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Holder, A. (2004) *Taking the strain or a strained relationship? Joint political and managerial leadership in UK city governance* (UK)

## **Taking the strain or a strained relationship? Joint political and managerial leadership in UK city governance**

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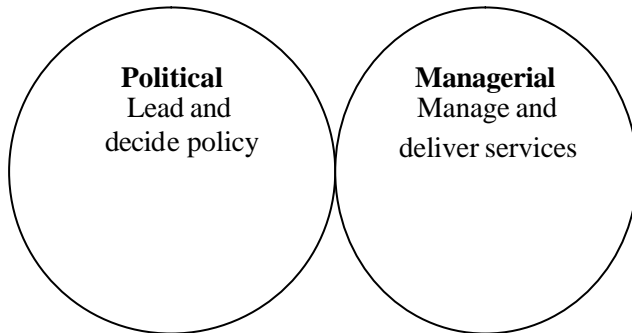
The leadership of democratic city governance is provided by a pairing of politicians and managers, either two individuals or more likely two groupings brought together by very different routes to do a complementary task. Their origins, careers and working cultures are quite different and yet together they joint hold the city's present and future in their hands. How well this relationship is established and sustained will influence the success or not of the city.

The thrust of this paper is that the city governance requires, as it always has, a distinctive joint leadership between politicians and managers. This has typically been worked out (or not) by two people or two groups to the greater good (or not) of the city community. Here we wish to draw upon some of the experience of the reform of UK local government governance – particularly the creation of political executives or cabinets as a replacement to the committee system. Several aspects of this have forced greater clarity into our thinking and practice about how this complex form of leadership is exercised. New ways of working together are emerging as a result. As Kurt Lewin has it 'if you want to understand an organisation, try to change it' and this is just what has happened.

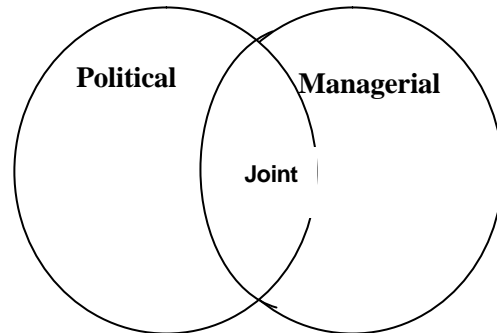
There is no doubt that city governance is wider than a few politicians and managers of the local authority but it is essential to start at this heart of democratic governance. In the past it was the accepted wisdom that the leading relationship of the local council was straightforward - politicians decided policy (and were jealous of this territory relative to managers) and managers carried the policy out (and were jealous of this territory relative to politicians). This is illustrated in the diagram below part (a), separate roles and separate 'leadership space'. Even if that were ever true, the boundary is now more complex because the complexity of operating in a city environment requires a complimentary 'requisite variety' of leadership, not just at the top of the organisation, but throughout the organisation and amongst its partners. Given the complexity of the relationship are there emerging ways of working that enable this leadership task to be better carried through?

We suggest that one way of handling this complexity is to work with three areas of leadership – the political, the managerial and the joint. The diagram shows this arising from the overlapping roles – part (b) – a joint as well as separate 'leadership space'.  
**What this paper wishes to set out is the need to more clearly define, build and practice the joint and separate leadership that city governance needs.**

a) Separation



b) Overlap and three roles



One feature common to most well performing local authorities in the UK is a good relationship between leading politicians and managers. To assert this – as many have in the UK – is to beg the question of what needs to happen if it doesn't yet exist. What are the components of a good working relationship that need building and sustaining? What does it take to establish a relationship between politician and manager that 'takes the strain' rather than producing a 'strained relationship'?

This paper rests on our experience of working on these questions with leading politicians and managers, separately and together, individually and in teams. We have found it necessary to work on two main characteristics of the relationship that the diagram illustrates. These are;

- a) **Knowing how to debate, decide and act in a joint way**  
The joint area of leadership covers issues of priority for the whole council or a policy area which necessarily have both political and managerial priorities within it. The discussion needs to have both politician and manager sitting down as equals (albeit with different roles and with different interests) and acting jointly as a result;
- b) **Knowing what will take place in their separate responsibilities**  
The two spheres of separate action for politicians and managers are known to a greater or lesser extent to the other. We have found the greater the degree of openness and understanding about the other the better for the working relationship.

This work to establish better joint working has brought new experiences to both groups. These have typically been;

- the unusualness of taking time to establish good understanding and joint processes;
- the unusualness of genuinely joint activities;

- the creation of new mechanisms to lead.

