



Getting to Grips with CPA:  
**Working Creatively with Renewal  
and Resentment**

1. The Government's intention with the Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is to use this mode of inspection to force the pace of modernisation across the whole local authority. It is the latest in a long series of initiatives and the most comprehensive yet. This paper sets out;
  - What leadership demands it will make on the authority to change - Part A;
  - What consultancy support to authorities will be necessary - Part B.

## PART A: LEADERSHIP DEMANDS

2. We believe the nature, scale and continuous character of change that CPA will stimulate requires three features to be recognized and reinforced by leaders in authorities and those, like us, supporting them. They are;
  - **expecting change to be continuous** and therefore building it into day to day processes
  - integrating, not splitting the inevitable **forces of renewal and of resentment**
  - working in a coordinated way with the **three dimensions of change** – the 'business' outcomes, the interest and politics (party and non-party), and the emotions and culture.

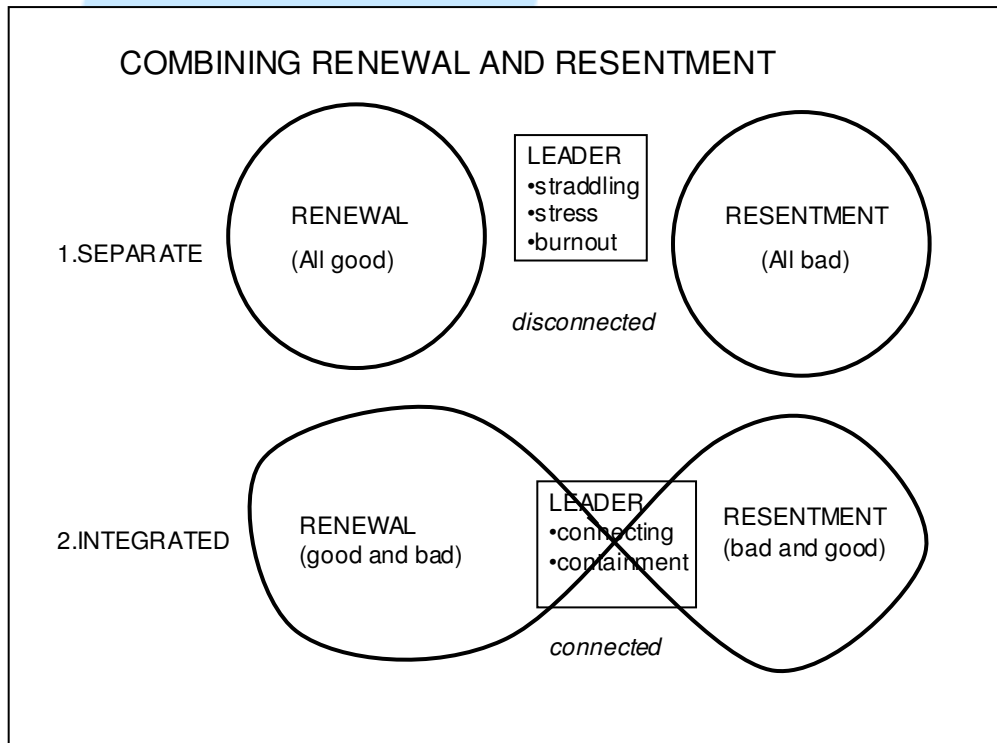
### Continuous change

3. Change and adaptation can no longer be an add-on to work but are a normal everyday part to politicians' and managers' lives. Mechanisms for reflecting and improving the handling of change must be mainstreamed within the work arrangements, recognising that training and 'off-the-job time is limited and can be too detached from the immediate complex reality. There is also a qualitative difference in the way change is handled; we can no longer rely on the conventions of role, hierarchy and previous remedies but are thrown back onto devising new change pathways which drawn upon oneself, relationships with colleagues, and networks. Change and transitions are the normal states, stability will be abnormal.
4. Unquestionably the rapidly changing context for communities in the economy, environment, technology and society necessitate rapid change in the local authority - not one-off changes but a pattern of continual change. There could be a mismatch between the CPA stimulus for change – a challenging one-off inspection of what is happening now – and a continuous process that must occur in all authorities, namely that of continuous handling change to face the future as well as existing challenges.
5. The imperative is to create with individuals and groups continuous and appropriate mechanisms for the organisation to sustain its dynamic

equilibrium of service delivery, political adeptness, and cultural and emotional wellbeing.

