



Civic Centre,
Arnot Hill Park,
Arnold,
Nottinghamshire,
NG5 6LU

Agenda

Council

Date: **Wednesday 19 March 2025**

Time: **6.00 pm**

Place: **Council Chamber**

For any further information please contact:

Democratic Services

committees@gedling.gov.uk

0115 901 3844

Council

Membership

Mayor Councillor Ron McCrossen
Deputy Mayor Councillor Kyle Robinson-Payne

Councillor Michael Adams	Councillor Darren Maltby
Councillor Roy Allan	Councillor Viv McCrossen
Councillor Sandra Barnes	Councillor Julie Najuk
Councillor Stuart Bestwick	Councillor Marje Paling
Councillor David Brocklebank	Councillor Michael Payne
Councillor Lorraine Brown	Councillor Lynda Pearson
Councillor John Clarke	Councillor Sue Pickering
Councillor Jim Creamer	Councillor Catherine Pope
Councillor Andrew Dunkin	Councillor Grahame Pope
Councillor Boyd Elliott	Councillor Alex Scroggie
Councillor David Ellis	Councillor Martin Smith
Councillor Rachael Ellis	Councillor Sam Smith
Councillor Roxanne Ellis	Councillor Ruth Strong
Councillor Andrew Ellwood	Councillor Clive Towsey-Hinton
Councillor Paul Feeney	Councillor Jane Walker
Councillor Kathryn Fox	Councillor Michelle Welsh
Councillor Helen Greensmith	Councillor Henry Wheeler
Councillor Jenny Hollingsworth	Councillor Russell Whiting
Councillor Paul Hughes	Councillor Paul Wilkinson
Councillor Alison Hunt	

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SUMMONS

A meeting of the Borough Council will be held on Wednesday 19 March 2025 at 6.00 pm to transact the business as set out below.



Mike Hill
Chief Executive

AGENDA

Page

- | | | |
|---|---|--------|
| 1 | Thought for the day | |
| 2 | Apologies for absence | |
| 3 | Mayor's announcements | |
| 4 | Declaration of interests | |
| 5 | Local Government Reorganisation Interim Plan for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire | 5 - 50 |

Report of the Chief Executive

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Report to Council

Subject: Local Government Reorganisation Interim Plan for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Date: 19 March 2025

Author: Chief Executive

Wards Affected

All Wards

Purpose

To provide an overview of the government's requirement for plans for local government reorganisation to be developed in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire; to outline the work undertaken to respond to the requirements; and to agree the submission of an interim plan for the area of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, in line with government requirements.

Recommendation(s)

THAT Council:

- 1) Notes the contents of the Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire at Appendix C.
- 2) Agrees for the Interim Plan to be submitted to government by 21 March 2025.
- 3) Agrees that the Council will work collaboratively with the other authorities across Nottinghamshire and Nottingham with a view to developing a final proposal for local government reorganisation for submission to Government by 28 November 2025.

1 Background

1.1 On 16 December 2024, the Government published the [English Devolution White Paper](#). The White Paper aims to devolve greater powers to regions and local areas to improve public services and drive economic growth through:

- Widening and broadening devolution so that all areas of England have a devolution settlement;

- Deepening devolution through the development of a stronger set of powers and resources available to local areas through the new Devolution Framework;
 - Progressing local-government reorganisation in two-tier areas to support a move to simpler structures, unlock further devolution and deliver sustainable public services.
- 1.2 The White Paper describes a new architecture of streamlined government, with the following tiers and functions:
- National government – responsible for the delivery and coordination of national level services, such as defence and macroeconomic policy, and services where national consistency is crucial, such as health;
 - Strategic authorities – responsible for coordinating levers relating to local growth and issues crossing council boundaries, such as infrastructure planning, transport, and spatial planning, while convening partners for public service reform;
 - Principal authorities – responsible for delivery of local public services, place shaping and local public service reform.
- 1.3 Under this proposed architecture, the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) would become a Mayoral Strategic Authority, with the potential over time to become an “Established” Mayoral Strategic Authority, unlocking additional funding, powers, and greater local flexibility.
- 1.4 The White Paper outlines that principal authorities are to be unitary councils and sets an expectation that all two-tier areas and smaller or failing unitaries develop proposals for reorganisation. The case for change outlined is that unitarisation can simplify public service delivery, can deliver significant efficiencies, and improve local accountability. Strong, unitary councils are seen as the building blocks for effective combined county authorities.
- 1.5 Alongside the publication of the White Paper on 16 December 2024, the Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution wrote to the Leaders of the nine councils in the area of the county of Nottinghamshire (the County Council, the City Council and the seven district and borough councils), outlining his intention to formally invite proposals for local government reorganisation, with the requirement to submit an Interim Plan, by March 2025 (Appendix A).
- 1.6 On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State issued a formal invitation to the nine council leaders, asking each leader to work with other council leaders in the area to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation (Appendix B). The timeline outlined asks for interim plans to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025, with feedback to be provided by MHCLG officials, prior to the development of final proposals to be submitted by 28 November.

