953
Ward 6	7 191
Ward 7	7 344
Ward 8	12 091
Ward 9	7 643
Ward 10	11 822
Ward 11	6 864
Ward 12	7 710
Ward 13	9 428
Ward 14	6 650
Ward 15	13 625
Ward 16	8 445
Ward 17	8 269
Ward 18	7 863
Total	157 865

General population growth in Gweru has been propelled by the fact that the city possesses huge untapped economic potential that can and should be leveraged to create wealth and economic opportunities for all. Dzawanda *et al.*, (2024) alludes that Gweru has potential for economic growth that can be achieved through capitalising on untapped opportunities that arise from improved resource utilisation efficiency.

Helpap (2023) identified five key challenges for local government relating directly and indirectly to the fiscal crisis which this research contends have had significant impact on GCC. These are:

- managing the budgetary demands of decreased revenues, increased service demands and the costs of unfunded mandates;
- meeting the demands of infrastructure and its associated costs;
- understanding and addressing barriers for shared service agreements or voluntary mergers used perceived through PPPs;

- the ongoing fiscal problems related to recurrent expenditure; and
- balancing economic opportunities with environmental risks.

In addition to these factors, the budgets of local authorities in Zimbabwe are directly and indirectly affected by fiscal issues at the central government level. More specifically, as budget cuts have occurred on critical areas such as the health grant (T 5) health expenditures for local government have been left to be managed by local authorities while the authority to review health fees in line with prevailing economic trends is censored by the national government. This funding stream has historically provided support for affordable health services and hence the general sustenance of health service delivery in the absence of the health grant is under threat of complete collapse. These a classic case of an unfunded mandate.

Table 1:5-Health Grant Disbursements from Central Government to Gweru City Council (Gweru City Council Finance Department)

YEAR	AMOUNT (ZW\$)
1994	721,971.00
1995	855,460.00
1995/96	266,900.00
1996/97	400,486.00
1997/98	809,789.00
1998/99	978,640.00
2000	5,266,540.00 ¹
2001	7,148,315.00
2002	140,309,075.00
2003	155,879,600.00
2004	170,786,950.00
2005	165,887,960.00
2006	289,760,980.00

¹ Inflation started picking up Constantly maintain the same font and text style (Californian)

2007	0.00
2008	0.00
2009	0.00
2010	0.00
2011	0.00
2012	0.00
2013	0.00
2014	0.00
2015	0.00
2016	0.00

Gweru City Council thus faces the daunting challenge of ever-increasing infrastructure and service delivery demands against dwindling revenue on-flows. Below are plates (photographs) showing symptoms of poor service delivery evidenced by uncollected garbage, damaged roads and non-functional street lights in Gweru.

The following picture illustrate uncollected Garbage in Mkoba Suburb Gweru



Plate 1.1: Garbage Dump in Mkoba Suburb Gweru

Uncollected garbage in a Gweru suburb a symptom systemic failure on the part of council.

While garbage collection was timeous and predictable. This is no longer the case. This city with almost 200 000 residents has only two functional refuse collection trucks.

The following illustration shows a damaged road in Ascot Suburb in Gweru



Plate 1.2: Damaged Road in Ascot Suburb

A damaged road in Gweru's Ascot high density suburb. City roads continue to deteriorate especially after heavy downpours during rainy season. Most of the city's roads are over 30 years old and have not seen much maintenance over the years.



Plate 1.3: Street Lighting in a State of Disrepair in Gweru East. Broken electricity lines indicative of non-functioning street lights with arrows

showing broken lines. Most areas of Gweru no longer have functional street lights.

Local financial management frequently suffers from lacking technological infrastructure and capacity, and opportunities for revenue generation are often restricted by inadequate regulatory frameworks and disadvantageous political structures (Mlambo and Chirisa 2023). Lagging public-sector spending takes a toll on urban efficiency and local economic activity, creating a vicious cycle of budgetary shortfalls, choking urban conditions, and economic stagnation (Shereni 2021). However, strategic governance and financing systems including government can provide hope for the struggling local authority (Chilunjika *et al.*, 2024). There are opportunities for matching local needs with institutional frameworks and revenue-generation tools. Appropriate financial management can tap into strategies that improve efficiency of revenue collection, win public support, capitalize on urban economies of scale, curb land speculation and sprawl, incentivize economic activity, and improve urban affordability for the poor (Chakunda 2023). The city also needs to right size its staff compliment which is consuming over 70 percent of generated income (Mudyadadzo and Nzwatu 2018). The resulting budgetary improvements can allow GCC to make strategic investments in the city, stimulating a virtuous cycle of growth, revenue generation, and prosperity.