### Renewal and resentment

- Our experience is that many ideas about change and adaptation rely on a conceptual split between forces for renewal and resentment: reinforcing the former and marginalising the latter (see diagram below).



- Both the forces of resentment and renewal have positive and negative qualities. Resentment about a change can result from defensiveness about ones territory and the shear effort of change (negatives) but can also stem from the lack of clear outcomes, unrealistic workloads, and a lack of engagement (positives). Renewal through change can bring the drive for improvement (positive) but can also engender addiction to the new, escape from the day job and use of ones position to show others in a less favourable light (negatives). Resentment and renewal exists in a relationship to the other; each has an influence on and is influenced by the other. We are arguing for a leadership process which combines the energy from both in practical ways.
- The implication is to separate oneself from the ideas of:

- Building only on renewal;
- Diminishing resentment through shaming or suppression;
- Applying ever increasing forces to overcome resisting forces;
- Focusing on leaders as the only point of responsibility;

9. It is also to embrace the ideas of:

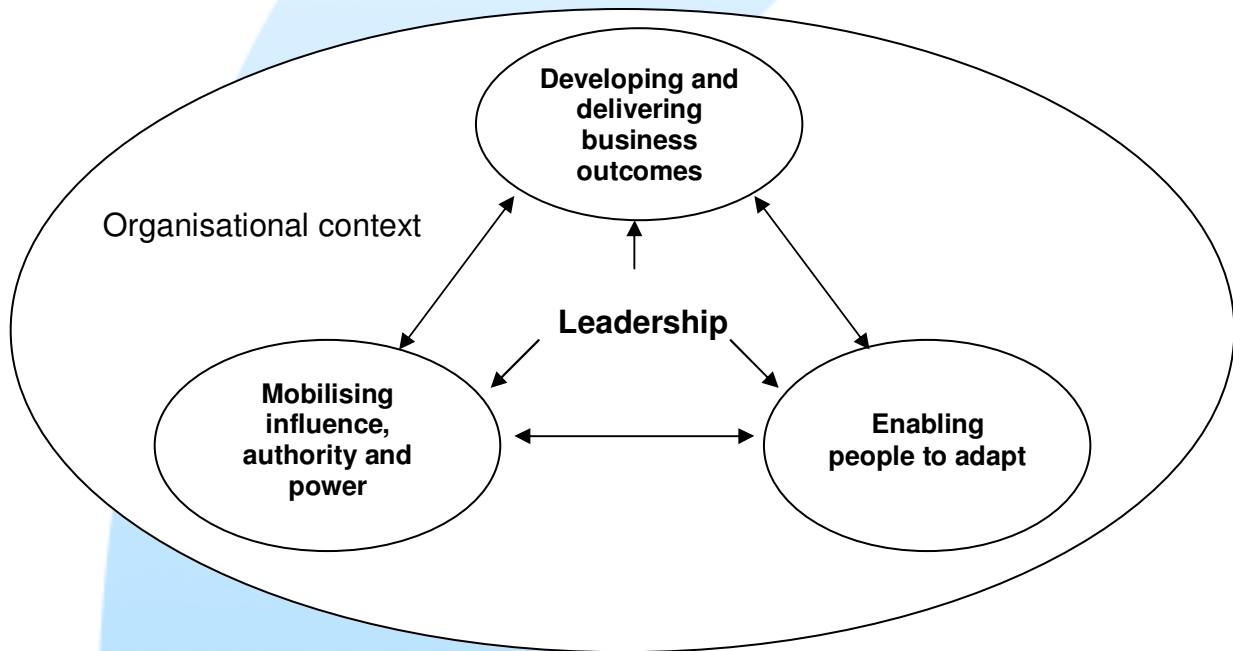
- The transforming potential and locked up energy of the forces of resentment – what is valid to use it; what is not valid to turn back to the individual or team for them to confront the consequences;
- Recognising the negative qualities of renewal – indiscriminate use of the concepts of the ‘new’ and ‘modernising’, the ‘wiz kids’, the inability to recognise the downsides of change, and the personal dynamics that can emerge of superiority ( even a patronising/parental style that is seen in some inspectors) and the misuse of power.
- The leader linking the two sides as well as the inside and outside of the organisation.