1.7 The letter outlines six criteria against which proposals for local government reorganisation will be assessed when considered by Government.

- a. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.
- b. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
- c. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
- d. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
- e. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
- f. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

The full detail of each criterion can be found in Appendix B.

1.8 In terms of the requirement to develop and submit an interim plan, Government recognises that local areas will be at different stages of development, therefore the level of detail available will vary. The expectation of Government is for one interim plan to be jointly submitted by all councils in the area but recognises that this plan may include more than one potential proposal under consideration. The interim plan is expected to set out an area's progress in developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance.

Developing the interim plan

1.9 Since the publication of the White Paper in December 2024, Chief Executives of the nine councils have met on a weekly basis, to develop and maintain a collaborative approach to developing proposals for local government reorganisation in line with government expectations, and specifically in the short term, developing the interim plan.

1.10 Leaders/Mayors of the nine councils have met three times to steer the work:

- On 13 January 2025, to agree the collaborative approach to developing the interim plan, including the joint commissioning, and funding of external technical support from Price Waterhouse Cooper (PwC) to independently develop and appraise potential options for local government reorganisation;
- On 14 February 2025, to receive a progress update in terms of options development and to steer the final phase of work in developing the interim plan; and
- On 5 March 2025, to agree the interim plan to be put forward to each Council for consideration.

1.11 The principles of the collaborative approach agreed which, councils are working to are as follows:

- Collaborative
- Open, honest, and transparent
- Focussed on improving outcomes, services, financial sustainability
- Acting in longer-term interest, particularly in use of resources, reserves and decision making in the interim
- Evidence-informed, based on data
- Resident-focussed
- Valuing and preparing employees for the future at a time of uncertainty and change

1.12 The interim plan (Appendix C) has been developed by officers from across the nine councils, with independent support and advice from PwC. It seeks to meet the government's requirements by covering the following elements:

- a) identification of any barriers or challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful.
- b) identification of the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.
- c) inclusion of indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.
- d) inclusion of early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.
- e) inclusion of early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.
- f) inclusion of a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local engagement to help shape your developing proposals.
- g) setting out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team, as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.
- h) setting out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.

- 1.13 It should be noted that the interim plan is a progress report to government, rather than a formal proposal. Three potential options for local government reorganisation are included within the interim plan at this stage, based on the initial work completed to date, with full detail included at Appendix C:
- a) One unitary covering Broxtowe, Gedling, and Nottingham City; one unitary covering the remaining County including Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood and Rushcliffe,
 - b) One unitary covering Broxtowe, Nottingham City and Rushcliffe; one unitary covering the remaining County including Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood.
 - c) One unitary covering Nottingham city (current arrangement); One unitary covering the County of Nottinghamshire.
- 1.14 It is acknowledged that the work that has taken place to date has not yet fully considered all national and local criteria, although does represent a good basis for the interim plan. Additional analytical work is therefore required following submission of the interim plan, to further assess the benefits and disbenefits of the potential options.
- 1.15 In reviewing the work so far, Leaders were in favour of making the case for potential minor boundary changes. This is to consider options that more naturally reflect local communities and identities.
- 1.16 Additionally, Leaders recognised that given the partial nature of the analysis, further potential proposals may emerge over the coming weeks. For these to be taken forward they would need to demonstrably meet the criteria to the same degree as those already being evaluated and referenced in the interim plan.
- 1.17 An anonymous survey of Gedling Councillors on potential options for reorganisation was undertaken in the new year. Of the 41 Councillors 34 responded. The results demonstrated that 91% of respondents did not agree to a single super unitary council for Nottinghamshire and Nottingham and that 65% would not support Gedling being part of a new unitary Council that included the City. The survey was undertaken at a formative stage, prior to the finalisation of the interim plan. It is recognised that further work is needed, including wider consultation and further evidence prepared collaboratively with other councils before any final submission to government in November.
- Next Steps**
- 1.18 Government has committed to providing feedback on the interim plan, to inform the next phase of option refinement and consideration. Councils will continue to work together collaboratively as outlined in the interim plan in developing detailed proposals for local engagement and decision-making prior to final proposals being submitted to government by 28 November 2025.