While the municipal financial discourse is fundamental to local government service delivery in Zimbabwe, it is also vital to critically examine the political economy issues of sub-national governments (Marumahoko 2023). These issues are critical to understanding the consistent refusal of the central government to decentralise significant tax revenues, and the common refusal of local authorities to adequately use the tax revenue authority they are granted (Marumahoko, 2024). Local authorities need the capacity and political will to implement reforms. Additionally, they should generate political support among urban constituents to introduce the necessary legal and institutional changes with the aim of generating increased revenue through greater tax rates, improved tax collection and reduced tax evasion (Maibeki *et al.*, 2021). Moreover, central governments should offer municipal

authorities more financial autonomy to restructure their tax bases and greater jurisdiction over revenue collection (Kaponda, 2024).

To buttress the above, the quality of governance is one key aspect that prominently arises from discussions on the reform agenda and the political economy issues facing local governments in developing countries in general and Zimbabwe in particular. Regarding the political economy and local government service delivery in Gweru, a series of questions arise: what are the dynamics of the political economy of Gweru? What areas of the political economy are fundamentally affecting municipal and urban finance and the capacity of GCC to provide services? What are some of the successful experiences of tax revenue decentralisation in developing countries (for comparative purposes with Zimbabwe)? What are some of the successful experiences of local revenue enhancement through a greater utilization of tax revenue authority? What are the drivers or factors of success? This study addresses the range of questions raised in this paragraph to come up with concrete recommendations to reverse the current decline in service provision in Gweru.

The study is largely guided by the service delivery models especially the decentralisation service delivery model and alternative service delivery model (multi-level governance model). Using these two models, the researcher seeks to identify the following as crucial variables affecting the better service delivery at the lower levels of government: (a) constitutional and legal framework, (b) consistency politics, (c) institutional capacity, and (d) service delivery mechanism. Taking these variables as independent variables, an analytical framework will be developed. This framework will help to analyse the challenges faced by GCC in terms of service delivery and how GCC can overcome the challenges to deliver better services to the public? The study is based on qualitative methodology, particularly using the case study approach.

Although indigenous Africans were living in the Gweru area from time immemorial, its establishment as a colonial military settlement dates back to 1894. Dr Leander Starr Jameson came and chose the site of the present-day Gweru in June 1894 and thereafter the first 280 plots were surveyed and sold two months later (Ranger, 2011). This settlement had a European population

of 350. The site was chosen because of its proximity to the Gweru River. To get water from the Gweru River, 'umkwelo' in Ndebele or a ladder was required since there was a steep slope and slippery banks. The town got its name from the Ndebele word 'Ikwelo' which means steep slope.

A significant event in the growth of Gweru was the railway connection in 1902 as part of the development of a railway system that was being constructed by the British South Africa Company of Cecil John Rhodes (Grant 2024). Gweru became a major junction of the railway system to then Salisbury to the north, Bulawayo to the south and Masvingo to the East (Mhlahlo 2007). Gweru became an important trading centre. Some of the early traders included the Meikles Brothers whose store constructed in 1894 is still a major landmark in Gweru (Chakwizira 2021). Other landmarks from that era present to this day include the Midlands Hotel constructed in 1917 and Boggie's Memorial Clock Tower constructed in 1928 as shown below (Grant 1995). Gweru was granted municipal status in July 1914 and had its Centenary celebrations on the 8th November 2014 (Matsa *et al.*, 2021). The following is a map showing the location of Gweru in Zimbabwe and the eighteen wards of the city.



Map 1.1: City Of Gweru Wards and Location Nationally and Provincially



Plate 1.5: Midlands Hotel, Gweru. Midlands Hotel constructed in 1917 is a major landmark in City of Gweru to this day. Like the city Midlands Hotel has deteriorated in quality and services in recent years.

Meikles Store was opened in 1894 and is one of the biggest departmental stores in Gweru up to this day. Recently Meikles partnered with South African supermarket giant Pick and Pay to bring better services to the people of Gweru. This is one of the few positive developments in the city.



