SUMMARY

The pilot town council project in Ang Mo Kio New Town showed that residents can run their own housing estates. This paved the way for the Government to draw up the framework for the operation of town councils and eventually led to the Parliament passing the Town Councils Act on 29 Jun 1988. On 1 May 1989, the first town councils were formed and over the next three years, the Housing and Development Board which had been managing the public housing estates will hand over the management and maintenance of the estates to town councils which will be formed in 3 phases. Town councils are more than just estate management agencies. This dissertation investigates the reasons for the introduction of town councils which are expected to provide a whole new experience as it will enable the residents to build-up self-reliance and self-determination in the management of the public housing estates in Singapore and to have a great impact on the quality and economic value of the estates in the future.

The objectives, scope and functions of town councils are examined in detail with an attempt to expound the
physical, social and political dimensions of the role. The dissertation also provides an evaluation on the extent of participation in the first nine town councils formed under Phase 1 of the implementation.

This dissertation has set forth to critically examine the hypothesis that town councils have facilitated greater residents participation in decision-making and policy formulation, that the use of managing agents is a better way for a town council to carry out its functions than the direct employment of staff, and that town councils have effective means to tackle the arrears in service and conservancy charges.

The dissertation will focus on the management, organisation and financial arrangements of the first 9 town councils. To carry out their daily operations, town councils will either employ professional estate managers or engage managing agents. Almost all the town councils in the first phase have opted to engage managing agents. Although it would seem that this may be the most cost-effective way, but in the longer term some town councils would be more confident to try and engage their own teams to manage the estates.

In the following chapters this dissertation will examine information and data gathered from various
published sources as well as directly from the town councils. An analysis of the income and expenditure of the town councils shows that their principal source of income is service and conservancy charges and at the present rates, town councils will have to continue to rely on the Government for funding.

During the initial years, the various town councils were more or less similar in their organisation and management and tend to be more conservative in their estate management decisions. Over the next few years, the differences between the ways the town councils are managed may show up in the different charges they have to collect to achieve standards of cleanliness and neatness of the neighbourhood. These differences would emphasize their sense of separate identity. Members of Parliament and councillors will have to decide on what to spend on routine maintenance, how to spend the sinking fund and how to use surplus funds. Residents can participate through the town councils to make their town councils succeed and bring excellence in living to their estates.