

Salford Cooperative Ambassadors

First published in Manchester in November 2015
by the Centre for Local Economic Strategies
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Summary Note

The Salford Cooperative Ambassadors (SCA) was launched in January 2015. The SCA involved a group of key people from key 'anchor' organisations across the public, social and commercial sectors (see Appendix 2 and 3). Facilitated by the CEO of the Centre for Local Economic Strategies (CLES), they sought to advance collaboration and cooperation in Salford. This activity, has deepened collaboration, created some behaviour shifts and developed a heightened 'can do' attitude (See Appendix 1, for summary of learning points) . It is recommended, that this approach be continued and accelerated.

The cooperation work involved two elements:

1. The ambassadors meetings/sets

- met monthly;
- lasted 1.5 hours;
- were facilitated independently;
- had administrative support provided by Salford City Council.

2. Outside of formal meetings

Ambassadors were encouraged to accelerate different working 'experiments', advancing cooperation in the ways they and their organisations worked.

In general terms, the Ambassadors felt that this approach was 'enjoyable' and a 'breath of fresh air'. And that this initiative should be 'applauded'. The SCA helped in stimulating different conversations and opened up 'new possibilities'. It was seen that getting various people in public life together was essential and 'vital for the city' . It helped Salford to think 'bigger'.

A number of specific benefits materialised from this activity. These included:

- Extension of Pre-employment training;
- Greater relationships forged between college and social enterprises;
- Mapping and increasing awareness of community facilities and how they can be more cooperatively used;
- Community and voluntary sector groups involved more deeply in community training and learning opportunities;
- Exploration of new business partnerships;
- New cooperation/sharing of governance structures;
- Promotion and advancement of social innovation, new behaviours and ways of working;
- New contracting/commissioning opportunities. i.e small business skills support.

It is recommended that Salford City Council agree to continue the programme, through a new cohort of Ambassadors. If agreed, the exact format and nature of this next Ambassadorial programme would need to be clarified, using the full report findings as a basis (see section 2.2).

The work also recommends that findings from this work inform changes to the Salford Exchange Network and Salford Community Committees.

1- INTRODUCTION

Greater collaboration and cooperation across the public, social and commercial sectors, is not only desirable, but essential in tackling these challenges and grabbing opportunity.

Launched in January 2015, the Salford Cooperative Ambassadors (SCA) activity is a novel and innovative approach designed to assist with the general Salford City Council transformation programme and advance collaboration and cooperation in wider Salford. It involves work with a selected cohort of key people from key 'anchor' organisations from all sectors who appreciate the benefits and are committed to advancing cooperation in Salford.

This report details progress made to date through this approach, and makes suggestions to the Salford Cooperative Ambassadors and to Salford City Council as to the next steps. Appendix 1 identifies key learning points.

This report has been compiled through an analysis of activity to date and from 1 to 1 interviews¹ with the Salford Cooperative Ambassadors and Salford City Council representatives which were conducted by Neil McInroy July - October 2015 (CLES and facilitator of the Ambassador activity).

'It has been important for me to be here as part of SCA, making connections and representing faith communities in the discussion taking place'

1.1 Background to Salford Cooperative Ambassadors

The SCA was a product of the Salford Cooperative City Commission (SCCC) which ran from 2012-2014. Findings from the commission suggested that:

- Some good cooperation and cooperative activity was happening in Salford but it needed acceleration;
- Salford City Council could take more of a lead, in cooperating more and in enabling others to do more too;
- Cooperative attitudes and behaviours of people did exist within the key organisations (anchors) across the public sector, private sector, community and voluntary sector and local government. These people were the 'key nodes' to building a cooperative networked city;
- To capitalise on cooperative commission. There was a perceived need for deeper thinking as regards how cooperation can assist in ongoing public sector reform and in Salford making the most of its assets, acumen and people.

From these findings, the Cooperative Ambassadorial Programme was borne.

1.1.1 Ambassadors: Anchoring cooperation

Changing social need, good jobs, fulfilled lives and improving health are just some of the key challenges facing Salford. In seeking to address

¹ All words and statements in quotation marks are direct quotes from the interviews with Ambassadors.

these, it is common to traditionally think of them as the concern of a sector or organisation. However, in the advent of austerity and cuts, joint working to potentially achieve better outcomes more efficiently, has become essential. Greater collaboration and cooperation across the public, social and commercial sectors is seen as not only desirable but essential in tackling challenges and grabbing opportunity. This needs acceleration.