Plate 1.6: Boggies Memorial Tower and Clock. The Boggies Memorial Tower was constructed in 1928 is another landmark in City of Gweru. The clock has not been functioning for many years due to lack of maintenance by the GCC.

Some of the major industries already alluded to above were established as the town grew into a major trading centre. Bata Shoe factory was established in 1943 and Rhodesia Alloys now Zimbabwe Alloys was established in 1950 (Grant 1995). Gweru attained city status in 1971 (Matsa et al., 2021). From its inception in 1894 the city was known as Gwelo and assumed its new name of Gweru after independence in 1980 (Gweru City Council 1994). The city now has over 33 000 housing units and 98% of them have reticulated water and sewerage. This is a far cry from the 240 plots and 350 settlers of 1894 (Mamboko et al., 2013). From three water wells and river water in 1894 the city now has 4 water supply dams with a capacity of 80 million litres (Nyathi 2022). **Plate 1.7:** City of Gweru Civic Centre/ Town House



***Plate 1.7:** City of Gweru Civic Centre/ Town House. This impressive building is indicative of city of Gweru's past when council was performing well.*

City of Gweru is the provincial capital of the Midlands Province. In this role, the city has offices of ministries of national government. City of Gweru's

central location and as a transport hub attracts a sizeable population from its periphery on a daily basis who come to access various types of services from government ministries, do business or simply visiting. This means the city's services are consumed by more than the resident population. The city is also surrounded by Vungu Rural District Council with a population of 91.000 (Zimstarts 2012), is close to Shurugwi District with a population of 77 870 (Zimstarts 2012) and Chirumanzi District with a population of 80 351 (Zimstats 2012). All three district impact on the city of Gweru from a service delivery perspective.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe Section 276 and legislation of Zimbabwe emphasises that local authorities have a pivotal role in service delivery and the various facets of development within their areas of jurisdiction (The Constitution of Zimbabwe 2013). This implies that local authorities must have policies and institutional frameworks that support and sustain the development of local people. The effectiveness of good local governance is therefore measured and benchmarked by the capacity of local government structures to provide an integrated development approach to social and economic development issues and to supply essential services congruent with the needs and desires of the local communities. In this regard, local authorities should be able to identify and prioritize local needs, determine adequate levels of services and allocate necessary resources to the public. In the same context good governance entails the existence of efficient and accountable institutions and systems and entrenched rules that promote development and ensure that people are free to participate in, and be heard on, decisions and implementation thereof that directly affect their lives.

Further, the materialisation of democracy at the local authority level implies giving citizens a role in these processes. This will lead to more accountability and responsiveness, and hence service delivery efficiency. However, it seems that the capacity of GCC to provide services in light of the above efficiency benchmarks is heavily riddled by a multiplicity of factors, inter alia, a limited fiscal space for optimal service delivery capitalisation. Such financial viability impoverishment implies that council cannot perform its functions due to fiscal distress. The symptoms of this are evident in uncollected refuse, water delivery constraints, poor road networks and street lighting among a myriad

of other problems. To add to this, residents have lost confidence in the general competences of council as manifested by widespread protests of various contexts and dimensions. Coupled with these are weak corporate governance structures and institutional frameworks evident in cases of violation of tender adjudication procedures, widespread corrupt tendencies and rampant abuse of council systems, procedures and resources. A seemingly complex intergovernmental relations framework has equally resulted in central government resorting to excessive punishment of local government officials as reflected through suspension and firing of councillors, dissolution of councils, appointment of caretakers and litigation. This thesis therefore explores the service delivery systems of GCC in relation to its current state, problems and challenges and possible strategies for improvement.

This study seeks to explore the service delivery systems of sub-national governments as epitomised by GCC in relation to its current state, problems and challenges and possible strategies for improvements. Using Gweru City Council as a case study the specific objective of the study are:

- 1) To examine the service delivery challenges of sub-national governments using Gweru City Council as a case study;
- 2) To explore political and administrative systems and mechanisms required to broaden the scope of sub-national governments for improved service delivery;
- 3) To identify indicators of efficient service delivery at sub-national level; and
- 4) To examine factors influencing sub-national governments from achieving their potential to enhance service delivery at sub-national level.