We do not deny that these have been worked on in many local councils over many years yet there continues to be considerable defensiveness and conflict within councils between politicians and managers which seriously detract from delivering public service to the public. We believe there is a need to be more considered in sorting out these areas of responsibility **and** the nature of the relationships. It has required some time and new processes to establish this clearer working basis.

This paper seeks to examine several ways in which this ‘leadership space’ in the Council, particularly the ‘joint leadership space’ is defined and in practice developed. The structure of the paper considers:

- a) the pressures for better leadership in local government;
- b) some practical ways in which these improvements have been addressed;
- c) the development agenda for city governance.

## **A. The pressures for better leadership**

There are huge pressures on cities to respond to the diverse and challenging expectations by its communities. The rest of this conference is testimony to this. It has been concern about this pressure and the leadership capacity and effectiveness in UK cities which has led to the establishment of the Leadership Development Commission for Local Government (LDC). Its report and recommendations to national bodies, local authorities and to leaders - to which we contributed - was published recently [LDC, 2004].

Underpinning the many views presented to us at the Commission were at least three major pressures which have challenged city government to ‘lift its game’ on leadership;

- the increasing expectations on city governance of constituent communities and Government policy and finance directives;
- the new political governance which have placed responsibility in a more clearly focused way on the pairing of individual politician and manager or pairing of teams i.e. political cabinets and managerial teams;
- the challenge from Government and the Audit Commission to demonstrate overall performance and good governance – in England the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) rates all local authorities in five grades from poor through weak and fair to good and excellent.

The Commission was concerned with a wide variety of factors but perhaps more than any other with the political – managerial relationship. All add up to a challenge to lead more effectively and particularly through the ‘joint leadership space’.

The Leadership Development Commission suggested a series of leadership capacities central to local government if it is to succeed over the next 5 – 10 years, two that are the principal ‘**drivers**’ and four that are ‘**enablers**’:

*Leadership Drivers:*

**community leadership**

responding to the needs, values and expectations of the community.

**delivering services**

continually delivering and improving services as customers and users wish to see them.

*Leadership Enablers:*

**setting direction, priorities and resources**

setting an inspiring and realistic agenda for the authority

**partnership working**

jointly working with others to deliver community outcomes by leading, supporting and enabling

**organising and changing**

aligning and changing the authority’s working to deliver Community and Council outcomes.

**personal and team skills, experience and mindsets**

continually extending one’s own and one’s teams capacities to learn and adapt

This set may be fairly familiar but what is particularly challenging is that we are suggesting **all** have implications for politicians and managers leading separately and together. This is set out in the ‘umbrella’ framework below which comes from the report and is intended to illustrate rather than define the type of responsibilities. Further work on a more comprehensive set of leadership capacities under the umbrella framework is being undertaken by ourselves for the UK Local Government Employers’ Organisation and Improvement and Development Agency.

## Umbrella Framework for Local Leadership Capacities

| POLITICAL  | JOINT  | MANAGERIAL   |
|--|--|--|
| <b>Community leadership</b>  |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Setting political values, objectives and commitments</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreeing the Council's leadership and contribution to the community</li> </ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing corporate values</li> <li>Consulting to establish community priorities</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Delivering services</b>   |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Scrutinising performance and action</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreeing targets and outcomes</li> <li>Agreeing performance systems</li> </ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Achieving results and running an effective performance management system</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Setting the direction, priorities and resources</b>   |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Defining core political priorities</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Devising and agreeing the corporate priorities and plan</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establishing work priorities derived from national, community, corporate and service policies</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Partnership working</b>   |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leading through partnerships</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Agreeing on priorities, representation and roles</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working through partnerships</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Organising and changing</b>   |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with other politicians and the public</li> <li>Facilitating political change</li> <li>Sustaining ethical and political values</li> </ul>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working across the political/managerial interface</li> <li>Jointly managing capacity and resources</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aligning the work of employees and others</li> <li>Facilitating change and adaption</li> <li>Sustaining professional, financial and ethical values</li> </ul> |
| <b>Personal and team skills, experience and mindset</b>  |  |  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing self and personal skills</li> <li>Developing the Cabinet/Executive</li> <li>Developing relationships within the political group</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing joint team working</li> <li>Facilitating the pairing of portfolio holder and director</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Managing self and personal skills</li> <li>Developing the management team</li> <li>Developing relationships to staff and organisation</li> </ul>              |

Two key issues follow from this framework:

- there are particular responsibilities for each type of leadership – for politician, for manager and for the pairing jointly – across all six areas;
- there is not a neat and easy way of defining what is necessary – particular circumstances and people with different capabilities will require different agreements.

