The Levelling Up challenge

Session 3: Establishing collaborative partnerships are key to successfully delivering Levelling Up.

"How do you establish collaborative partnerships that provide the necessary leadership, can effectively communicate the levelling up mission and foster co-design across all interests. How will these partnerships mobilise and align all available resources to invest in agreed levelling up outcomes?"

Leadership through partnerships

Since Greater Manchester Council was abolished in 1986 the city's approach to governance has been defined by over 30 years of partnership between the districts, the private, charity and voluntary sectors.

Devolution was complete in 2017 with the election of Andy Burnham as Manchester's first Mayor, some 17 years after London first established the model for a directly elected regional mayor. However, Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) is a very different governance model from London. The Mayor is simply the leader of 11 authorities across the partnership - policy comes from consensus across the region rather than from any direct mayoral powers.

The region's goals cannot be delivered by GMCA alone or even by the public sector alone - it must be through partnerships in which the public and private sector work together.

*"For Greater Manchester to succeed all districts must succeed.
The glue that holds the partnership together is the Greater Manchester strategy – it provides the common vision for partners to get behind."*
John Wrathmell, Director of Economy, Greater Manchester Combined Authority

ADEPT amey

The power of the Mayor

The convening role of the Mayor means activities are not restricted to simply those over which he has formal power. Often if the Mayor has an initiative then the public and private sectors choose to get involved.

For example, Andy Burnham has a commitment to end homelessness across the region. While the Mayor has no formal power in this area, he has the ability to bring the conversation to the table, gather the partners and break down the siloes needed to tackle the problem.

Similarly, the GMCA Good Employment Charter highlighted issues around work and pay. By bringing together many voices, the Mayor was able to co-design the policy, hold events and establish the required tools to create a 50+ strong movement of employers representing millions of employees who want to get involved and drive change.

GMCA - key partners

1. **Local enterprise partnerships**
   GMCA provides support to many partnerships with the private sector which are central to its service delivery.

2. **Voluntary sector**
   Often need more development to build the partnerships but nevertheless key to driving community wealth building.

3. **Communities**
   Important to build close ties and avoid always talking to the same people rather than actively seeking out and bringing a range of different voices to the discussion.

Tips for strong partnerships

- *Strong leaders, such as a Mayor, often have the power to form partnerships and prompt actions way beyond their statutory powers.*
- *Resources are vital to ensure that partnerships work and stay together.*
- *Open minds and good communication are central to effective partnerships.*
- *It is vital to understand who you are in the partnership with and how you can most effectively engage with them.*