The research questions informing the study are:

- 1) What are the service delivery challenges of sub-national governments using Gweru City Council as a case study?
- 2) What mechanisms and processes are required to improve the service delivery capacities of sub-national governments?
- 3) What are the indicators of efficient service delivery at sub-national level?

- 4) What accountability mechanisms would be needed in allowing sub-national governments more room to define the scope of its service provision and how it engages with third parties in service delivery?
- 5) Why haven't sub-national governments realised their potential to enhance service delivery?

The Government of Zimbabwe with the support of the international donor community has made great strides toward establishment of a stable, effective and democratic structure of local government (Conyers and De Visser 2010). Zimbabwe adopted a new Constitution in 2013 with a clearly defined mandate for the three tiers of government. With this clear constitutional framework and administrative structure now in place, efforts are underway to consolidate and align primary legislation to the supreme law of the land. However, over the past years, the question of the state of sub-national administration competences has escalated. It has become the focus of much attention in central government policy commitments. Efforts, with support from development partners, have been targeted at the sub-national level capacity development, institutions and systems.

Sub-national governments have been justified for two fundamental reasons. First, representative democracy seems to work best the closer the government is to its constituencies (Helao, 2015). According to De Visser (2010) the presumption is that lower levels of government, for example, a local government, are better placed at perceiving the desires and demands of its constituents for public services than a distant centralised government. It is for this reason that most developing countries, Zimbabwe included, are championing decentralisation, a process of pushing responsibilities and resources to lower levels of government. Second, subsets of people in the country have the right to demand different types and quantities of public goods and services. There seems to be clear benefits from allowing subsets of residents to demand different arrays of services. Section 8 Subsection (1) of the Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment Number 20 of 2013 guides the, “state and all institutions and agencies of government at every level in formulating and implementing laws and policy decisions that will lead to the establishment, enhancement and promotion of a sustainable, just, free and democratic society in which ‘people enjoy prosperous, happy and fulfilling lives’. Effective service provision is at the centre of people’s daily lives. The

urban dweller relies on local governments for the provision of life sustaining services characteristic of a “Good life” which inhabitants yearn for. Urban residents in Zimbabwe are perturbed by the state of their cities and towns.

Urbanisation represents one of the main demographic transformations confronting sub-Saharan Africa today, with attendant implications for the region’s long-term development trajectory. Although debate exists over whether Africa can be accurately classified as the fastest urbanising region of the world (Potts, 2009; Satterthwaite, 2010), it is undoubtedly true that many more Africans now live in urban areas than at any other point in history. The World Bank predicts that by 2030 Africa will finally be an urban continent, with more than 50% of its population living in cities (Kessides, 2006). Increasingly, much of this urbanisation is fuelled more by natural population growth in cities or urban-to-urban, rather than rural-to-urban, migration (Freund, 2007; Tacoli, 2001).

While African cities in general and Zimbabwe’s urban centres in particular are undoubtedly vibrant locales that generate economic growth and make a significant contribution to the national GDP, this increase in demographic pressure places a strain on already weak service-delivery mechanisms. Garbage collection, the availability of potable water and sanitation, affordable and predictable electricity, and efficient public transport all remain in short supply. Without creating sufficient job opportunities in labour-intensive industries, 61% of urban employment is concentrated in the low-income and unstable informal sector (Kessides, 2006). In turn, this means that few urban residents constitute a viable tax base for funding the provision of key public services. Consequently, many urban agglomerations have become what Simone (2006) terms ‘pirate cities’, in which people must rely on pirate operators, such as mobile water vendors or illegal electricity and water connections, in the absence of genuine state engagement.

The thrust to improving service delivery is not simply a technical exercise but rather requires consideration of two inter-related dynamics relevant to governance contexts at both local and national levels. Firstly, as a consequence of decentralisation, the responsibility for the provision of key services has theoretically been transferred to sub-national authorities in many