One of the important elements is how the key anchor institutions across the public, social and commercial sectors cooperate.²

The term 'anchor institutions' is commonly used to refer to organisations which have an important presence in a place, usually through a combination of being: large-scale employers; being key umbrella organisations/ hubs representing many other groups; one of the largest purchasers of goods and services in the locality and controlling large areas of land and having relatively fixed assets. Examples include local authorities, NHS trusts, community and voluntary services (CVS), Colleges, universities, trade unions, local businesses and housing associations.

Interest in the role of anchor institutions has arisen in recent years due to their potential to generate economic growth and bring social improvements to the local community and environment. Anchors have a large stake in the local area and due to their activities, they cannot easily relocate. For example, while many corporations may be able to move, a hospital probably will not.

Therefore, following the SCCC, Salford City Mayor- Ian Stewart moved to select a number of cooperative 'Ambassadors'. (See Appendix 1). These Salford-based Ambassadors, (representing individuals within key anchors) would seek to

move cooperation and cooperatives forward in Salford and champion cooperative approaches, through an action learning/development approach. The cooperation work had two key elements:

- 1) The Ambassadors meetings/ sets:
 - meet monthly for 6 months in the first instance;
 - each meeting last 1.5 hours;
 - be facilitated by Neil McInroy (CEO, CLES);
 - be supported by CLES and Neil McInroy, in terms of support outwith development set meetings.
- 2) Outside of formal meetings. Most of the cooperation activity took place outside of the formal meetings/ sets. In this, Ambassadors were encouraged to accelerate different working 'experiments', advancing cooperation in the ways they, their organisation worked and deepening the cooperative relationships with other partners.

1.1.2 The aim and aspirations of Cooperative Ambassadors

The aim of the action learning set was to start the process by which cooperation, could be advanced. The aspiration was that the group should aspire to be 'more than the sum of our parts'.

'Having had the time and space to acknowledge and risk take around the fact that cooperation and collaboration (in the city not just the college) is a much much more powerful approach'

This Cooperative Ambassador approach does not fit with convention as regards the traditional partnerships approach or structure. It is less defined in terms of rigid formal agendas or presentations, etc. and is more 'free form' in what was discussed and what tasks needed to be undertaken between

2 See CLES work: <http://www.cles.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/Anchor-institutions.pdf>

meetings. In particular, the sets offered an opportunity for Ambassadors and agencies they represented to develop themselves as regards:

- sharing information and ideas;
- accelerating different working 'experiments';
- delivering change;
- creating opportunities for some joint ventures;
- committing to principles of cooperation, including development of cooperatives;
- championing for cooperative approaches and their development.

1.2 New conversations and new possibilities

Generally the Ambassadors feel that this was a welcome 'opportunity' to try something different. Ambassadors found this process to be 'enjoyable' and a 'breath of fresh air'. This was in significant contrast to some other partnership activity. It was felt that this initiative should be 'applauded'.

The sets involved an 'interesting collection of people' who were 'not normally together'. For some, this created a time to 'get off the treadmill', for 'head space', in which 'trust and relationships' could be built, through 'the breaking down of barriers'. This included a look at changing the routes to power, less hierarchical and vertical to more distributed and horizontal.

To me, it highlights a need for more detailed and radical action in the future. The impetus behind this process should not be lost'.

As such it helped in stimulating different conversations and opened up 'new possibilities'. This was especially welcome in a context in which everyday working lives were often filled with

formal partnerships, and a workload which was often driven by incremental, often reactive activity.

'SCA has allowed learning to be cascaded between Ambassadors (and their partner agencies), and it has highlighted how change can be applied to current organisational cultural and delivery practices'

It was seen that getting various people in public life together was essential and 'vital for the city' and this helped Salford to think 'bigger'.

The programme has served to forge a number of connections, relationships and understandings which may not have been made, without the activity. These include:

- Deeper appreciation of how system needs to change for better outcomes;
 - Deeper understanding of what the people behind key agencies think and what motivates and drives them - 'putting faces to agencies';
 - Being able to say things which could not be said in more formal partnerships. Including honesty about what could be done rather than 'warm words';
 - New relationships and professional 'friendships';
 - Knowledge about key cooperative things which are happening and where Ambassadors can get more involved/ help;
 - Instilling a greater awareness of cooperation and how individual Ambassadors and their organisations could act and behave in relation to accelerating cooperation in their everyday work and activities;
- Allow for the consideration of creatively disruptive behaviour in existing service activity.