The complexity of this ‘map’ of leadership and the need for negotiating the particulars in each locality is not to argue that ‘anything goes’. The basis of authority does define the limits of roles. This authority across the three types of leadership is outlined below.

| <b>Political</b>   | <b>Joint</b>   | <b>Managerial</b>  |
|--|--|--|
| Elected authority from the community to set the Council’s direction and make choices on its behalf | Authority gained from acting together and ensuring that choices respect the interests and concerns of the community and of each other. | Appointed authority to act on political choices and delegated responsibilities to deliver services and use the Council’s influence |

The outer two are familiar, the central one is less so but it is the one on which much of the credibility of city governance rests. This suggests that managers do not have the authority to decide unilaterally on major policies, nor politicians the authority to manage the Councils’ employees, in a day-to-day basis. How much of each chooses to seed to the joint area is however a major consideration in city leadership.

One final point before considering the practicalities of this ‘joint leadership’. It concerns the general thinking on leadership. Whilst we have a particular focus in this paper we would acknowledge the need to draw upon the general leadership literature. This, whilst diverse and competing, provides models and development possibilities for the individual leader, whether political or managerial. We frequently use the ideas of Goleman (2002) on styles of leadership and emotional intelligence, Kotter (1990) and Pascale (1996) on the relationship of leadership and management and Heifetz(1994) on adaptive leadership. The implication that leaders must individually adapt their styles to suit the varied and changing situations is central Heifetz has argued this particularly powerfully and appropriately for government and the Leadership Development Commission drew heavily on his and other’s views set out in The Adaptive State [DEMOS 2003]. We take it as read that these ideas must continue to be central to city governance. This paper however focuses on the joint and interactive aspects of political and managerial leadership.

## **B. The practical implications of joint leadership space**

The implications of this idea of joint leadership space is that several aspects of the working relationship between politician and manager need to develop. These are **in**

**addition** to the normal demands of leadership. The following are critical questions that we have found necessary to answer if joint leadership is to work well;

1. **Who does what?** Distinguishing between leadership and management – not the usual political/managerial split;
2. **Whose coming from where?** Understanding and responding to very different cultures and career routes;
3. **How do the two teams work together?** Establishing joint leadership space and joint team processes;
4. **How do individuals work together?** Building effective pairings of politician and manager;
5. **How are individual political leaders to develop?** Strengthening the leadership of politicians.

## 1. Who does what? Leadership or Management?

A difference often held to distinguish politicians and managers is the leadership/management distinction. We believe this is not so. Kotter (1990) and Pascal (1996) draw the distinction generally (and respectively) as;

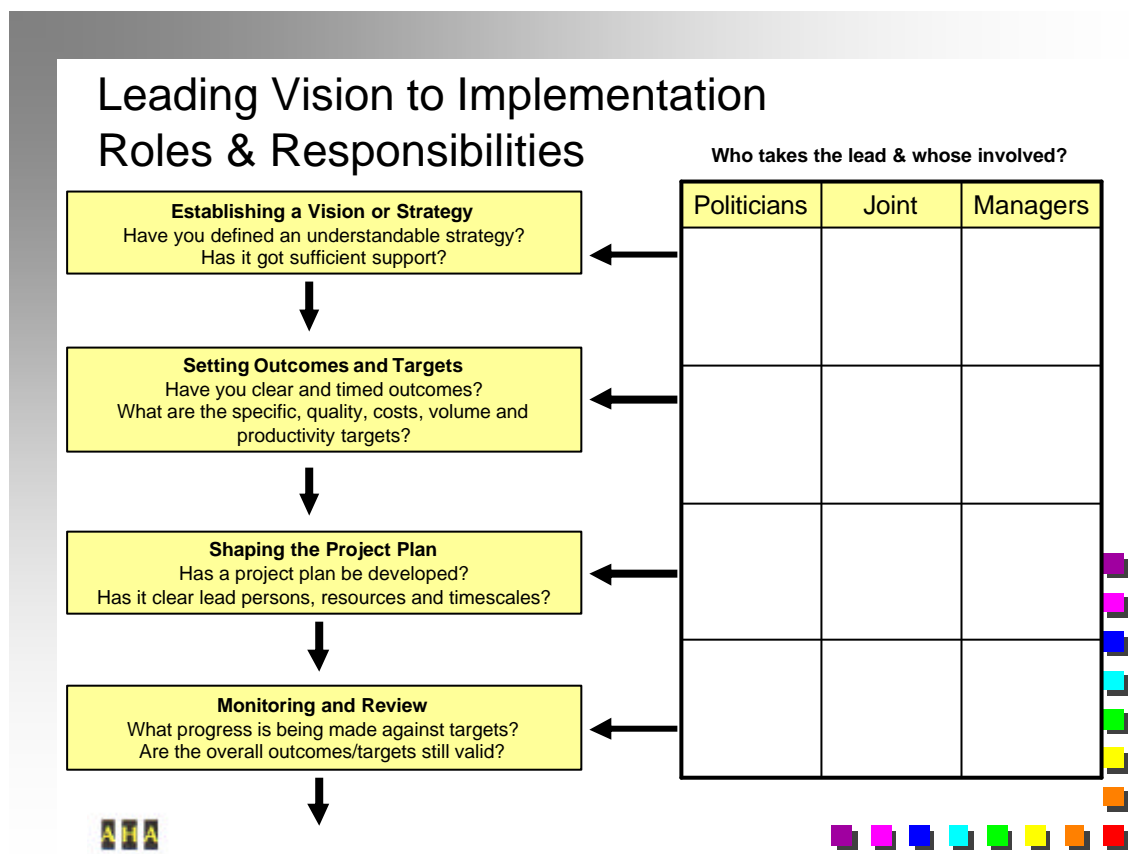
- management deals with complexity - 'making happen what should be happening'
- leadership deals with change - making happen what wouldn't normally happen'.