10. This links with a lot of recent writing, notably Tony Giddens, who argues traditional institutional structures, hierarchies and roles have become disembodied. Consequently we cannot rely on these externally provided structures and have to engage in an ongoing process of self, group and organisational reflection and recreation of form, process and task. Each authority will need to create its own pathways for legitimacy and adaptation.

11. This means in the context of the CPA each organisation and its leaders must make their own sense of the CPA initiative and construct their own meaning of the changes for them. Any leadership initiative must include an assessment of what individuals, their relationships, networks and the links to the outside world bring to the situation – they cannot rely on traditional roles and resources and merely setting targets. Like the Government they will discover this may be necessary but is not sufficient for effective change.

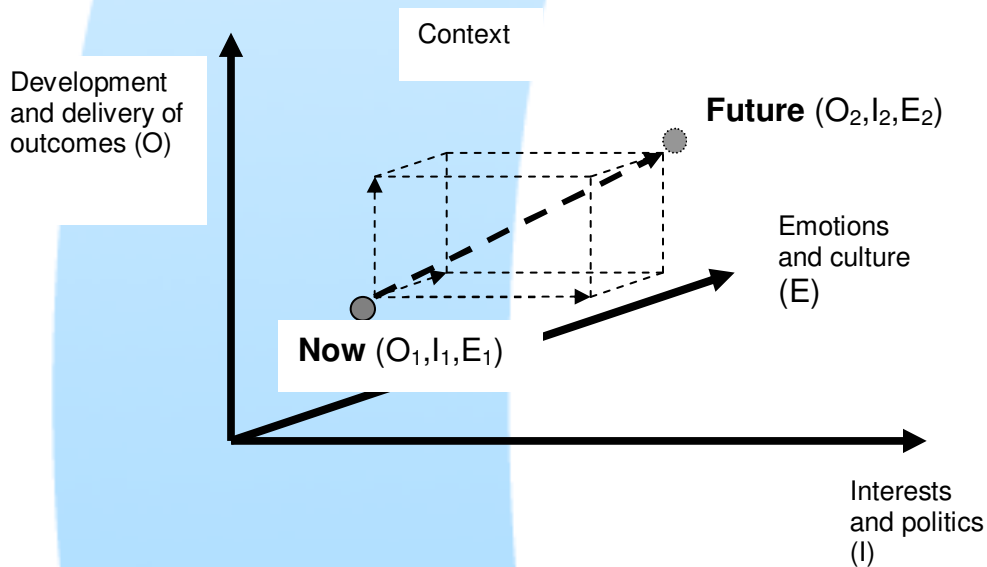
### Three dimensions

12. Fundamental to leading change is the need to tackle three key dimensions of any organisational change. These too must be tackled in an integral way as they interact critically. Whilst there are many detailed models of both leadership and change available we have found the need for a straightforward model that balances the three key dimensions. The dimensions are not new but the way in which they are expressed and balanced has proved particularly useful in bringing in change to a variety of public, social and private sector organisations.