1.3 Cooperative action

To date, formal Ambassadorial meetings have accounted for 6 sets of 90 minutes, with the first set an introduction. This is not a lot of time to show demonstrable benefit. Nevertheless, it was intended that the Ambassadors would meet outside of the Ambassador set and with others (not part of the Ambassadorial sets) and progress cooperative action, wherever possible. This activity was designed to explore how we could reduce, rather than increase, bureaucracy, aiming to make it more efficient and effective.

The additional activities and benefits are a direct result of interaction within the sets. This is not to say that some would not have happened anyway, at some time. But the sets have served to catalyse and accelerate action, or in some cases prompted activity which would have been unlikely otherwise.

These include:

Small business skills support

Two Ambassadors met with Salford City Council business team to understand and explore engagement with small business in skills support for Salford workforce. This work evidently served to raise awareness of the issue. These areas were identified for possible action:

- **Contracting opportunities** – refresh linkages to Meet the Buyer event and mini-versions of this;
- **Recruitment** – review and raise awareness of small and medium enterprises of SEARCH, etc.;
- **Innovation** – check what University of Salford is doing to communicate/ promote with small and medium enterprises;

- **Promotion** – review linkages and mutual promotion between Business Growth Hub, City Council/ Locate in Salford, GM Chamber of Commerce and Business Growth Hub.

This work evidently served to raise awareness of the issue, and ongoing discussions are likely. There is agreement that in the next round of European Structural and Investment Fund (ESIF), there will be joint working to strategically plan delivery around the city. This was not done in previous rounds.

Separate work has also served to make connections between Ambassadorial programme, the business support units of Greater Manchester Chamber of commerce and the Salford local chamber council.

‘Being a Co-operative Ambassador has created introductions to other people that I would not have met otherwise, especially in fields not normally connected to my own. It has then introduced me to new ways of addressing issues and potential new collaborators’.

Pre-employment training

Ambassador meeting (Salford City College, Hospital and University) to explore cooperation and mutual benefits around the expansion of pre-employment training. This expansion is now planned and timetabled. Work has now started. Staff have been recruited.

Cooperation across governance structures

New involvement of Ambassadors on governance structures of fellow Ambassadors organisations. This has been implemented and is being developed.

Community and voluntary sector groups involved more deeply in community training and learning opportunities

This is being worked on, with already closer working between Salford CVS and college evident.

How digital innovation can solve some social problems?

Courtesy of an invitation by one Ambassador, another Ambassador facilitated a session with digital companies within Salford in which social issues and potential digital solutions were discussed. This promoted discussions with five companies, followed by more in-depth exploration of three possibilities, which is continuing

Advancing social innovation

Two Ambassadors explored how more social entrepreneurial ideas could be developed, possibly through a social innovation seed fund. There is particular interest in transformative innovation – ‘something between our worlds’, bringing together positive ‘mavericks’ from within and outside large agencies. This approach might complement one or more of these options:

- running a series of small innovations between sectors/ agencies;
- engaging with one insoluble issue requiring innovation in which most/ all of us can participate;

‘SCA has provided space to be able to talk to people in an informal way, allowing new thinking – to achieve any kind of change requires a ‘we’ which is what us as Ambassadors have created – I have been inspired and believe that we can be more different not just transactional but also relational – lets just do it!’

- developing an innovation mode/ strategy for the City;
- encouraging all main agencies to have an explicit innovation section in every major plan (perhaps for 3-5% of its work).

This starting point has led to further discussion about the contribution of social innovation within the wider transformation of public services in Salford, including citizen-driven use of digital technology.

Develop ICT services and use of mobile technology within Salford City Council

Ambassadors explored how user experience labs based at The Landing in MediaCityUK could assist in the ongoing efficiency and effectiveness of ICT and mobile technology in Salford City Council services.

Mapping and increasing awareness of community facilities and how they can be more cooperatively used

Ongoing, with link between Salford interfaith network and Salford Public Health made. Also, through the council’s ‘asset mapping’ initiative aligned to its on-going review of neighbourhood services.