Both are essential to the well functioning local authority. It is our experience that politicians have a role in management, not in doing the planning, budgeting, organising and controlling but in being briefed about performance and problems **and** jointly making decisions about the overall management of each. Equally managers at many levels have the knowledge, insight and ability to provide leadership – to suggest and be in a good position to advocate and jointly lead change. This is not to say each should do the others job, rather that a difference sometimes quoted is not so simple.

In practice we work with joint teams of politicians and managers to negotiate and make explicit this overlapping of leadership and management. One practical mechanism is the LDC's 'umbrella frame work' set out earlier. The six capacities of leadership are in fact a mixture of key leadership and management tasks, and they provide a vehicle for discussion and agreement about who is responsible across the three types of leadership, e.g. political, managerial and joint.

Another practical device we use when the joint team changes in composition is for politicians and managers to clarify and agree who does what on particular strategies or

policies as they move from ‘vision to implementation’ (below). In other words working down and agreeing the central ‘joint’ column as well as what will be specific political leadership and what managerial leadership responsibilities. This provides broad agreements which will as major initiatives proceed, need further refinement.



## 2. Whose coming from where?

There is potentially **much that culturally separates politicians and managers**. John Nalbandian [2000] with his wide experience has set out some key cultural differences. We have added to this and use the following chart frequently. Whilst it is simplified it captures enough of the reality.

|                                  | <b>POLITICIANS</b>                              | <b>MANAGERS</b>  |
|----------------------------------|---|--|
| Philosophy                       | Political                                       | Professional and managerial  |
| Role                             | Representative<br>Making choices                | Expert<br>Organising delivery  |
| Currency                         | Information, power and votes                    | Knowledge, good practice and position  |
| Method                           | Playing the game                                | Problem solving  |
| Conversation                     | What do you hear?<br>Storytelling               | What do you know?<br>Reports   |
| Language                         | Interests and symbols                           | Information, money, people and things  |
| Leads by                         | Persuasion, outcomes and power                  | Coherence, outcomes and good practice  |
| Handles performance by           | Responding to local pressures                   | Responding to performance indicators, often nationally or professionally derived |
| Successful performance is        | Responding to many diverse needs                | Doing a few things well  |
| Dynamics for handling difference | Conflict, compromise, change<br>Relies on votes | Harmony, cooperation, continuity<br>Relies on position                           |
| Selected for                     | Political allegiance experience and promises    | Professional experience, credibility and fit                                     |
| Promoted for                     | Delivery, profile, influence and allegiance     | Delivery, reputation and fit   |

Given these differences it is hardly surprising that many relationships between politician and manager are poor. Running through much of the relationship are differences which can lead to frustration and distrust. Throughout there are differences: of values i.e. philosophy and ‘currency’; of communication i.e. conversation and language; of legitimacy i.e. role, leads by, handling differences, selection and promotion; and of how success is viewed i.e. handling performance and success criteria. These differences require ongoing attention at the level of interpersonal and inter group relationships if they are not to get in the way of the substance of leadership.

We have found it necessary to take time together with political and managerial teams to identify cultural differences. The critical aspects are;

- what are the differences?
- what are the implications?
- are there working practices which can be agreed to ameliorate the differences?

At the heart of these times together politicians and managers need to develop a mutual understanding that reflects their different perspectives and interests. Whilst the pressure of city governance creates a drive to ‘just get on with the job’ we have seen the substantial benefits from time, early in a working relationship, devoted to this negotiation of respective roles and contributions. There are many techniques which help this process but in essence we have found ‘open space’ sessions – time with no agenda – to be as effective as any. From this emerges a genuine understanding of where the other parties ‘are coming from’ and a basis for negotiating working arrangements with enough in them for each party to own.