ADEPT • amey
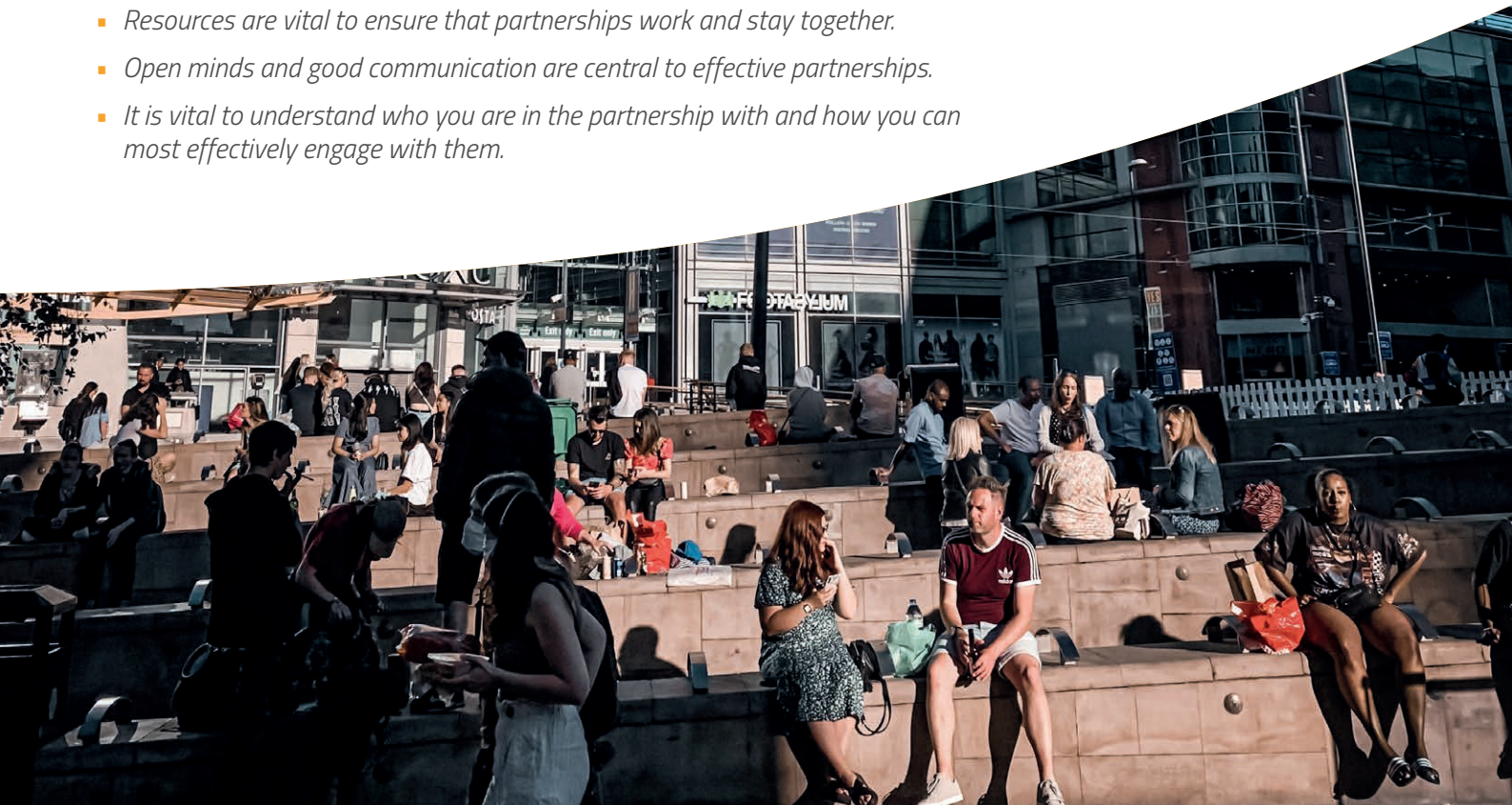
The changing face of power

Central and local government decision making is governed by three key drivers – politics, philosophy and economics. The social backdrop is shifting so today the political and economic drivers are weaker while philosophical drivers have grown.

This means that increasingly we see key government decisions are made largely based on philosophical ideas, supported by the noise of social media and the "versus" society that this has created. It is a polarised battle of one vision for the future versus another.

The fact that in some areas, voter turnout is less than 20% does not necessarily mean people are not interested; instead, it is more likely to indicate they simply feel their voice is not being heard or their values are not respected by politicians.

After decades of falling respect for government and party politics, we now have a vacuum in societal leadership. Our 'cancel culture' means it is increasingly difficult for politicians to be able to do the right thing or to stand up and say what they really think. We have a "faster horse mentality" rather than daring to embrace something better.

Our current fractured society means everyone wants self-rule and control over their own destiny. The Kennedy Moonshot moment, where a politician moves beyond statements to start creating a movement for change, is virtually impossible today.

"We now have less trust in institutions and more trust in people. That means we need to get mass participation in politics - a few people sitting in darkened rooms can no longer get things done."