Greater relationships forged between college and social enterprises

Through work between Salford City College and Salford CVS. Community Learning Trust has now been developed and is delivering. Salford CVS now on Board of Trust.

1.4 Not powerful enough?

Some Ambassadors felt that the ambassadorial work was merely ‘a beginning’ but there

was potential for this to grow into something even more powerful. As a beginning this activity was seen as being ‘low level’ and that any future activity of this sort needed to be ‘scaled up’. Some believed this initiative was a distinctive one and potentially offered an approach which Salford could ‘make its mark’ within Greater Manchester and beyond.

However, to do that the Ambassadorial activity needed to be more broadly recognised and appreciated and placed higher up in the agenda of some participating organisations.

There is a challenge in this process, as it disrupts the rules of conventional partnership working. In this, some questioned whether co-operation can be transformational. Some hinted that 'viewed from outside it would seem that co-operation for the council and other agencies

is peripheral rather than a mainstay of systemic change'. There is a need to step-up.

1.5 Commitment and attendance?

The programme was designed with the intention that the Ambassadors would stay for the whole 6 sets. The majority of Ambassadors who attended the first set in January 2015 have stayed with the process.

Nevertheless, there has been some fall away in attendance within the sets. Pressures of workloads, perhaps 'meeting fatigue', 'cooperation not being a priority' and changing job roles have been factors mentioned. Furthermore, it is surmised that this type of approach 'may not be

'SCA has confirmed that we do indeed have a very entrepreneurial council (based upon my experience of the 15 or so colleagues I have worked with over the previous six months), it assesses issues, identifies a line of travel and starts it {...} disruption is a relevant element of/ for change management and is a requirement for co-operation to become more widespread, to have an increased social impact and bring about better services'

for everyone'. The sets were non-hierarchical in style. As one Ambassador put it: 'the approach taken was about relationship building, some (Ambassadors) are perhaps more transactional in their approach. They may not see the direct benefit of sharing, and working through things together - relationally and cooperatively'. This perhaps reflects how this approach represented a 'necessary' culture shift?

1.6 Resources

'We do not actually have sufficient space for thinking and unpacking issues, SCA has allowed for this intellectual discussion'

There are three resource implications for this work. Firstly, the biggest (in-kind) resource implication was the time of the Ambassadors. This involved the 1.5 hours set meeting time per month and additional time throughout the month - outside of meetings. This was accommodated within the existing work commitments of Ambassadors and was seen as a fillip or advancement to their work, rather than an additional burden. Secondly, there was some administrative support from Salford City Council. Thirdly there was support from CLES (Neil McInroy, CEO), who facilitated the meetings, conducted some addition interviews and wrote this report.

In terms of time for this second and third portion (excluding report writing), the whole six months activities, with admin support was around 15 days work.

2- NEXT STEPS AND WAY FORWARD

In the Ambassadorial set up meetings and in the 1 to 1 conversations a number of potential ideas have emerged as to what could be done next.

2.1 The context to cooperation

With significant and ongoing cuts to local authority and other public sector agencies and activity, it is evident that the need for greater cooperation across public, social and commercial sectors is not going away. The current trends in place based approaches, within the context of GM devolution, is fertile territory.