Four key areas are:

- **Recognising the differences of values and philosophy**  
We have found that there is much misjudgement of what drives one another across the political/managerial divide. Without attempting to seek consensus (apart from the separate task of defining the core vision and values of the Council) the simple question of ‘why are you in local politics/local public sector management?’ asked individually of everyone in the joint team, illicit responses which strengthen respect and adjustment to one another. Of course not everything is disclosed but the basis of joint work has a firmer foundation.
- **Recognising different conversation patterns**  
Many politicians and managers have found explicit discussion about the differences between political ‘stories’ of difficulties contrasting with managerial city wide data particularly illuminating. A joint recognition emerges that local examples and general data are both part of the picture to be analysed. Either or both may be unduly partial and need assessing for that. The policy or practice proposals that emerge then reflect this broader factual and ‘ownership’ basis.
- **Recognising the differences of legitimacy and authority**  
The authority of the role, selection, promotion and handling of differences all create differences between politicians and managers. We have found that the recognition of each of these differences does have practical implications for how people arrive in and depart from the teams (i.e. career routes), what priorities they are driven by in decision making and how negotiation takes place to achieve results. Once these are shared, differences of perspective can be recognised and accommodated and processes of selection, decision making and implementation mutually respected.

- **Recognising the differences of view about performance**

The pressure for performance can differ between politician and manager. The difference between local performance within short timescales can differ markedly from national and professional based performance over long timescales. Again we have found an explicit discussion of this has helped broaden the nature and ownership of both performance management systems and the joint management of performance results.

### **3. How do the teams work together?**

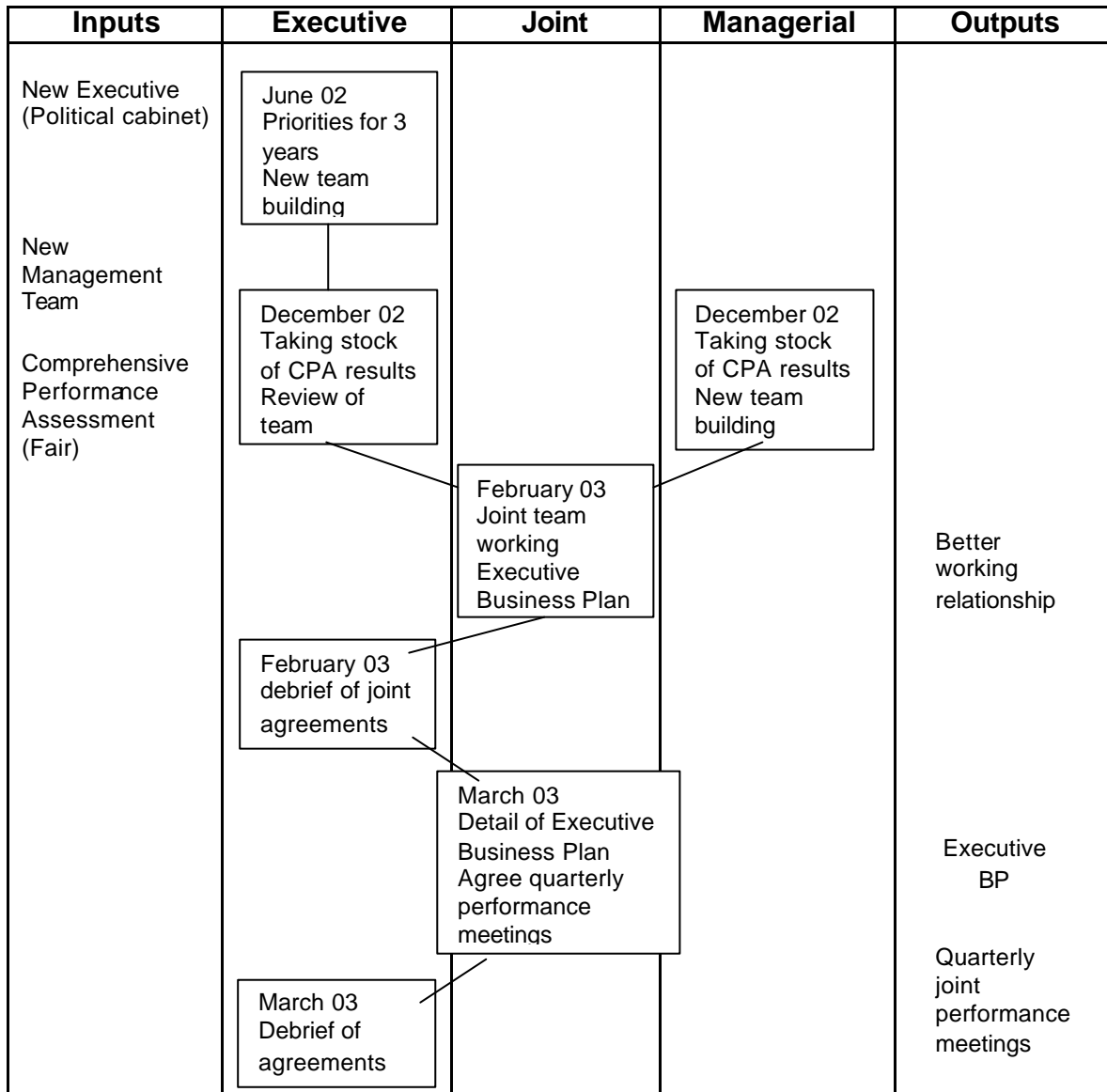
It is one thing to seek to define joint leadership space, yet another to establish it. There are two primary levels at which it needs to be developed: at the political team to managerial team level and at individual political portfolio holder to director level. The following section sets out a practical example of team to team work. The next section (4) an example of individual to individual.