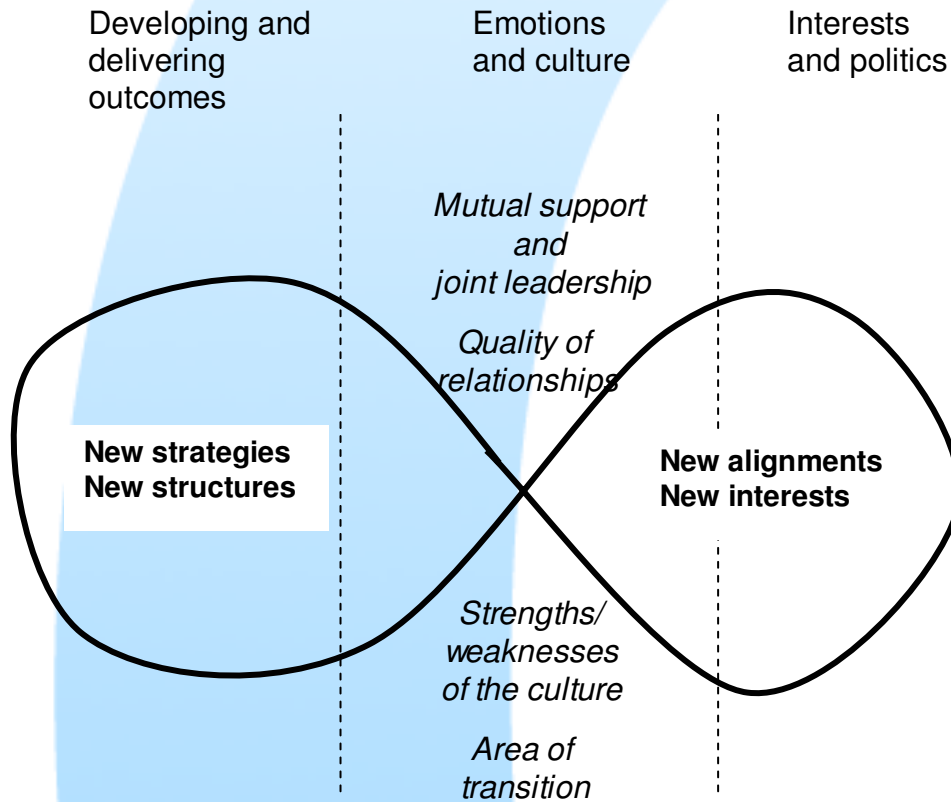


13. Leaders of change need to balance their efforts across three dimensions of any particular change:
  - developing and delivering clear outcomes
    - supported by good 'business' processes of strategy development, planning, implementation and performance monitoring.
  - mobilising influence, authority and power
    - hearing the various interests and voices to do with change and negotiating a way forward.
  - enabling people to adapt
    - acknowledging the challenges and dilemmas people face and supporting the emotional, behavioural and cultural changes.
14. Leaders are at the centre of these processes, shaping and directing them, though not, of course, always responsible for carrying them out. What is critical is that although one aspect seems central at any time, e.g. developing a strategy, a leader's role is addressing other aspects appropriately **at the same time**, e.g. building support, allaying fears.
15. **Context** is critical. Rarely are changes made alone – they have links to other services, organisations and indeed changes. Just deciding on a single outcome and 'going for it' is not a serious option anymore.

16. The three dimensions can be literally pictured as a three dimensional diagram (like the corner of a room - see below). Any change process must deal with the movements on each dimension – improved outcomes, improved alignment of interests and appropriate handling of emotions and culture (like movements in the space of the room) . Any consultancy support must mirror this continuous, connected work with all three dimensions.



17. Our working hypothesis is that the focus on targets and structural modernisation (one dimension) is necessary but not sufficient. The old system suffered from a lack of attention to the relatedness, connectedness and joint responsibility through which power and feelings are expressed (the two other dimensions). We would argue that new ways of working require new ways of continuously engaging across these three dimensions.
18. The Government is for example encouraging the bridging of the gap between leadership by members and officers. We support this. Despite the difference in roles there needs to be new ways of working across the member-officer boundary. Many councils are evolving these ways in the new political arrangements and with varying degrees of success. This requires a 'jointness' which has existed before but needs new shape and new practice. The diagram below illustrates the challenge across the three dimensions. As with any major change which works with only one dimension (the first column) these changes are likely to be seriously impaired if tackled in this limited way.



## PART B: CONSULTANCY SUPPORT

19. We have taken some space in setting out the case for a broader more integrated approach to change. We trust it carries conviction both conceptually and, as we are keen to demonstrate, in experience. We would not pretend it is completely new but it is, we would argue, particularly timely. We suggest there are four ways in which it could be taken forward in relation to CPA.  
( Please not these ideas have since been further elaborated in our 'offer' document **Tackling the CPA Recommendation: the Leadership challenge** also available on our web site)

### 1. Capacity Diagnosis – joint sense making

20. CPA is essentially a diagnostic tool for assessing the state of the authority in respect of its service delivery and corporate integration – its business. When the authority faces its 'verdict' it needs a wider, self diagnosis to meet the challenge of the change. To the 'business' assessment we would suggest the authority must have an assessment of its **capacity to change** which rests as much on changes to the other two dimensions - the political

