



Report to Cabinet

Subject: “The Story Unfolds – Nottingham as a Core City” and Related Matters

Date: 8 September 2005

Author: Head of Cabinet Office

1. Purpose of the Report

- To inform members of proposals recently published by Greater Nottingham Partnership to progress development of Nottingham as a “Core City”, and related developments with regard to city regions.

2. Background

Nottingham is one of eight cities in England designated by the government as a “Core City”. This designation recognises the city’s regional significance and government expectations that it will lead a “regional renaissance”.

In the context of “Core City” development, “Nottingham” is defined as the Greater Nottingham area, including the districts of Rushcliffe, Broxtowe and Gedling. Development of the “Core City” concept is being led in the area by the Greater Nottingham Partnership.

In 2004, the Partnership published its development strategy for the city and its region, “Drawing Together”. The Partnership’s Chief Executive presented details of this to council members in October 2004.

The Partnership has now published a follow-up document “The Story Unfolds”, which begins to set out how change will be achieved in the seven priority areas previously agreed.

The full document is available for reference at www.gnpartnership.org.uk/corecities

3. Key Issues in “The Story Unfolds”

“The Story Unfolds” is built around the seven themes set out in the earlier “Drawing Together” document. These are: -

- Leadership
- Economic Diversity
- Innovation
- Connectivity (two sub-themes Transport and Digital)
- Skills Development
- Quality of Life
- Physical regeneration

The themes reflect an holistic view of regeneration, a stance which this Council has welcomed in the past.

For each theme, the document sets out the problems that need to be addressed, possible answers and a set of actions planned to help deliver the answers. Lead agencies are nominated for each theme, and for actions within each theme. Problems and answers are attached at **Appendix A**.

The document acknowledges that the programme is still a “work in progress”...that...”represents a shared manifesto for the future of our city”. Further work will need to be done.

4. Wider Issues (including City Regions)

The “Leadership” theme is of particular relevance and perhaps the most immediately challenging to the Borough Council (indeed to all local authorities in the conurbation). The Partnership sees this as the first of its action areas, since progress on it is seen as key to opening up opportunities in the other themes.

The challenge to local authorities is set out in the following observation that: -

“Whilst recognising the paramount importance of elected local government, we need a democracy with a different texture - one in which businesses, voluntary organisations and community groups can play a bigger part. The Centre for Cities is conducting research on city leadership. Their findings will help to inform a local debate.”

At the launch of the strategy, Dermot Finch, Director of the Centre for Cities (part of national “think-tank” the Institute for Public Policy and Research – IPPR) outlined some of the issues being addressed as part of its research on city leadership, final results of which are due for publication in March 2006.

These issues include: -

- **Collaboration** – across administrative boundaries. In most core cities, administrative boundaries do not fit with the “real economy” – this is a particular issue in Greater Nottingham. Mr Finch did stress that there is no appetite in government to redraw local authority boundaries, but that collaborative work across boundaries is likely to be essential.
- **Incentives** – Should there be financial or other incentives for core cities and city regions to retain some of the benefits generated in their area for future re-investment etc. Some of these issues could be considered as part of the Lyons review of local authority finance, currently in progress, though Mr Finch stressed local authorities would have to make a case for change.
- **Leadership** – This is not necessarily about structures as such, more about functions that might usefully be aligned across boundaries. Transport was cited as an example. There could be a debate about the possible role of elected mayors in such situations. There are also issues about how the interests of those who work in or otherwise use cities but do not live there can have a voice in city governance.

Mr Finch also outlined related issues on the concept of “City Regions”. These areas are not precisely defined but cover areas much larger than Core Cities, based around the economic impact of the core cities (the Birmingham City region, for example, might cover an area including Wolverhampton and Coventry).

In Nottingham’s case, the city region might cover the three cities of Nottingham, Derby and Leicester, and early work is already being carried out to explore areas of commonality between the three (details can be found at www.three-thinking.co.uk)

In the wake of the North-East regional government referendum result, Mr Finch acknowledged that the wider regional governance debate is now very much open and a role for “City Regions” in these developments is one option that may be considered.