Alex Pratt OBE, founder, Serious Brands
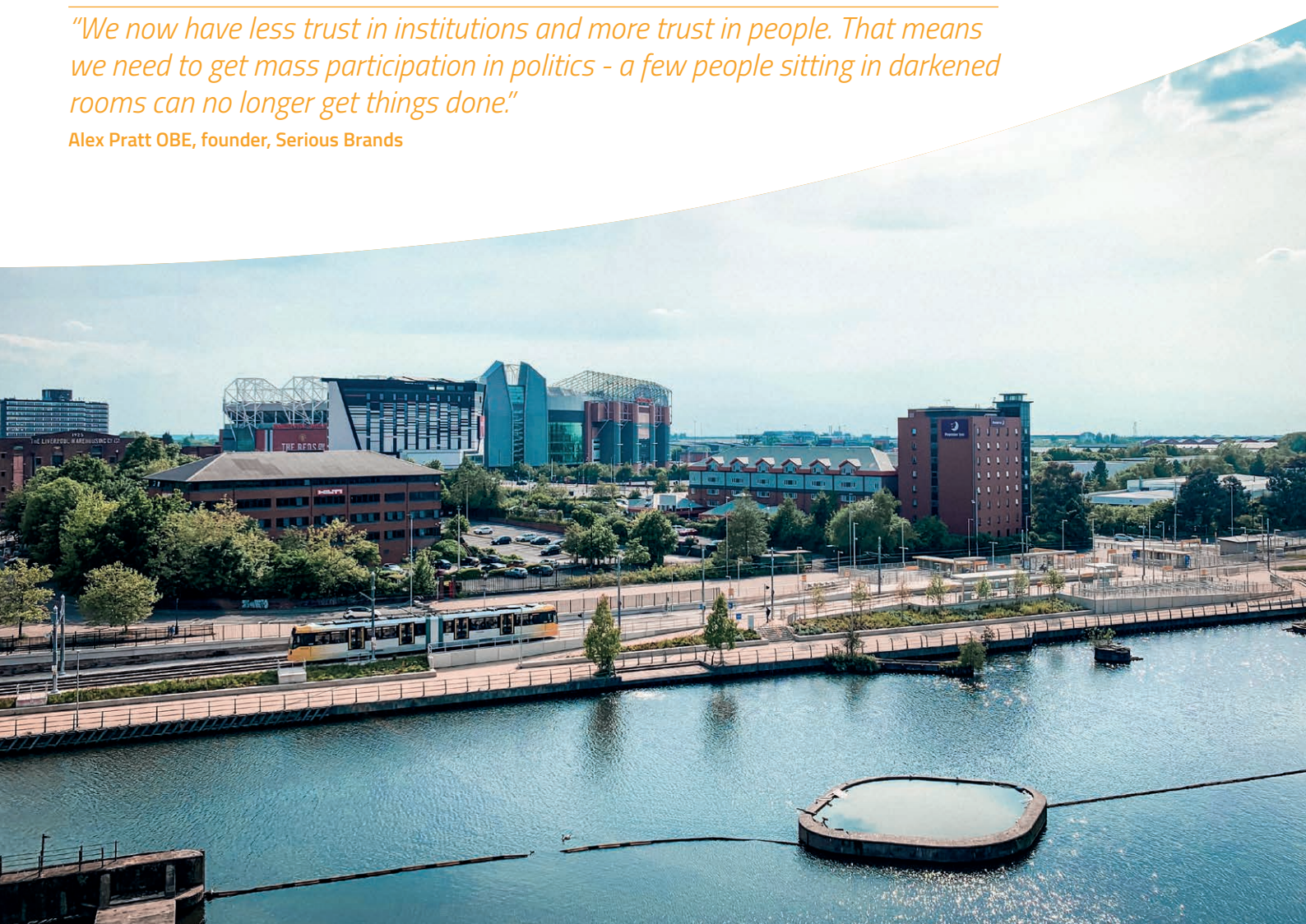
Pigs, chickens and diners

Difficult or potentially controversial political decisions require strong leadership and the energy and commitment to make things happen. In any political process or project there are typically three character types needed:

- *Pigs: the people or organisations who are totally committed to the project - and prepared to die for the cause*
- *Chickens: the people of organisations who are committed and prepared to make things happen - but pragmatic about driving for success at any cost*
- *Diners: the people or organisations who are supportive of the project - but only so long as it serves their own interest.*

For a project to succeed it needs at least one pig (a strong and committed leader) to drive it forward plus a few chickens (a committed expert delivery team) to really get things done. And crucially, the number of diners (the funding bodies or similar interested parties) must be controlled to ensure that competing self-interests do not drag it off course.

