Supporting local government every day

WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH COUNCILLORS

Keith Crampton

KEY OUTCOMES

- Being more aware of the political reality of the organisation
- Building knowledge and awareness
- Developing communication strategies and an ability to positively influence

SO WHAT IS IT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT, WHAT DO YOU FEEL ARE THE MAIN COMPONANTS OF WORKING EFFECTIVELY WITH COUNCILLORS?

POLITICS

- The activity of winning and using power in competition with other parties
- Activity within a group by which some members try to gain an advantage

AWARENESS

- Knowledge or understanding of a subject, issue or situation
- Being aware of and seeking to understand the feelings of others

And applying this awareness by:

- Showing delicate feelings or judgement

OVERVIEW OF THE DIFFERENT ROLES

Councillors	Officers
• Accountable to their electorate • Community leader for their ward • Add a political dimension • Set policy and strategy, including the budget/Council tax • Bound by a statutory code of conduct • Deal with Casework on behalf of constituents • Balance the interests of their ward with that of the whole Council • Represent the Council on other bodies • Involved in senior appointments only	• Through the Chief Executive are accountable to the Council • Serve the whole Council • Politically impartial • Provide advice and deliver services within the policy framework and budget set by the Council • Bound by their contract of employment and the code of conduct for officers • Responsible for the management of staff and operational matters

A TRADITIONAL VIEW?