Hounslow is one of 33 London Boroughs and lies to the west of central London. It has a population of about 210,000 and is adjacent to London's primary airport Heathrow. It describes itself as a 'community of communities' and reflects this in that 120 languages are spoken in the educational system. It has a range of social groups from considerable affluence near the centre of London, through strong Asian communities to white working class groups further to the west.

The Borough has a history of services with differing performance reputations – the very good to the very poor. The political control has been with Labour but with some tensions within that political group. The national inspection regime for local government - the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) - rated the Council as 'fair', middle of five categories from excellent to poor. Politically and managerially there was a feeling that this under-rated the Borough's performance. One aspect that was recognised however was the lack of a consistent strategy for the Borough - there had been plans but these were often managerially produced and suffered from a lack of political ownership.

Although the Executive (of ten politicians) was not the first since the new political arrangements had been required by Government there was a sense that the CPA process together with a newly restructured management team would require a fresh approach to the leadership of the Borough. The challenge for both teams was to build and sustain a joint leadership relationship and to deliver a jointly owned strategic plan.

The pattern of development is illustrated in the following chart. The development workshops were in addition to regular Executive and Management Team meetings. The work was facilitated by us.



So what is distinctive about this process? We would argue it places ‘joint leadership’ agenda at the centre of the local authority’s strategic leadership and addresses some of the demands to make it successful. These are;

i) **The two leadership teams and paired relationships require separate strategic thinking time:**

- the process gave the two teams time to establish their separate priorities, one driven by political imperatives and manifesto commitments, the other driven by managerial priorities as professionally and nationally perceived;

- these are inevitably different as the roles reflect different origins for priorities but there was considerable overlap.
- it is important to have space and time separately to define priorities as the political and managerial leadership draw together the agendas from their respective constituencies.

ii) **The joint workshops for the two teams did not just attempt to bring the two agendas together – the policy task – but spent time building the relationships between the two;**

- the patterns of personal perspectives and cultural assumptions needed time to be declared, understood and ways sought to bridge the m;
- the clarification of respective roles – where separate e.g. politicians negotiating political priorities with other politicians and where joint e.g. agreeing common strategic priorities were worked on;
- the debate and merging of the two agendas was based upon better understanding of one another's positions.

iii) **The process used common tools and techniques;**

- too often the political leadership has little or no involvement in the analysis or planning mechanisms – this process involved the use of leadership models, prioritising mechanisms and change management tools for planning the most effective way of implementation (and agreeing respective responsibilities).

iv) **The facilitated joint workshops were not seen as a regular feature but they were used to design more permanent mechanisms for joint leadership;**

- early on the idea of a quarterly performance management meeting was devised;
- the quarterly performance results, presented in an easily understood way, were presented by each portfolio holder and director pairing - success acknowledged and failure identified, explained and action proposed
- this ensured the politician and manager **understood** the results together and **responded** together. Perhaps more than other mechanisms this has forged joint leadership as a process which only begun with the workshops.

## 4. How do individuals work together? Pairing of politician and manager

It is not often that politicians and managers choose one another in the UK local government system. The relationship has all the qualities of an ‘arranged marriage’, different ‘families’ – political/elected and professional/appointed – choosing their respective representative. Just occasionally the manager is chosen by the particular politicians they then work with. However the paired individuals have to get on and make it work.

In any particular pairing there will be differences of;

- culture (as discussed in part 2) above
- experience of the policy area
- time availability
- training
- ability

Whilst leading politicians in UK local government may increasingly be full time it is as likely that there are not. There is also an inequality of experience in specific policy and practice, analytical techniques, training and the time available for the role. It is our experience that there is a wider range of ability amongst politicians and any joint leadership needs to be capable of adapting to this. This inequality must be handled more effectively if there is to be mutual respect in the joint leadership – it puts many such relationships under strain and puts pressure on both sides.