African countries in general and Zimbabwe in particular (Sibanda 2013). Secondly, the design and implementation of decentralisation policies has often been erratic, however, with complex layers of government resulting in overlapping mandates and high levels of poverty depriving local governments of adequate resources. Although much has been written on decentralisation (for example, Madhekeni and Zhou, 2012; Crook, 2003; Conyers 2001; Olowu 2001), there has rarely been an exclusive focus on cities in particular. This thesis therefore examines service delivery competences of local government in the context of decentralisation. The decentralisation thrust in Zimbabwe has found legal expression in the new Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment number 20 of 2013 as provided in section 3(2L) on devolution and decentralisation of governmental powers. Further, the whole of chapter 14 of the Constitution provides for provincial and local governments including their powers and financing. This is a major milestone in local government reform. By being constitutionalised local government can now access funding from the fiscus as provided for in section 301. This section guarantees at least five percent of the national budget to provincial and local authorities. Although the Constitution was passed in 2013 the first transfer to provincial and local government has been provided for in the 2019 national budget where \$310 million has been allocated. Could constitutionalisation then be the panacea to local government service delivery challenges? This study explores the implications of this major legislative reform in the context of service delivery and governance.

This study applied a single case study approach and hence was confined within the physical boundaries of Gweru city council. Whereas some aspects of the research might have been drawn from outside Gweru as the study applies the systems theoretical paradigm, the primary focus of the study was Gweru and the key research factors were drawn from within the local area.

The hyperinflationary situation prevailing before 2009 peaking in 2008 makes a budgetary analysis of the period prior to 2009 almost impossible as the inflation rate changed almost on a daily basis. Yet the same period from about 2002 is characterised by the general decline in services. This therefore limits the study in coming up with a comparative analysis financially for that period. The financial implications on service delivery during that period are difficult

to quantify. This research attached high regard to research ethical standards as the basis of maximising possible benefits and minimise possible harms. The following are the critical ethical dimensions underpinning this study:

1. Respect for respondents and confidentiality- the researcher treated views of respondents confidential and shall not disclose their identities or their contributions without their prior written approval;
2. Honesty in reporting data, results and methods;
3. Objectivity- emphasis will be on avoiding bias in all aspects of the research.
4. Integrity- the researcher acted with sincerity; striving for consistency of thought and action;
5. Carefulness- avoiding careless errors and negligence;
6. Respect for intellectual property- the researcher shall honour patents, copyrights, and other forms of intellectual property and giving credit where credit is due; and
7. Legality- all the process and conduct of the researcher shall give high regard to relevant laws and institutional and governmental policies on research and scholarship.

Chapter 1 has established the context of the study giving both historical and conceptual perspectives and located the research problem within that particular context before outlining the statement of the problem. The chapter also provides the aim of the study and gave a comprehensive justification of the study stating the indispensability of the research and why the study should be conducted. It was further indicated that this was a qualitative study focusing on service delivery challenges at local government/ sub-national level with GCC as the case study. Other areas of the chapter are the objectives and research questions, limitations and delimitations of the study. The chapter also discusses research ethical considerations such as confidentiality, honesty, objectivity and integrity.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature. The chapter will focus on review of related literature divided into four distinct but related areas for purposes of systematic analysis, Global perspectives on service delivery with specific reference to Britain, South Africa, Australia and the USA. Justification for this

selection of countries is given in the chapter. Scholarly perspectives around the evolution of Local Governance in Zimbabwe and the legislature framework upon which it is anchored. Key concepts of this study are: service delivery, efficiency indicators, decentralisation and its various forms. The study is guided by the systems theory. Other theories to be examined in relation to the study are the efficiency services theory and the democratic participatory theory.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology. The study utilised qualitative case study research using in depth interviews, focus group discussions and analysis of secondary data sources. The purposive sampling technique was used and data were tested for validity using respondent validation and the use of comparison. The confidentiality of respondents was considered as a cardinal ethical point among other considerations such as honesty, objectivity and integrity.

Chapter 4: Data Presentation, Analysis and Discussion. Data were presented using thematic analysis and critical discourse analysis techniques. Key areas of thematic analysis for the study were, the free line-by-line coding of the findings of primary studies, the organisation of these codes into related areas to construct descriptive themes, and the development of analytical themes. CDA was preferred here because it focuses primarily on social problems and political issues, reconciled with current paradigms and fashions. At the same time, it provides empirically adequate critical analysis of political and public administration discourse which is usually multidisciplinary.

The last chapter comprehensively summarises the study, drew conclusions and made commendations. Recommendations were focused on areas of further academic research and particular ways of improving the local government service delivery capacity of Zimbabwe's local authorities basing either on the views of experts and researched experiences of other countries.