It is perhaps worth noting that Nottingham is unique amongst core cities and city regions in that it includes a mix of two tier and unitary local government – the administrative cities at the core of the other seven are surrounded by other unitary authorities. With the exception of Bristol and Nottingham, all city regions are based around former metropolitan county areas

4. Resource Implications

There are no specific resource implications at present, though these could be significant in future, depending on the future direction taken.

5. Recommendation

Members are recommended to note the report.

Appendix A

Problems and Questions for the Seven Themes

Developing Leadership

Led by: Greater Nottingham Partnership

The problem:

Nottingham is represented by six local authorities - the City of Nottingham, Nottinghamshire County Council, Broxtowe, Gedling, Rushcliffe and the Hucknall area of Ashfield. It is only when the population of all of these economically interdependent areas are added together - 650,000 - that we can be considered a Core City. Modern city governance demands that other sectors can - and must - contribute. Raising skills, for example, involves great effort at community level and by business, while the voluntary sector often provides a safe setting where people can find their feet. There must be links between these sectors and providers of education at all levels, including schools. Paradoxically, in other areas Nottingham has too many partnerships. That can cloud roles and drain resources.

The answer:

Local government needs to think itself into a city region. Already some joint work is done, like the Local Transport Plan, written by the City and County Councils. Councils should recognise that there is everything to gain from a bigger economic and social picture.

A more inclusive approach to governance must be granted to other sectors, too. Each organisation and sector must learn to respect each others' strengths. Strategies must interlock, where possible, rather than appear in isolation. Roles will continue to be clarified as part of the process around each action area.

Economic Diversity

Led by: Competitiveness and Growth Strategic Action Team, Greater Nottingham Partnership

The problem:

New business start ups are 12% below the national average - and they are more likely to fail. Local entrepreneurial spirit is lacking due to our historic reliance on large firms in traditional industries. There are few suitable premises for small companies and much commercial space has now become housing. Businesses report that crime is a debilitating drain on their resources.

The answer:

Nottingham has some good examples of creative industries, plus engineering, food and drink suppliers and an exciting new medical technology initiative. The service sector has grown in the last ten years, as has the public sector in health and education. All these areas must be nurtured, while more high growth companies must be persuaded to move in.

We recognise the importance of the social economy, both in providing services which fill gaps in mainstream provision, and in providing employment in some of our most deprived communities. Working with the guidance of SEEM, (Social Economy East Midlands), a county wide social economy support partnership has been set up. The establishment of a regional School for Social Entrepreneurs, based in Nottinghamshire, will increase the number of entrepreneurs entering the sector.

Innovation

Led by: Nottingham Innovation Steering Group

The problem:

London and the south - east are the UK's main innovative economies. Consultants commissioned by GNP found that Nottingham lagged well behind. Yet we need innovation to make our companies more competitive, and to develop growth sectors with the high quality jobs that our future prosperity demands. If we don't innovate we will be left with low skills jobs that can be outsourced to cheaper labour markets elsewhere.

The answer:

We must make the most of Nottingham's Science City status, celebrating this success inside the city and using it to attract other innovators. We must capitalise on the work at BioCity, ensuring that companies there can grow into other premises in the Eastside regeneration area, when they are ready. We need to increase the level of commercial innovation by linking business to research at our universities, and by setting up networks to swap ideas and transfer technology.

Connectivity Transport

Led by: Greater Nottingham Transport Partnership

The problem:

Britain's roads continue to get more congested. Yet the ability to get around easily is vital for a successful economy. It is also essential to protect our environment from both gridlock and car fumes. We need to keep our city a clean, green place that companies want to invest in - and we must protect our planet.

The answer:

The City and County Councils have worked together on the statutory Local Transport Plan. When the Government reviewed progress last year, it was awarded the joint top marks in the country. The plan has meant that the growth of road traffic has almost stopped in Greater Nottingham, although the use of public transport is growing - and unemployment is down. However we cannot afford to be complacent. We have to plan for more prosperity without pollution. The City and the County Councils are preparing the next Local Transport Plan to cover the next five years. It contains many elements that must be put in place.