Councillors

Agree policy

Provide strategy and direction

Represent the public

Officers

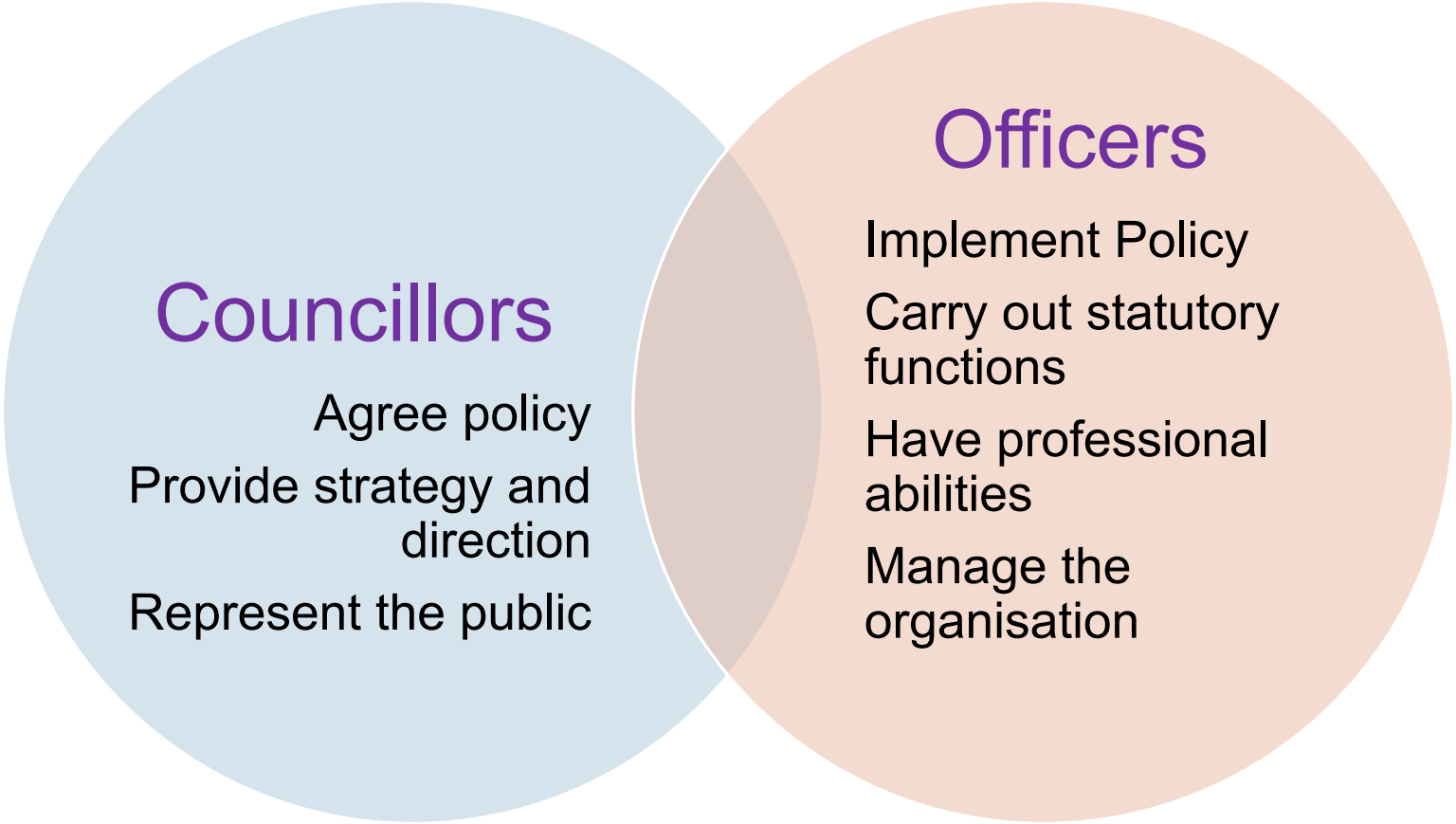
Implement Policy

Carry out statutory functions

Have professional abilities

Manage the organisation

A REALISTIC VIEW?



“It is difficult to have any clever clear cut idea that there are two separate groups, the politicians who get on with the formulation and direction of policy and officers who are aloof from this, who have nothing to do with the political arena and actually get on with the implementation.

Both officers and members know that isn’t true and that officers are inherently involved in the formulation of policy because of the nature of information giving that they are very deeply involved in and that members are involved in carrying these policies out. They’ve got to be because changing policies is about knowing whether they’re working and being able to monitor and evaluate the success of what’s taking place.”

Cllr David Blunkett, Leader of Sheffield, interviewed by Simon Baddeley INLOGOV (1980)

SO THE FIRST STEP IS

Embrace the reality of working in Local Government and develop the skills needed.

Operate with integrity within the legal boundaries and the policies and culture of your organisation.

TWO ASPECTS TO CONSIDER:
1. READING

- How the political scene is changing
- The structure and process of political decision making
- Sensitivity to the politics of your own organisation
- What is going on behind the scenes?
- What are the hidden agendas?

Kim James, Tanya Arroba and Simon Badderley working with INLOGOV

2.CARRYING

- Appreciation of the legitimacy and necessity of political control
- Communication skills in a political setting
- Ability to handle the stresses of a political system
- Readiness to face the dilemmas which can arise
- Sense of public and private self

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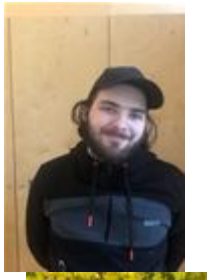
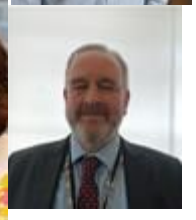
OR PUT SIMPLY

HOW AWARE ARE YOU?

And

HOW SKILLED ARE YOU IN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS AND ABILITY TO POSITIVELY INFLUENCE?





WHAT DO COUNCILLORS THINK?

WHAT MAY BE THEIR FRUSTRATIONS WITH OFFICERS?

COUNCILLORS EXPECTATIONS

- A Commitment to the Authority as a whole
- Partnership
- Timely response
- Accurate information and professional advice
- Confidentiality
- Awareness and sensitivity to the political environment
- No jargon
- Plain English
- No bluffing and integrity

COMMUNICATION WITH COUNCILLORS

- Understand the purpose and choose the medium
- Do not blanket copy in councillors particularly about operational matters
- Consider:
  - Do they need to know to be able to fulfil their role
  - Will it cause political embarrassment if they are not made aware
  - Are there policy implications
  - Do not seek operational decisions
- Consider what information is required for Councillors to make good policy decisions
- Consider Political neutrality – do other groups need to know to carry out their opposition and ward relevant codes of conduct

WHAT CAN OFFICERS EXPECT?