In most projects there are too many diners and not enough pigs. This reality is crucial to understand. Without the strong passionate leader, projects rarely establish a narrative and gain the momentum needed to overcome inertia and gain the traction needed to succeed.

"You have got to make it your mission to ensure that everything is the leader's idea. It's amazing what you can get done if you claim no credit."

Alex Pratt OBE, founder, Serious Brands

ADEPT ● amey

The community is a resource not a problem

To local authorities, communities can be seen as a problem to overcome rather than a resource to tap into. This must change – communities must be defined by their strengths – their skills, knowledge, experience - and not by their needs.

Investment in communities has to go beyond simply funding. Going the extra mile to really engage with people - on their terms, in their homes, on a regular basis and not only when there is a crisis. Perceptions that certain people are hard to reach or difficult to engage with usually stem from a failure to truly understand their lives.

Seeking both qualitative and quantitative evidence is vital to creating change. Tapping into emotions and stories is much more powerful when seeking community buy-in for ideas compared to cold, hard data and evidence. However, while data does not always spark emotions it is vital to sealing the deal and convincing funders to back ideas.

Focus on community health and wellbeing

Having a good home that reflects each individual or family, enjoyable work and enough income to give security, to provide for a family, to have a social life, and be able to leave wealth for children, is central to most people's motivation and sits at the core of successful communities.

Agencies should re-frame thinking to address the reality of these needs and to convince people away from the idea that "nothing will ever change" by focusing on the issues that they want to see changed.

Too often the standard response is for local authorities to provide services. But services are expensive and usually do not fix the problem. Instead, more conversations are needed to identify what to stop doing rather than introducing endless schemes that impose new ideas on people.

"The solution is to work with the people who are perceived as the problem. We have to enable local people to first create their own agenda before agencies become involved - that way problems can be reframed to create a new perspective around the real issues."
Chris Dabbs, Chief Executive, Unlimited Potential

Wealth and economy

The role of the local authority should be less about funding services and initiatives and more about creating an environment for wealth generation. Energised and engaged communities will not have to – or want to - wait for the local council to do everything for them.

Rather than endlessly doing research to demonstrate how poor people are to justify investment, local authorities should gather and share the local strength from community knowledge, skills and awareness and set up groups, organisations, enterprises that can act on the things that matter locally.

Increasing the power of the community is key. That means being able to create the trusted responses and support that the usual services cannot address and provide mutual aid with practical support to build wealth across the community. Exploring social/mutual ownership of assets so that the community – not just private sector investors - can share in the wider wealth generated as areas are improved.

Co-production of services provides both value and investment in people and communities, offering a clear purpose for the community. This helps to create a supportive environment and trusting relationships in which all parties can endorse and share action learning.

Key principles

- *Everyone has strengths.*
- *All types of power must be shared.*
- *Good relationships are crucial.*
- *Diversity of people is important.*
- *There are different types of knowledge.*
- *It is important to test new ideas.*

Indicators of success

Perspective

- *We are part of an interconnected whole.*
- *People share a vision.*
- *People are resourceful with many strengths.*

Participation

- *Open, trusting relationships enable effective dialogue.*
- *Leadership is collaborative and promoted at every level.*
- *Feedback and collective learning inform adaptation.*

Power

- *Power is shared, and equality of voice actively promoted.*
- *Decision-making is devolved.*
- *Accountability is mutual.*

Workshop 1

The challenge:

- *What are the key principles of great collaborative leadership and resource alignment? What prevents this from happening and what can place leaders do to unlock?*