- and managerial will to change as well as the capacity to move emotionally and culturally. With both dimensions there will be aspects that are overt, covert and unconscious which need addressing – any major change which rests on the first and ignores the other two will almost certainly falter.
21. Whilst there is a self assessment element to CPA the verdict is the inspectors. This cannot be the case for the assessment of the authority's capacity to change. There is a danger that this diagnosis work is **done to** the authority, albeit well intentioned. We would argue for the wider use of joint sense making – a process where groups, including consultants assess the verdict of the CPA, their views and feelings about it, the implications and what they regard as feasible action. This in our experience can be challenging, supportive and realistic.
  22. We would suggest that this 'capacity to change' could be assessed through:
    - A pattern of observation and feedback at critical meetings, interviews with key actors and small and large diagonal slice groups for straight reactions;
    - Leading, task and work groups working through suggested requirements for change by assessing the task/business, political and emotional cultural dimensions.
  23. The assessment would identify what personal, group and organisational changes are necessary – both 'renewal' and 'resentment' dynamics to assist the 'business' changes. We may use a scaled set of variables. We would also use an adapted force field analysis. This would map the driving and resisting forces and suggest ways of moving forward clarifying driving forces (recognising the equal and opposite reaction many driving forces get) and drawing out the energy of the resisting forces as much as possible. We would jointly work on mechanisms for achieving these.
  24. This would lead into recommendations for consideration by:
    - A leadership group, preferably joint member/officer;
    - Peer and work groups to devise ways of making the changes;
    - The CPA 'task team' to integrate these ideas within the proposed action plan.

## 2. Consulting to internal or external change agents.

25. The task of assisting authorities responding to a classification of fair, weak or poor will not be easy. Those leading the change process can be pressured and disorientating and can be greatly assisted by support to those directly involved to see the 'wood' as well as the trees. This requires

support in focusing on the essentials and as we demonstrate above a capability to shift from the business issues to the interests/political and emotional/cultural dimensions to get the required movement.

26. We would suggest the following process – one adapted from use elsewhere – which essentially provides mentoring support. It would involve a meeting with the change agents involved in an authority on say a monthly basis to;

- (a) have an ‘open space’ period of ‘what’s happening’ in the authority and ‘what’s happening to us’,
- (b) issue/project based discussions to identify ways forward,

This would be followed, as appropriate, with individual support away from or ‘on-line’ in the situation. Further issues and experiences would be brought back to the monthly review and action planning session.

### 3. Direct support to organisational leadership

27. The ‘recovery’ from a CPA inspection must come from the authority. We can only offer support. Support can be of the three kinds – business/technical, political/ negotiative and people based/cultural. We would suggest that the support process is via three levels of leadership; those who are organisational leaders (i.e. steering the process), those programme managing ( either a person or group) and those who are ‘project or task’ leaders ( relating to the number of task groups). At all levels it would require continually working across all three dimensions to achieve real change.

28. We would suggest some primary mechanisms of the following kind:

- Ensure there is a sound joint diagnosis of the issues by leading organisational members and officers and this is sustained through the monitored process – this could be linked to features of accelerated leadership training;
- Ensure there is continual support to the ‘project leaders’ who are tasked to design and implement change – linked to a mentoring model similar to that set out in para 26;
- Work with a diagonal slice group to identify the necessary cultural changes, ways of making the changes, identifying change agents and using the groups to monitor progress;
- Devise task teams to tackle problems and support these in all three dimensions;
- Ensure the peer management groups are up to date and engaged in the changes being proposed and the ways of tackling them – joint sense making is well established;

- Establish action learning groups at levels where change is to be the most drastic combined with development /training sessions where this support is necessary;
- Ensure there is continual assessment of team and inter-team dynamics, assessment of the state of the authority and recommendation of what is needed.

#### 4. A & E situations

29. There will be situations where authorities want specific, urgent and intensive help. We have considerable experience of this. The work inevitably has to be tailored but we believe is well suited to the approaches set out already, particularly the need to work across all three dimensions. The key decisions will rest around the potential for affecting the situation and whether what is being requested is of any potential value, short or long term. We believe the interest/political and emotional/cultural dimensions come more to the fore and sometimes require focused and quite drastic attention before the task elements can be moved forward.
30. We would anticipate the use of;
- Support and challenge to leaders and other key individuals
  - Work with leading executive, scrutiny and management teams
  - Facilitation of large cross sectional groups
  - Partial and whole system assessments
31. The key would be the capacity diagnosis as this would identify the need, approach and feasibility.

#### Conclusion

32. We put these ideas forward for discussion and refinement. They could we believe contribute to a qualitative change in authorities which goes beyond the necessary but insufficient use of new techniques, systems and targets. We trust they are of interest and will lead to us working collaboratively with you.

Andrew Holder, Gerhard Wilke, Mike Green, Mhairi Cameron  
AHA Consulting

7<sup>th</sup> June 2002