



## **Report to Cabinet**

**Subject:** "Showing the Way" – Greater Nottingham Conurbation Area Agreement

**Date:** 1 June 2006

**Author:** Head of Cabinet Office on behalf of Chief Executive

### **1. Purpose of the Report**

- To seek Cabinet endorsement of a proposed basis for a Greater Nottingham Conurbation Area Agreement.

### **2. Background**

**2.1 – The Nottingham economy** - As members are aware, Nottingham is one of England's eight Core Cities. Nottingham in this context is taken as the areas covered by Nottingham City Council, Gedling, Broxtowe and Rushcliffe Borough Councils and the Hucknall area of Ashfield District Council.

Cities are increasingly seen as key drivers of economic prosperity. It looks likely that measures to improve city governance will feature in the forthcoming local government white paper, aimed at increasing cities' economic competitiveness.

The Council has accepted that the Borough's economy is intrinsically part of the wider Greater Nottingham economy. This being the case, it works closely with Greater Nottingham Partnership (GNP) to pursue economic development goals for the Borough and is supportive of the City Development Strategy "Drawing Together" developed by GNP.

**2.2 – Local Area Agreements** - The government launched the Local Area Agreement (LAA) programme in 2005, aimed at streamlining and joining together existing funding and performance management arrangements between

predominantly public sector service providers across four share local-national priority themes. Those themes are: -

- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Children and Young People
- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Economic Development and Enterprise

LAAs are being rolled out across the country over three years, initially on a pilot basis. Nottinghamshire was one of the areas chosen as a pilot in June 2005.

Government requires LAAs to be developed at either unitary or county council level (i.e those authorities fulfilling education and social services authority functions).

**2.3 – Why Conurbation Area Agreement?** - This council had concerns about the approach to LAAs from the outset in Greater Nottingham, particularly for the economic development and enterprise block, which it is felt does not reflect the reality of the local economy and of service delivery patterns in practice.

The Leader of the Council and the Chief Executive made representations on these issues to Government Office representatives, initially to no avail, but when the issue was raised with the then Minister for Local Government in November 2005 at a seminar in Nottingham, it was indicated that government would support the development of such agreements across city/county boundaries where it made sense to do so.

Further discussion led to a proposal that a Conurbation Area Agreement should be produced, in tandem with wider Core City prospectuses. The Conurbation Area Agreement (CAA) would broadly follow the LAA model focus on the economic development and enterprise block, at least in the first instance, with the possibility of expansion to cover other themes in future if partners support this.

Given the timing of these proposals, a majority of partners felt that the CAA should run in parallel with the LAA, which by then had substantially been completed. However, it is possible that the CAA will take over elements of the economic development and enterprise block of the LAA when the latter document is “refreshed” in 2007, subject to partner agreement.

### **3. Proposal**

A copy of a “prospectus” for a Greater Nottingham Conurbation Agreement, “Showing the Way”, is attached for members’ consideration at **Appendix A**.

It has been drawn together by GNP and Nottingham City Council staff, with support from the Borough Council and other partner agencies, including Rushcliffe and Broxtowe BCs and emda.

It focuses on three themes: -

- Skills and Employment
- The Knowledge Economy
- Land and Infrastructure

The Agreement includes a wide range of projects to help deliver priorities against these themes. Many of these build on proposals set out in the City Development Strategy and in the existing LAAs for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire – the latter may be further integrated in 2007.

These include initiatives to address worklessness, which is increasing at present in Gedling Borough; to improve Inward Investment across the conurbation; to improve transportation links and support wider development of science and technology based industries. Wider issues to do with sustainability are also included.

The Borough is likely to benefit from many of the initiatives proposed, although it is unlikely that the Borough Council will be directly involved in the delivery of many. Key exceptions to this relate to land use planning, where the council will need to work with partners on issues concerned with employment land availability and enter into discussions with partners about a more coherent local development framework for the conurbation.

Governance is proposed to be through a new sub-group of Greater Nottingham Partnership, at which the Leader and Chief Executive of each council in the area would be represented. Further details have yet to be developed – opportunities offered in the forthcoming white paper regarding city governance will be explored.

The written Agreement has been produced in a very short timescale and GNP has already submitted it to government officials. Though most of our concerns about wording have been addressed, a few issues remain and these issues have been raised with the report's authors.

GNP is seeking formal endorsement of the proposal from all the partner councils in order to progress the issue with ministers. A presentation to ministers had been scheduled for early June but, at the time of writing, it was unclear whether this had been affected by cabinet and ministerial changes announced recently. In any instance, it is expected that any work arising from the CAA will need to begin in the near future.

#### **4. Resource Implications**

There are no immediate specific resource implications for the Borough Council arising from endorsement of the CAA at this stage.

There could in future be resource implications for the Borough as the CAA is delivered, in terms of securing wider prosperity for the area, though it is too early at present to assess what these would be.

Firmer commitments would be made through the governance arrangements proposed, at which point specific resource implications for the Borough Council will be clearer and can be given due consideration.

#### **5. Recommendation**

Cabinet is recommended to endorse the proposal for a Greater Nottingham Conurbation Area Agreement.