In one northern English city where there have been racial disturbances in recent years the council sought support in building its leadership capacity. We were invited in to facilitate this process and undertook a joint team process similar to that in Hounslow (3). The objective was to build strong joint leadership which had a strategy owned by both and which was practically strengthening community cohesion. The stakes and pressures were high.

It was during these joint leadership development events – covering various models and facets of leadership – that the strain in particular relationships between politician and manager became apparent. Three examples illustrate the need to be open about the ‘strain’ and find ways of tackling the problems.

### a) Establishing a joint understanding

It was clear with a range of new politicians to the cabinet that many had very steep learning curves on their portfolio responsibilities. Their ‘paired’ managers briefed the portfolio holder. This was often extensive (in the scale of new knowledge and responsibilities), the relationship very unequal (one side knew much more than the other) and, the scepticism from the politician may have been met by some paternalism from the manager. The result was a defensiveness and wariness on both sides.

We had separate sessions one to one with each individual in some 'difficult' paired relationships. Typically we were coaching the local politicians to hold onto their contribution (their grasp of the political realities), to increase their confidence (they didn't need to know a subject in detail to shape good policy or ask the key questions of what is the outcome? why now? what happens if it's not done? what are the risks?) and to encourage a confident and open approach with the manager. Typically with managers we were coaching them to identify what aspects of culture, knowledge and behaviour were getting in the way (e.g. the stories told were **not** necessarily idiosyncratic and isolated).

We then encouraged the pairing to take time away from business to discuss their relationship, what expectations they had of the other, and how they each saw the three types of leadership between them – political, managerial and joint. The results varied from the dramatic to the ordinary. Some relationships greatly improved and the progress on policy and the energy taken up by defensive behaviour reduced and redirected more productively. Some relationships change little and this was due to inflexibility on either side and/or a lack of will to make the effort. This type of coaching is in our experience particularly helpful, extending to working jointly with the pairing over a number of sessions. The critical features are the mutual understanding of one another's;

- experience;
- roles;
- expectations;
- willingness to work together.

**b) Identifying and tackling key working differences as they occur**

On one occasion a manager had to respond to the priorities and deadlines of the Government on a community cohesion work programme. It was to be published without enough time for the politician to consider the likely political and public reactions. Just before publication a joint development workshop for the two teams was held. Inevitably there was conflict, strong expressions of views and the 'two sides' psychologically separated, each pulled by their own imperatives.

Although the event was a team one and the agenda planned, it was changed to address the difficulty. Essentially it provided time for developing mutual understanding, defining the action, and agreeing who would be responsible. The critical features for handling these differences were;

- sharing mutual interests;
- agreeing what had priority and how a compromise might be struck;

- agreeing that important action needed joint handling by both politician and manager.

**c) Ensuring joint ownership of the policy agenda**

We were surprised by the lack of political understanding or ownership of the council’s strategic plan when we first started work in the council. In the pressured environment where rapid action was necessary the managers had analysed the independent task force report (an independent report written about the racial disturbances with a list of recommendations) and put together the strategy. Politically this had been ‘nodded through’ as the ‘only strategy one could have’. It meant that a year later when an re-election of a third of the council produced further far-right politicians, the ruling group had to respond. Many of the new political ideas were not in the strategy (which already stretched the council’s resources to breaking point). The strategy had to be reconstructed. It was crucial that the process and result were genuinely jointly owned.

It is this joint policy process that often needs reconstructing, both through political team to managerial team and individual politician to individual manager. The ‘felt fairness’ of the process to both sides is crucial. This has to be the pre-requisite for a pairing of politician and manager to be held accountable for progress (or not) and management of the policy area. The critical features are to jointly establish;

- understanding;
- fairness;
- agreed action and make joint action a regular part of the council’s work;
- agreed leadership and management responsibilities.

This ‘arranged marriage’ needs more support than we typically give it.

**5. How are individual political leaders to develop?**

This might seem presumptuous – surely they know. Whilst there is no shortage of leadership development for public sector managers there is not a history in the UK of local politicians regarding it as necessary or useful. If however the leadership of cities is to be a genuine joint leadership it needs politicians **as well as** managers with a developing set of leadership competencies.

In the UK the Leadership Academy, directed by the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) with providers such as ourselves, has been a major success in this respect. It provides a credible leadership development programme for local political leaders, from council leaders and cabinet members, to scrutiny chairmen and

opposition leaders. The Government's improvement and capacity building agenda provides this impetus. It is a series of three, two day module programmes, ranging through personal, political, organisational and community leadership. It attracts a wide range of politicians across a spectrum of political parties, authorities, age, gender and race. Its success is that it is widely recognised as **the** programme for those in leadership positions to go on; particularly those wishing to improve and extend their leadership skills. Over 500 leading politicians have been through the programme in three years.