Design principles of great collaborative leadership and resource alignment

- *Delve into understanding the real problem.*
- *Ensure the partners are joined up from the start and find/ agree a leader who is an advocate for all partners.*
- *Create trust in the partnership to build credibility and reliability.*
- *Create a shared vision and common objectives based on a strong evidence base.*
- *Co-design to make sure that stakeholders are on board early and build trust through engagement.*
- *Build the narrative - with or without data.*

Blockages preventing this from happening

- *The lack of diversity in thinking around solutions.*
- *Too much self-interest and preconceived ideas.*
- *Failure to understand the issue properly.*
- *Too many competing priorities and poor resource alignment.*
- *The lack of a champion to create the vision.*
- *No common purpose leading to a short-term approach.*

Tips to unlock great collaborative leadership and resource alignment

- *Defined funding cycles and a move away from endless funding rounds.*
- *Seeking the right narratives to create the right relationships.*
- *Greater understanding of the available resources.*
- *Tap into the community to use its talents to help.*
- *Create a long-term plan but break it down to keep people on board in the short-term.*
- *Generate a culture to collaborate.*
- *Get the design principles right.*
- *Take time to take people with you.*
- *Be realistic about what you can achieve.*

Workshop 2

The challenge:

- *Empowering communities and optimising the private sector contribution is essential to 'levelling up' partnership working – what prevents this and what can place leaders do to unlock?*

Blockages to private sector involvement and tips to unlock

Relationships with the private sector are not in the public sector psyche	*We need to develop a two-way conversation around "what's in it for them; what's in it for us" to change the mentality which LEPs could support with*
On-going concerns over impartiality	*We need to work differently to allay these fears*
Failure to engage and represent all small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs)	*As SMEs account for 70% of wealth generation they are the bedrock of the community – it is vital that they are engaged with early on and frequently*
Unrepresented sectors are not properly identified or engaged	*There is a need for frequent contact events such as hackathons to accelerate engagement and generate new ideas*
Different cultures across geographical boundaries	*Local authorities must move from having discussions to actually engaging*
Lack of private sector knowledge about incentives	*Need to make the prize more attractive with long-term sustainability*
Failure to understand local commitment and ambition	*A greater understanding of what generates "pride in place" is crucial*
Lack of understanding by public sector over how and when the private sector can contribute	*SMEs need to have some "skin in the game" to help commitment*

Blockages to community empowerment and tips to unlock

- *Failure to involve communities through co-design of services*
- *Local Authorities should move toward commissioning services through the community they serve*

- *Not properly listening to the community*
- *Local Authority leaders need to become more engaged with their community*

- *Not accessing all groups in the community to reflect society*
- *More investment is required to engage the community*

- *Language - too much jargon is used*
- *There is a need to explain the vision and outcomes in language that the community understands*

- *Too much red tape and governance*
- *Local Authorities must try to understand what drives the red tape and remove it*

- *There is a lack of skills and capacity*
- *Must look to engage volunteer programmes to develop the required skills and build capacity*

- *Relationships must be entered into without preconceptions and politicians can be blockers*
- *Communities must be empowered rather than politicians*

Questions for the next session:

1. *What practical steps have you taken to deepen your relationships and partnerships with the private and community/charitable sectors?*

2. *What practical steps have you taken to engage with your communities, to empower them and to treat them as the solution rather than the problem?*

Session 4: 9 September 2022

Proposed Problem Statement:

"Norfolk County Council has recently agreed its strategic approach to levelling up the County – the Norfolk Investment Framework (NIF) – and agreed £1m seed corn funding. The NIF's four 'grand challenges' are underpinned by evidence, and the NIF partnership are now working together on a blueprint for delivery and pilot activity this year. The ambition is for larger scale investments to be ready by 2024/25. This will require innovative approaches to sustained investment, avoiding the limitations of short-term competitive bidding.

Key documents have already been circulated and Norfolk will provide more background and insight on the day. You will be asked to evaluate:

1. Ambition & Strategy

2. Partnership & Delivery

3. Evidence base & Monitoring & Evaluation"