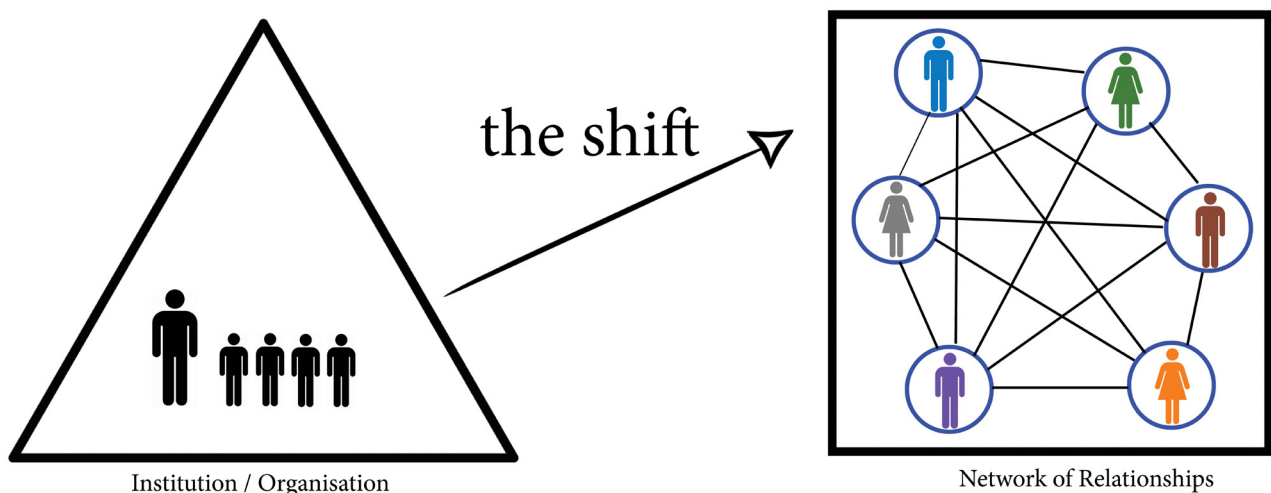
We could surmise that we are generally moving from a situation of individual institutions/ agencies to a network of relationships - fuelled with a desire for tackling social issues, creating better economies and generally doing things more efficiently and better. This is about the acceleration of cooperation across the whole city,

including public, social and commercial sectors. Mobilising institutions in Salford as a place, not just as a singular service (see Figure 1).

2.1.1 Making the shift to even greater cooperation

The Cooperative Ambassadors work represents a small but potentially important aspect to advancing more cooperation within Salford and this 'shift'. In addition, there are other things happening which reflect this cooperative approach (i.e. Salford being designated as a Social Enterprise City in March 2015). However, there are challenges and the advancement of cooperation in Salford needs to address these.

Figure 1: The cooperative 'shift'



These challenges include:

- Lack of co-operation with some disadvantaged groups (especially the 'easy to ignore'), some areas of commercial business (such as media and culture), some public services (e.g. primary, secondary and further education) and some minority faith groups;
- Lack of a 'culture of cooperation' in existing partnerships. There is too much process and rigid silo thinking;
- Deepening of social value. Some public services are 'closed' in how they think, behave and work;
- Need to improve cooperation with employers. Getting better at responding to what employers/ the market wants in terms of skills;
- Salford collectively thinks small and parochially and does not cooperate voraciously enough in terms of the economic agenda at a GM level.

However, more positively, there is much to commend in Salford in terms of existing cooperation. There is common testament to high levels of solidarity and reciprocity within Salfordians and those working within Salford. This imbues and effects the way in which the public, social and commercial sectors operate.

The above reveals a story of some good things happening but a need, and significant desire, to push on. It is also evident that there is willingness and change afoot in other public agencies as well as within the social and commercial sectors.

It is important to note that the future does not involve cooperation becoming a mere partnership with the potential to become bogged down in process. There is a balance to be struck. Something needs to be advanced but it cannot be done in ways which flexibility, creativity and innovation (as has emerged within the Ambassadorial work) is suppressed.

2.2 Extend the Cooperative Ambassador programme

This is a novel approach, which has had some gains and is enthusiastically supported by those who have stuck with the process throughout. This Ambassadorial work has led to the consideration as to what the cooperative values and principles should be in Salford. On that basis, it should be continued and developed, snowballing to a whole range of new people. There should be an aspiration that cooperative values become the norm for all institutions. Engagement with ambassadors in this way is the key, and in tandem to the original idea of connecting up 'key nodes' within the city. There is willingness from the majority of the Ambassadors for this to happen.

2.2.1 Scale of next Ambassadorial programme

At least 12 and possibly a new cohort of up to 50 individuals. Learning from existing cohort needs to be cascaded through the mentoring of this new cohort of people. It is evident that the Ambassadors need to have more extended influence (and power?) in spreading out and stimulating cooperative behaviour and attitudes. This particularly includes linking much more with commercial players in the city and across the city region.