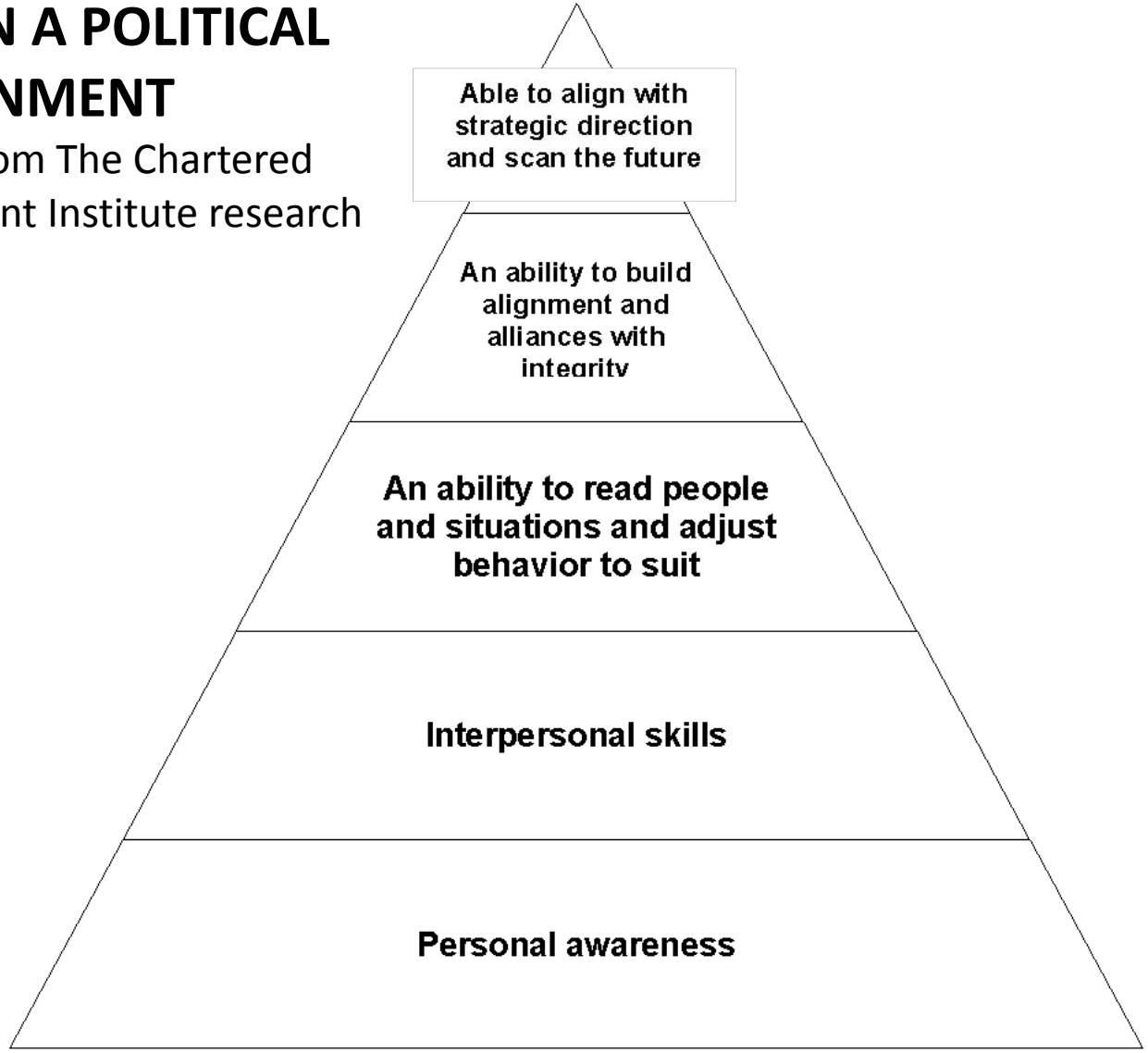
- A working partnership
- An understanding of and support for respective roles, workloads and pressures
- Political leadership and direction
- Integrity and confidentiality
- Respect, dignity and courtesy
- Not to be bullied or put under undue pressure
- Compliance with the relevant codes of conduct