Success has been due to five ways in which it has strengthened political leadership;

**a) Learning on one's current leadership challenges**

The programme provides repeated opportunities to tackle a leadership challenge that each leader brings. Whilst the programme content offers different ways into the challenges, e.g. change management, emotional intelligence, it also uses the mechanism of action learning groups (ALG). Much used in UK management ALGs rest on the process of learning through a small peer group questioning a leader on how he or she is tackling the current challenge. Many find this process extremely helpful such that between modules there is a commitment to acting and reporting back on progress. So successful has this process been that the next three year phase of the Leadership Academy has strengthened this use of ALGs as a vehicle for peer support and assessment on each leader's 'challenge'.

**b) Time and confidentiality to review personal leadership**

One part of the programme that is regularly highly rated is that which provides confidential time (and methodologies) away from the local authority and local political system to examine issues of personal style, doubt and difficulty. This is not usually available to political leaders and they have found it a great help. The network of support that builds up is across political parties. It is one aspect that typically continues beyond the end of the programme.

**c) Models and techniques**

Part of the inequality of the joint leadership is the frequent lack of self assessment (e.g. Myers Briggs Type Indicator) undertaken by politicians, and awareness of leadership models, techniques of analysis and methods for change management and implementation. Whilst there is not a need to have all the skills managers have in this respect, politicians do need some understanding for two reasons;

- develop their own leadership skills and capabilities;
- engage more equally in the analysis and debate of policies in the joint leadership space.

**d) Drawing upon experience from other authorities**

Whilst fairly obvious this has been, nonetheless very powerful. The opportunity the programme offers is not the ‘good practice’ presentations of conferences which can often be overstated. In an atmosphere of open disclosure about oneself – a) and b) above – it is not surprising that the sharing of council experiences is both more real and more attuned to translation to another authority. In particular discussions about politician/manager relationships - the ‘joint leadership space’ - as experienced in different settings that is most helpful. That there are different patterns of behaviour and range of possibilities can be seen for real. Much of this learning had had a major impact on other authorities.

**e) Hearing and debating the realities and shadow side of leadership**

One example of this is the use of psychodynamic ideas. The idea that leadership is about dealing with realities ‘under the table’ or brought in from one’s past strikes a chord with many leaders, despite the challenging nature of some of the content e.g. ‘political’ birth, life and death, group envy and challenge. This transacting ‘in the moment’ leadership provides another ‘take’ on the reality of leadership as crucial as transforming the leadership. This particular aspect of thinking has been brought to the programme (and to a recent international study of leadership) by Gerhard Wilke a group analyst. (Binney 2003).

**f) Other associated development**

The strengthening of political leaders is not restricted to programmes such as the Leadership Academy. There is considerable use of peer mentoring (a political leader from one city providing one to one support to another, typically of the same party) which is nationally coordinated by the IDeA. There are action learning groups independently facilitated and some development by the political parties. Goldsmith’s College, University of London are currently conducting research for the IDeA into aspects of the politician’s role in the UK system. These results are beginning to identify areas where development processes could strengthen the political leadership as politicians see it.

This section has identified some examples of how political leaders can be strengthened in their roles. Whilst it may seem strange to concentrate on one aspect of what we are urging is a three part leadership role – political, joint and managerial. We have done this because in our experience this has strengthened the practice of all three. It has done this by;

- increasing the confidence of political leaders (and reducing defensiveness);
- opening up models, techniques and ideas for enabling joint leadership work to be done;

- broadening the experience and repertoire of leadership styles and possibilities.

### **C) The leadership development agenda**

This paper has presented a range of ideas and experiences about the 'joint leadership space' in city governance. Most are drawn from the recent experience of new political arrangements in the UK. What, if anything, does this mean for the city governance more broadly?

We would suggest the following:

- the political/manager interface needs elaborating into a three way umbrella - political, managerial and joint - if it is to be better understood and worked in practice;
- there need to be on-going joint development processes **in** city authorities between;
  - a) political and managerial teams, and
  - b) paired political and managerial individualsto strengthen the joint leadership; this needs to balance time spent on joint policy making, planning and action with **adequate time** on the working understanding and relationships between teams and individuals;
- the use of practical techniques for helping teams and individuals; understand, shape, agree and act upon their joint work. This paper has set out some;
- there needs to be more research as to what formulations of this joint leadership space are acceptable to both politicians and managers.

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1 June 2004

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