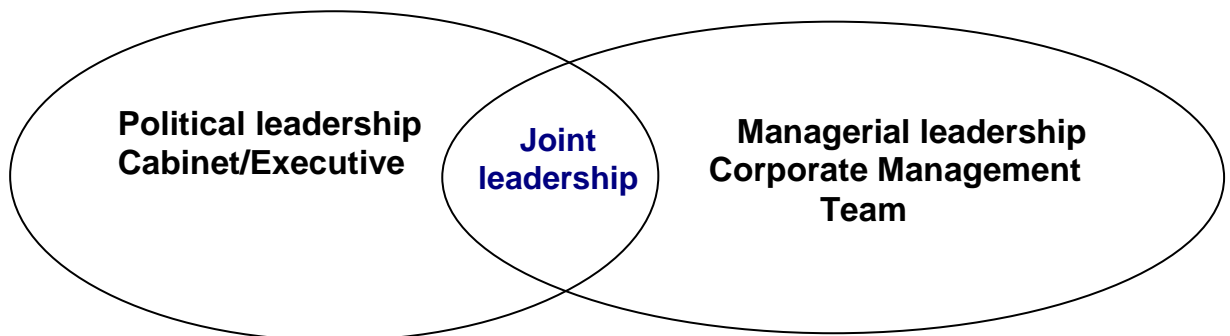


New Leadership in the Council's Top Teams

A Workshop for tackling the critical 'hotspots' that prevent the Cabinet/Executive and Corporate Management Team working at their highest level

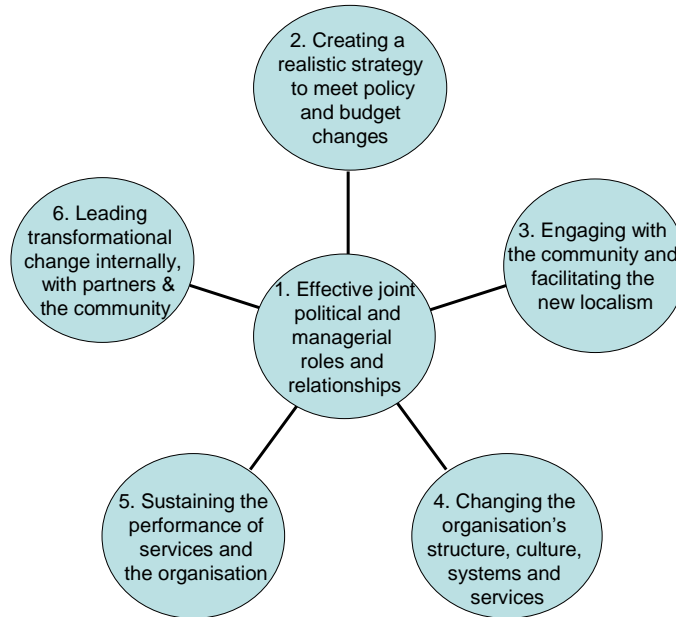
1. Few doubt the enormity of demands on the political and managerial leaders in the Cabinet/Executive and Corporate Management Team – the Council's top teams. The increased demands require adaptive leadership from these teams to meet:
 - **Government demands:** the local government settlement **cutting budgets** by 28% over the next four years; the **Localism Bill** laying out new decentralised financial and planning powers, scrutiny and transparency responsibilities and requirements to better engage with the community; the **Health Bill** returning public health to councils and a Health and Wellbeing responsibility; the **Education Bill** opening up school provision
 - **Local demands: Increased pressures from communities and service users** for **better, personalised and responsive services** and a new, stronger requirement to work with the community
 - **Challenges of delivering services through a patchwork of providers** – from internal business units and standard contracts with the private businesses to social enterprises/trusts and 'mutuals' of staff previously within the council.
2. The Top Teams of the authority have overlapping leadership roles if they perform effectively - the diagram below illustrates this.

Joint local leadership by top teams



All top teams have 'hotspots' where their functioning is not good and prevents the effective working of the council. Now that the demands are greater than ever it is imperative that top teams work well on all the essentials (below). The idea of a workshop for the joint top teams - cabinet and corporate management team – is that they spend time taking stock of how well they perform on these essentials particularly with the emerging agenda, **and** commit to making changes.

We suggest there are six essential features of successful joint leadership in a municipality



The following questions could help identify the 'hotspots' in each:

1. **How well is our joint leadership working between the two teams – Cabinet/Executive and Corporate Management teams?**
 - Have we good ways of **discussing and agreeing issues** between us (e.g. joint informal meetings, agreed lines of communication)?
 - Do we **bridge the cultural gap** between politicians and managers? (e.g. have we ever sat down and asked what gets in the way of effective understanding and discussion)
 - Overall are there any **hotspots** where difficult roles and relationships need working on to improve the leadership?

2. **Do we have a clear strategic direction for the next 3-5 years which is jointly owned?**
 - Does the council's strategy come straight from managers for politicians to sign off – **is it really a joint commitment?**
 - Do politicians take **time to develop their political views together** on what they want for the future?

3. **How well as joint leaders are we engaging with our community?**
 - Are we merely telling the community what we do or are we **sharing decision making** with them, or even giving them powers to make their own decisions?
 - How much of what the **community wants gets delivered** to them? If it's a small amount how can we increase this?
 - Have we any **hotspots** where we are not engaging well with the community?

4. **Is there joint leadership of major changes to the council as an organisation, its shared services and management and its relationships with partners?**
 - Is there an ongoing joint commitment to **maximise the benefits of shared** services and management?
 - Is there agreement about the **programme and priorities for strategic change** to the council's structure, systems and services?
 - Is there **political support for the major organisational changes** in order that the council is fit for current and future purposes?

5. **Are all of our services and targets regularly reviewed for their performance and success or failure in delivering your outcomes?**
 - Is **service performance at the strategic level seen by politicians** and jointly managed with them?
 - Are **targets for projects** (internal and external to the council) **jointly managed** with politicians?

6. **How well do we jointly, across the two teams, lead transformational change?**
 - Do we a **shared practical vision** of the organisational transformation needed and speak with one voice about it?
 - Are we **managing the big structural changes** well enough but **not changing our culture**?
 - Overall are we able to **adapt the organisation to changing demands** without dropping our service standards?
 - **How often do we get** the timing, cost, people, process **bits wrong**?

The **agenda for a top team workshop** can best be drawn from this type of assessment of hotspots and the priorities for action it suggests.

There is more detail on top teams in guidance we wrote for the IDeA/LGID: *Inside Top Teams: A Practical Guide*, available as a download from the LGID Knowledge website or this site under *Catalysts*.