The new Ambassador process should:

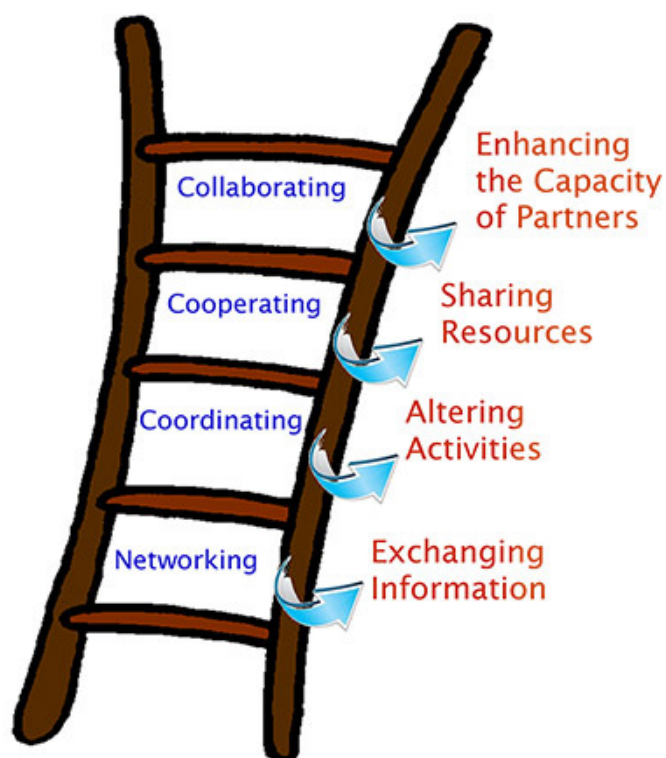
- **Be given greater prominence and 'authority' within Salford.** The exact scale of this 'authority' needs to be explored. But clearly Ambassadors as 'guarantors' and holders of cooperative values and attributes, should have some authority to suggest change in other organisations and institutions as required. Perhaps authority passed in some way from the city mayor?

- **Developing a definitive view as to what cooperation in Salford is about** and advancing comprehensive adoption across Salford. This could include a drive to develop a cooperative anchor institution network, covering all of the major public, private and social anchor institutions in Salford, with common aims and values around cooperation.
 - This may be about reshaping the Salford Partnership and remit;
 - Consider how cooperation can be advanced to address deprivation and dependency;
 - To identify issues and initiatives across Salford which should be addressed co-operatively;
 - To develop the process of Salford 'thinking bigger' and considering itself to be a key component of a leading European City Region.
- **Be tasked with a specific cooperative programme of work.** Suggestions include:
 - Oversee a social network study of cooperation within Salford;
 - Devise a Salford cooperative innovation funding mechanism;
 - Create a programme in which 500 Salford residents and/ or workers become Salford co-operators. They would span public, private and social sectors;
 - Create an annual 'cooperation in Salford' event and potentially be aligned to Salford Social Enterprise City Programme;
 - To integrate local business into the processes of co-operation, growth and change.

2.3 Salford City Council Exchange Network and a new 'cooperative exchange'

If one accepts the need for greater cooperation in Salford. It is useful to consider where Salford City Council is on this journey to more cooperation. An activity which took place at the Salford City Council Exchange Network revealed where senior staff felt they were on this journey. Theoretically, cooperation operates on a spectrum, ranging from networking, coordination, cooperation and at the very top is deep collaboration (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Ladder of collaboration



At the exchange event, senior managers were asked where they thought they were on the ladder: firstly individuals and secondly where they thought their individual service was. Just under half of the individual senior Salford City Council managers thought they were collaborating, whilst less than a third thought that their service did. This work (albeit light touch), indicates: firstly that there is motivation and a willingness to cooperate more. Secondly, that individuals own perception of their cooperative capabilities were greater than that of the Salford City Council service as a whole. Salford City Council Exchange Network should have cooperation as a stronger element to its activities. To facilitate this, a portion of its activities should be extended to include external wider partners/ Ambassadors. This 'cooperative exchange' would be a:

- Regular 'think tank' for ideas, where issues of service delivery and on the ground issues are brought for discussion (quarterly);
- Could involve 'cooperative action' solving sessions;
- Source for the regular dissemination of good cooperative stories in Salford.

2.4 Reshape Salford community committees as community anchor committees

Aside from the above, Salford needs a mechanism for extending and deepening the culture of cooperation within communities/ neighbourhoods in the work of councillors and in everyday service activity. To achieve this, Salford could reshape its existing community committees.

This links to existing work by Salford City Council to redesign neighbourhood services. Part of an overall transformation change programme,

prompted by austerity (by 2016 Salford will have lost 43% of core government funding), this work aims to identify new ways of neighbourhood working that better supports and empowers communities to become more 'self-reliant' and less dependent on some public services. This work involves two key aspects.