- 1.19 It is after this date that Government will consider any proposals and take decisions on how to proceed, including laying any necessary legislation and working with councils to move to new “shadow” unitary councils. Timelines for new unitary authorities to be implemented are expected to be April 2028 at the earliest.
- 1.20 Government has indicated that it intends to provide capacity funding to support with preparing proposals for reorganisation, however details of this funding are not yet available. Work to date to develop the interim plan has been undertaken within existing budgets, with external support from PwC costing less than £90,000, with costs shared across the nine councils. Given that local government reorganisation is a significant undertaking, there will be a need as a priority to develop an understanding of the likely financial implications of developing the proposal and subsequent implementation costs, and to set aside financial resources for this purpose.

Human Resources Implications

- 1.21 At this stage staff have been briefed by the Chief Executive twice on the proposals for Local Government Reorganisation. Whilst there are no current impacts on staff arising from this report directly, it is recognised that there will be HR implications as proposals develop. There may be impacts on recruitment in the short-term due to uncertainty around reorganisation. Staff have been assured that there are no immediate impacts on staffing and that they will be updated regularly on the development of proposals.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 The proposal is that members note the contents of the Interim Plan for local government reorganisation at Appendix C and agree to its submission to government on 21st March 2025.
- 2.2 It is noted within the report that there has been a collaborative approach to developing these proposals and members are asked to formally support further collaboration to progress final proposals for local government reorganisation for submission to Government by 28 November 2025.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Councils could have developed proposals in isolation rather than collectively across the whole area of the county of Nottinghamshire. This would have risked options being developed which meet the needs of part of the area but not the whole, and which have less alignment with the criteria set out by MHCLG in the statutory invitation. The potential proposed options for local government reorganisation outlined in the interim plan have been developed through a structured and detailed work programme overseen by Leaders/Mayors with support from Chief Executives and advice and analysis from PwC.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from submission of the report to government. As proposals develop, further financial viability assessments will be undertaken.

There will be ongoing costs to the Council to support the development of final proposals for submission to government in November. No specific allocation has been made as part of the agreed budget for 2025/26 as cost implications were not known as budget proposals developed.

Approval for any budget required will be obtained once a clearer idea of costs is established.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 The White Paper itself does not create legislative change. Any proposals for reorganisation of local Government will require legislation to be passed. As proposals progress the legal implications will emerge.

As part of any proposal for change the Council would need to ensure compliance with its statutory duties including the public sector equality duty and data protection and information governance duties.

Consultation and Engagement are fundamental building blocks in democracy and considerations on how Councils can involve their residents in these key proposals should be at the forefront of any planning discussions.

A data protection impact assessment has been undertaken as part of the work to develop the interim plan.

6 Equalities Implications

- 6.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be created as proposals for reorganisation are further developed. At this stage, high level data has been used to inform the interim plan due to the need for submission by the 21st March. Further work to fully assess equality implications will be undertaken.

7 Carbon Reduction/Sustainability Implications

- 7.1 At this stage, no implications have been identified, however further assessment will be undertaken as proposals develop.

8 Appendices

- 8.1 Appendix A – Letter from the Minister of State for Local Government and English devolution 16 December 2024.

Appendix B - Criteria for local government reorganisation

Appendix C – Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

9 Background Papers

- 9.1 [English Devolution White Paper](#)

10 Reasons for Recommendations

- 10.1 To ensure that Council meets the requirements of the statutory invitation from government to submit an interim plan for local government reorganisation for the area of the county of Nottinghamshire by 21 March 2025.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by:

Date: 11.03.2025

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by:

Date: 11.03.2025

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE MP

*Minister of State for Local Government
and English Devolution*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

16th December 2024

Dear Colleague,

PUBLICATION OF THE ENGLISH DEVOLUTION WHITE PAPER

Firstly, I want to thank you and your teams for the work you have been doing to support local communities throughout the year. I know that mounting pressures have made the job harder, but you have the commitment of this government to work as equal partners in rebuilding vital public services and delivering growth that is felt in every corner of the country.

We know that our Plan for Change relies on strong local government, as the foundation of our state – critical to driving growth, delivering and reforming the local public services people rely on, and to our democratic system. We are a government that believes, at our very core, in local power. That is why we continue to work closely with colleagues through the Local Government Association and its special interest groups, and why we have established a Leaders Council. And it is why today, we are publishing the English Devolution White Paper – a milestone in delivering our promise to permanently shift power from the centre.