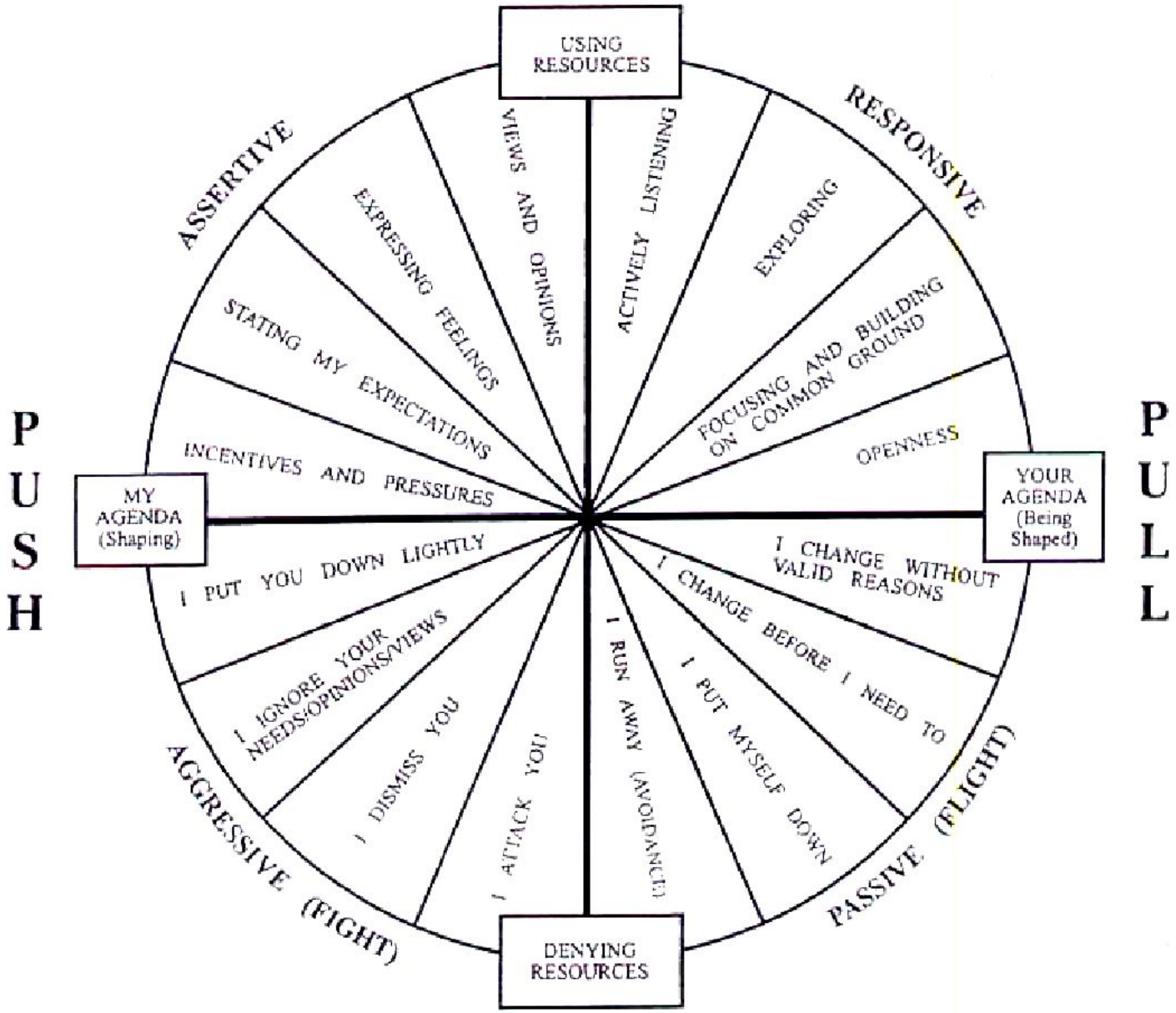
Seven PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC LIFE

1. Selflessness
2. Integrity
3. Objectivity
4. Accountability
5. Openness
6. Honesty
7. Leadership

SKILLS IN A POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

Adapted from The Chartered Management Institute research




USING RESOURCES
RESPONSIVE
ASSERTIVE
PUSH
PULL
MY AGENDA (Shaping)
YOUR AGENDA (Being Shaped)
DENYING RESOURCES
AGGRESSIVE (FIGHT)
PASSIVE (FLIGHT)
VIEWS AND OPINIONS
ACTIVELY LISTENING
EXPRESSING FEELINGS
EXPLORING
STATING MY EXPECTATIONS
FOCUSING AND BUILDING ON COMMON GROUND
INCENTIVES AND PRESSURES
OPENNESS
I PUT YOU DOWN LIGHTLY
I CHANGE WITHOUT VALID REASONS
I IGNORE YOUR NEEDS/OPINIONS/VIEWS
I CHANGE BEFORE I NEED TO
I DISMISS YOU
I PUT MYSELF DOWN
I ATTACK YOU
I RUN AWAY (AVOIDANCE)

CIALDINI'S SIX INFLUENTIAL FACTORS

Influence The Psychology of Persuasion Robert B. Cialdini

1. Commitment and Consistency
2. Reciprocation
3. Scarcity
4. Authority
5. Liking
6. Social Proof

A MODEL FOR UNDERSTANDING OFFICER INTEGRITY

Politically Aware

Clever

Wise

Psychological Game Playing

Acting with Integrity

Inept

Innocent

Politically Unaware

Ref Simon Baddeley and Kim James, INLOGOV

Effective partnerships

- Trust
- Clarity of roles
- Open communication
- Regular contact
- Flexibility
- Sharing information early – particularly bad news
- No surprises

LGiU

What are your next steps?

Thank You for your time

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