- 1) a comprehensive community asset mapping exercise to help build a picture of the scale and scope of resources and capacity at the neighbourhood level;
- 2) from this mapping, to then redefine the Neighbourhood offer.

A component of the redesign could involve a reshape in how the Salford's eight community committees (one for each neighbourhood area) operate. They currently support the residents in Salford and make decisions about priorities for the area. Community committees are open meetings that have been set up to ensure local residents can influence decisions about their neighbourhoods. Each community committee has a budget and is supported by its own neighbourhood management team which works to put the priorities into action. Under the principle of 'integrated place' these community committees could develop:

- becoming 'cooperative neighbourhood committees' perhaps re-branded as 'Salfordian collaboratives' or 'Salford community anchors'³;
- remaining as a member led committee but have a changed term of reference to include other agencies and bodies who could be co-opted onto them. Some community committees are naturally evolved e.g. Eccles has an 'accountable corner' spot for ward councillors;
- becoming a focus for more collaborative and cooperative action;
- being serviced in part by Salford City Council, but with other agencies, including the Ambassadors, playing a heavier role in them.

3 There may be some constitutional issues around this which will need to be explored.

3- CONCLUSION

The Salford Cooperative Ambassadors was an experiment. With relatively small amount of resource, it has served to deepen collaboration, create some behaviour shifts and develop an enhanced 'can do' attitude across individuals from anchor institutions in Salford.

The Salford Cooperative Ambassadors was an experiment. With relatively small amount of resource, it has served to deepen collaboration, create some behaviour shifts and develop an enhanced 'can do' attitude across individuals from anchor institutions in Salford. It is therefore recommended, that this approach is continued and accelerated.

To achieve this there are a number, of considerations.

- Salford City Council need to agree to continue the programme, through a new cohort of Ambassadors (of at least 12, possibly up to 50). This means allowing new Ambassadors (officers and councillors), to become involved and Salford City Council would administratively support the process;
- If agreed, the exact format and nature of this next Ambassadorial programme would need to be clarified. Using this report and section 2.2.1 as the basis;
- Resources to achieve its continuation would need to be identified. Independent facilitation and steerage is important, as is ongoing monitoring and learning. One option would be continued use of Salford City Council Membership of CLES (as has been done in this instance). If all of CLES membership was utilised, a new round of 12 Ambassadors for 1 year could be developed. Alternatively, CLES are willing to consider joint bids to funding bodies as a means of gaining additional funds.

As regards the Salford Exchange Network and Salford Community Committees, following agreement, a meeting could take place between CLES, some Ambassadors and relevant SCC staff and Councillors to ensure the findings from this work, are woven into these activities.

APPENDIX 1

Learning from Salford Cooperative Ambassadors: Why, What and How?

This is a learning guide to the Salford Cooperative Ambassador programme of work - an innovative approach to advancing better outcomes for the citizens and communities of Salford.

Why?

Changing social need, good jobs, fulfilled lives and improving health are just some of the key challenges facing Salford. In seeking to address these, it is common to traditionally think of them as the concern of a sector or organisation. However, in the advent of austerity and cuts, joint working to potentially achieve better outcomes more efficiently, has become essential. Greater collaboration and cooperation across the public, social and commercial sectors is seen as not only desirable but essential in tackling challenges and grabbing opportunity. This needs acceleration.

What?

People in and across agencies talk, share, and jointly work up plans and arrangements. Cooperation happens all the time and - if focussed on outcomes - is a good thing. However, how do we accelerate this cooperation?

For many years Salford has had an emphasis on this cooperation and respected the power of it. This is culminating in a variety of initiatives, including Spirit of Salford and Salford Social Enterprise city, alongside the Salford Cooperative City Commission. However, as a means of embedding and accelerating cooperation within a broader range of public, social and commercial anchor organisations, the Salford Cooperative

Ambassadors programme was set up.

This approach does not fit with convention as regards the traditional partnerships approach or structure. In fact it, in part, bucks it. It is less defined in terms of rigid formal agendas, bureaucracies, or hierarchies. It is more 'free form'. This tallies with the spirit of cooperation. Indeed, any efforts to perhaps formalise working in an overly technical or prescriptive way is likely to fetter cooperation. In particular, the approach here offered an opportunity for Ambassadors and agencies they represented, to develop themselves as regards:

- sharing information and ideas;
- delivering change;
- creating opportunities for some joint ventures;
- committing to principles of cooperation, including development of cooperatives; and
- championing for cooperative approaches and their development.