It was a decade ago that the first mayoral devolution agreement outside of London was signed, I know because I was one of the council leaders who contributed to it, and who signed it to create the Mayor of Greater Manchester. Much was learnt from that experience, and what followed it. We proved that devolution works. We proved that it relies on the good faith and commitment of council leaders, working hand in glove with a mayor who relentlessly drives for greater powers from the centre, to deliver change which can be felt by local people – with bus franchising a good example of this. But it is also self-evident that the devolution by deal approach in England has led to an ad hoc and inconsistent patchwork which isn't the sum of its parts, nor does it meet the test of placing the right powers in the right places. Central government is still hoarding power that would be best placed locally.

At the core of the White Paper is our vision for making devolution the default setting of government, rather than a policy dictated by the whims of Westminster and Whitehall. The government will legislate to set out which powers go to which type of authority. The basis for these decisions will be rooted in this government's belief that the role of Local Government is to shape their local places by delivering the vital frontline services residents rely on, as well as bringing together communities to feel connected and proud of their local areas. Mayors provide a strategic layer, able to unblock regional disagreements and drive economic growth. The most far-reaching and flexible powers will be for areas with Mayors, because they provide the most visible and accountable form of local leadership.

Those powers will be deepened. As part of the White Paper, we have published an enhanced devolution framework, including: a clear and transparent route to accessing integrated funding settlements over time; new powers over strategic planning so that Mayors and Strategic Authorities with council leaders are able to plan sustainably for housing and infrastructure

growth; devolution of non-apprenticeship adult skills functions and supported employment funding, as well as a substantive role in future employment support that is additional to core Jobcentre Plus provision; a statutory role for Mayors in governing, managing, planning, and developing the rail network; and a strengthened role in relation to business support, boosting exports and attracting international investment. This represents the floor of our ambition, not the ceiling, so we will enable our most mature strategic authorities to request and pilot new functions to drive innovation.

Strategic Authorities, working in partnership with Local Authorities, will be positioned as convenors on public service reform. This is foundational to address the mounting pressures and demand, and to hardwire prevention into a new way of working. Many councils do this well, but we hear all too often that it is often despite other parts of government, not with the support of it. For others, the overwhelming pressure to keep afloat so the system doesn't fall over is all consuming. That must change and more will follow on placed based working. The White Paper will set out how we support this by better aligning accountability. The government will transfer Police and Crime Commissioner and Fire and Rescue Authority responsibilities to Mayors where boundaries align; establish an expectation that Mayors are appointed to Integrated Care Partnerships and are considered for the role for Chair; and announces a long-term ambition to align public service boundaries, including Job Centres, police, probation, fire, health services, and Strategic Authorities.

As we widen devolution, our goal is simple. Universal coverage of Strategic Authorities in England. The government issued an invitation to places without devolution to submit proposals in July to enable us to see the range of proposals and approaches being taken across the country. We have secured mayoral devolution agreements with council leaders in Greater Lincolnshire and Hull and East Yorkshire which will see elections taking place in May 2025, and we have had constructive conversations with a range of areas where there is a determination to realise a deeper devolution settlement, including Cheshire and Warrington, Norfolk and Suffolk and a number of others.

The government will shortly set out its Priority Programme for devolution - which will be for areas that are willing to progress devolution to an accelerated timescale and to plan for inaugural mayoral elections in May 2026. This will be a focused programme to align any other reforms which may be required, so there is clarity and transparency on the timetable, as well as the support on offer to build capacity where it is needed. Taken with the clear offer presented in the White Paper, we expect the programme to demonstrate that our ambition is shared across the country and by local leaders of all stripes.

More widely, the government will continue to develop proposals for new strategic authorities collaboratively and in partnership with local areas over a longer period once the Devolution Priority Programme has developed. However, to ensure that everyone in England can benefit from devolution and ensure the effective running of public services, the government will legislate for a ministerial directive, allowing the creation of strategic authorities where absolutely necessary and, after due time has been allowed, local leaders have not been able to agree. It is not our expectation that this will be widely used, and it is our hope that it will not be needed. But it is right we are clear about the direction of travel and that we are settling out a new approach for the whole of England.

Local authorities are the foundation of devolution and this project will create a new constitutional settlement for local government of all kinds. A settlement that prioritises putting local government on the road to recovery and reform and ending the destructive 'Whitehall knows best' mindset.