Connectivity Digital

Led by: Accelerate Nottingham

The problem:

Information is the crucial 21st century commodity, as important to our future prosperity as coal was in the past. It allows individual businesses to be more competitive, helps to create clusters of interdependent industries, and it supports economic growth. Much of Nottingham is covered by broadband, but the infrastructure is still piecemeal. Some sectors cannot afford the high bandwidth they need.

The answer:

All sectors need to acknowledge that we need a high quality ICT network. We must work together to plan and implement it. Accelerate Nottingham - a public/private partnership - is developing the Connected Nottingham brand for ICT investment. Projects include Connected Communities providing a service to Learning Centres, and the WiCity network of wireless internet "hotspots" - already up and running in over 100 bars, cafes and at both universities. The eBusiness training project will teach small companies how to trade on the internet.

Developing Skills

Led by: Greater Nottingham Skills Board

The problem:

Nottingham has a large number of residents with low skills and no qualifications, particularly in the inner city and outer estates. Many traditional low skill jobs have been replaced by other low skill jobs in retail and hospitality. Easy access to these jobs means many people are not motivated to train, and city employers recruit extensively outside the city. However there is an increasing need for skilled administrative and technician grade jobs, the lack of which is seriously inhibiting the growth of higher value added jobs and economic growth. To ensure more jobs for graduates, and increased local prosperity, we have to ensure that we can match the supply of skills to the demands of employers.

The answer:

Following the publication of the Greater Nottingham Development Strategy: Drawing Together, a Greater Nottingham Skills Board has been set up to tackle adult learning, skills and employability. Its task is to raise the aspirations of local people, drive up the demands for skills from business and improve the match between skills supply and demand. Key areas such as retail distribution, health and social care, construction engineering and manufacturing will be supported. Priority groups will include 14 to 19 year-olds, lone parents, people with disabilities, those with low / no qualifications, black and ethnic minority groups, older people and those living in our most deprived wards.

Quality of Life

Led by: Greater Nottingham Skills Board

The problem:

Although Nottingham offers a high quality of life in many areas, it is not enjoyed by everyone. Anti - social behaviour is a problem for many residents of outer estates, while the lively nightlife of the city centre can be threatening. Other Core Cities have redeveloped and revitalised their physical environments. Nottingham must develop a civilised city centre with more facilities for all age groups - and more physical space for retailers - if it is to continue among the top five retail centres in the UK. We also need to support the diversity and vitality of district shopping centres.

The answer:

Local councils are improving neighbourhood services, and reducing crime in disadvantaged areas. The Respect for Nottingham initiative has reduced street begging and improved cleanliness. The Turning Point traffic and bus scheme for the inner ring road will help to civilise the city centre, giving pedestrians priority. The planned Centre for Contemporary Arts and new cultural celebrations will add to our electric atmosphere, making the city attractive to the new creative class that is crucial for future prosperity. The 21st Century Towns initiative will breathe new life into some neighbourhood district centres.

Physical Regeneration

Led by: Physical Regeneration Strategic Action Team, Greater Nottingham Partnership

The problem:

Good physical space is needed to attract inward investors, and to allow local companies to grow. However many sites in Nottingham are difficult to develop, with fragmented ownership and high costs. Successful physical regeneration often needs public intervention. It is a long term process if it is to fully satisfy local economic strategy. Great care has to be taken to ensure that renaissance links to local economic and social regeneration, bringing benefits to residents as well as the private sector. In particular. Nottingham city centre needs to continue to expand, if the city region is to capitalise on the growth in employment, housing, retail and tourism.

The answer:

Nottingham Regeneration Limited, acting for its partners English Partnerships, emda, the City Council and the private sector, has masterplans in place for the three regeneration sites - Eastside, Southside and Waterside. Together they would cover 300 football pitches and represent one of the largest regeneration sites in the UK. Development has already started on these sites, allowing the city centre to expand outwards, maximising its function as the economic engine of the city region. GNP has the following priorities - a stock of business premises, improving the public realm and lobbying for more funding.