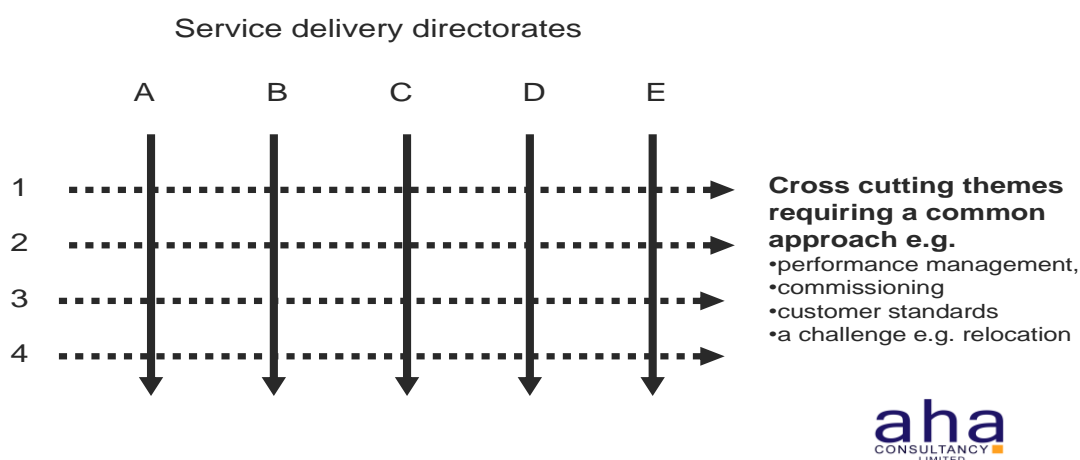# Matrix Working

The transformation agenda common to many authorities uses managers in two ways and it must balance the competing demands. It asks managers to provide the directorate's service delivery **and** deliver cross-council/cross-partnership transformation projects. It is often referred to as **matrix management**. The diagram below represents this:

Matrix Structures:
service delivery structures overlaid with cross cutting themes

Service delivery directorates

A   B   C   D   E

1 - →
2 - →
3 - →
4 - →

Cross cutting themes requiring a common approach e.g.
•performance management,
•commissioning
•customer standards
•a challenge e.g. relocation

aha
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What many corporate groups of managers are finding is that the competition between the 'vertical' service delivery priorities and 'horizontal' cross cutting improvement priorities need robust management. Typically this requires:

- **individual managers committing a fixed proportion of their time to cross cutting projects** as well as carrying through their service delivery/ improvement work, and being appraised against ;

- **management teams managing the conflicting processes, priorities and plans between different tasks** – Corporate Management Team at a strategic level, Divisional Management Teams at business planning level or Frontline Teams at a delivery level;

- **cross cutting projects getting full project disciplines** –this needs **senior 'sponsors'** who will defend and be accountable at CMT; **project leads** with time and skills; **project disciplines** of working to Project Initiation Documents, resourcing, outcomes, and performance timescales; and **overall management** of the workload pressures and conflicting demands (of which there will be plenty).

What is important with matrix management is that it is an embedded and familiar way of managing the authority: it does require staff, managers, teams and the organisation's systems and processes to reflect and practice the principles.

Some of the key lessons are:

Lessons for improvements

Positives:
- It creates the necessary authority, resources and momentum to get new ways of working embedded
- It works against silo mentality and ties the organisation together to act as one
- It forces prioritising and clarity as much as possible

What to watch for:
- It can create two ways of doing things if differences are not resolved
- It can create old guard/new guard feelings and 'camps'
- It can be temporary if not embedded in the culture

Lessons for the organisation

Positives:
- It can break down barriers and mobilise skills on common challenges
- It diffuses influence and control across and down the organisation
- It increases adaptability
- It is an opportunity for developing people and making good use of good people

What to watch for:
- No one has perfect knowledge and it is down to the individual to balance the two sets of demands – this requires empowerment and principles for everyone
- Each member of staff and particularly managers must be as clear as possible about the outcomes, timescales and priority given to the cross-cutting projects
- No matter how emergent the agenda is, clarity about the timescales i.e. project or permanent cross cutting , does matter for psychological health

Lessons for the leadership

- It makes the strategic team a crucial forum for resolving differences when both sets of roles and are within the team
- There must be open debate when the two sets of demands – workload and work processes - are different
- The strategic management team will have to give up on total control – increased matrix working means increased devolved responsibility