How?

The Salford Cooperative Ambassadors (SCA) involves a selected cohort of key people from key 'anchor' organisations across the public, social and commercial sectors, who appreciate the benefits of joint working and sharing and as such are committed to advancing cooperation in Salford. The work benefitted from being promoted and supported by Salford City Council.

The cooperation work took place in two broad ways.

1) The Ambassadors meetings/ sets:

- met monthly;
- lasted 1.5 hours;
- were facilitated independently;
- had administrative support.

There is much here in creating the context for free thinking and sharing in these sessions. This included:

- Deeper appreciation of how system needs to change for better outcomes;
- New relationships and professional 'friendships';
- Knowledge about key cooperative things which are happening and where Ambassadors can get more involved/ help;
- Allow for the consideration of creatively disruptive behaviour in existing service activity;
- Being able to say things which could not be said in more formal partnerships. Including honesty about what could be done rather than 'warm words'.

2) Outside of formal meetings. Most of the cooperation activity took place outside of the formal sets/ meetings. In this, Ambassadors were encouraged to accelerating different working 'experiments', advancing cooperation in the ways they worked, their organisation and their relationships with other partners. This included:

- Questioning of service activities;
- Exploration of new business partnerships;
- Identification of knowledge gaps;
- New cooperation/ sharing of governance structures;

- Promotion of social innovation, new behaviours and ways of working;
- Joint working for service change;
- New contracting/ commissioning opportunities for small business skills support.

Key learning points

This was a novel approach. Light touch, but potentially penetrative in shifting behaviours and styles of working. In this, the evident success of the SCA was predicated on:

- Support and heft from Salford City Council;
- Commitment of Ambassadors to Salford and its challenges and opportunities;
- Recognition that things could improve;
- Ambassadorial honesty about challenging their own/ organisations activity behaviour in that regard;
- Facilitation which balanced challenge and tramlines, but did not fetter.

APPENDIX 2

Initial Ambassadors

Name	Organisation	Job title
Cllr Paula Boshell	Salford City Council	Strategic Assistant Mayor
Sue Lightup/ David Herne	Salford City Council	Strategic Director - Adult Services
Alison Page	Salford CVS	Chief Executive
Chris Dabbs	Unlimited Potential	Director of Innovation
Prof Maggie Pearson	University of Salford	Pro Vice Chancellor (Public Benefit) and Dean of the College of Health and Social Care
Martin Sim	Salford City College	Principal
Elaine Inglesby-Burke/ Jack Sharpe	Salford Royal Foundation Trust	Deputy Chief Exec
Jon Corner	The Landing	Chief Executive
Phil Cusack	GM Chamber of Commerce	Chairman (Capita)
Mark Dutton	Salford Community Leisure	Chair
The Revd. Daniel Burton	Salford All Saints Team/ Salford Interfaith Network	Team Rector/ SIN Committee Member

APPENDIX 3

Ambassador attendance at sets

Ambassadors	Set 1 - 29/01/15	Set 2 - 12/3/15	Set 3 - 22/4/15	Set 4 - 4/6/15	Set 5 - 10/9/15	Set 6 - 22/10/15	Total
Cllr P Boshell	Y	Y	X	X	Y	Y	4
Elaine Inglesby-Burke	X	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
Rev. Daniel Burton	X	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	5
Jon Corner	Y	Y	X	Y	X	Y	4
Phil Cusack	Y	X	Y	Y	X	Y	4
Chris Dabbs	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6
Mark Dutton	X	Y	X	X	X	X	1
David Herne	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Y	Y	2
Sue Lightup	Y	Y	Y	Y	N/A	N/A	4
Jackie Moores	Y	Y	X	Y	X	Y	4
Peter Murphy	Y	X	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Alison Page	Y	Y	X	Y	Y	Y	5
Prof. Maggie Pearson	Y	X	X	X	X	X	1
Jacque Russell	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Jack Sharpe	N/A	N/A	X	X	X	X	0
Ian Stewart (City Mayor)	Y	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	1
Neil McInroy	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6
Chris Howl	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	6
Total	13	10	6	9	7	10	



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