I recognise the challenges you are facing and the incredible commitment and hard work you have shown over the difficult last 14 years. In the local government finance policy statement published in November, we committed to providing the first multi-year funding settlement in 10 years in 2026-27, to give you the certainty you need. We have taken immediate action to ensure that deprivation as a key driver of demand is taken into account with the release of £600 million through a Recovery Grant. We know much more needs to be done, and so we will also reform our approach to allocating funding within the Local Government Finance Settlement, to redistribute funding to reflect an up-to-date assessment of need and local revenue from 2026/27. The initial consultation on the principles of this funding reform will be launched later this week.

I also know that the rising cost of statutory services has put serious pressure on your budgets and often forced you to focus on crisis management. The 2025/26 Settlement sees new funding of over £4bn, including a new Children's Social Care Prevention Grant, worth £250 million, which will nearly double direct investment in prevention in children's services. We are also committed to mainstreaming reform and prevention to local authorities across England, with £100m allocated to innovative projects supporting public service reform, partnering with local leaders and mayors. You are critical partners in this government's commitment to reform public services.

This is a government that is committed to long term, sustainable success and we know many councils want to take forward local government reorganisation, not least of because we have received a number of requests already.

At a time when so many councils have been forced to reduce vital frontline and neighbourhood services, it is not right that Taxpayers in some areas are required to pay for the two-tier premium, both in overall cash terms and in opportunity cost – a 2020 report found that reorganisation would realise £2.9bn over five years, with a one-off cost of £400m. The same is true of government who provide grants partly to account for the inability to move funding across service areas between councils with very little benefit to frontline services.

We will work with councils to ensure simpler local government structures of sustainable size, that deliver for residents. We are writing in the first instance to all two-tier areas and neighbouring small unitaries, setting out our plans to deliver new unitary councils, phasing delivery to take into account where reorganisation can unlock devolution, where areas are keen to proceed at pace or where it can help address wider failings. We will follow up in the New Year with smaller or failing unitaries which would benefit from reorganisation into more sustainable structures.

But to do that, central government has to give you the autonomy you need. We believe that decisions with purely local implications should, by default, be taken locally, ending the 'parent-child' dynamic that has characterised the relationship between central and local government in recent years. That is why the White Paper commits to reforming the use of competitive and ringfenced funding pots, which waste your resources, along with consolidating funding wherever possible into the Local Government Finance Settlement and streamlining requirements for reporting and evaluation. It is why we intend to take forward measures in the proposed Planning and Infrastructure Bill to introduce a power for local planning authorities to be able to vary or set their own planning fees. And it is why we commit to working with you to remove requirements for Secretaries of State to sign-off on the use of your powers, including the ability to make byelaws, through a comprehensive review.

We will also be changing the process for selective licensing, so that local authorities will no longer need to seek Secretary of State approval when implementing schemes covering more than 20% of their area or private rented sector. Local authorities will be able to introduce schemes of any size provided the statutory criteria are met, empowering you to manage

housing standards and improve conditions. To support transparency and ensure local voices are heard, the requirement to consult for a minimum of 10 weeks will be retained. We are also asking that local authorities publish the outcome of any reviews, share scheme data and include mayors in their consultation (where they are in mayoral strategic authority areas). The new general approval and updated guidance will be issued today, effective from 23 December 2024.

We are also setting out the steps needed to create a universal system of strategic planning. The government's preference is for this to be led by strategic authorities. However, where there is no strategic authority in place, or planned to be in place, the government will take a power through the forthcoming Planning and Infrastructure Bill to direct defined groupings of upper-tier county councils and unitary authorities to deliver a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS). The arrangements for agreeing an SDS in such areas will follow the same principles as for foundation (non-mayoral) strategic authorities. Recognising the imperative of delivering a universal system, the government will legislate for intervention powers, to intervene where plans are not forthcoming to the timeframe.

Delivering for your residents also requires a solution to the capacity challenges you are facing around recruitment and retention. We committed to establish a workforce development group, run in partnership with the sector, which will identify practical solutions to help resolve workforce issues and I am pleased to say the first scoping meeting took place last week to kickstart this work.

We have listened to concerns the failure of the standards regime to give councils the teeth they need to deal with poor behaviour and the need to ensure that in creating new Strategic Authorities that we build reliable checks and balances into the system. Residents, members and officers also have the right to expect that those few elected councillors who do not meet the highest standards are held to account. To give councils appropriate and proportionate means to deal with misconduct, we will reform the standards system, consulting on measures including a mandatory code of conduct and the power to suspend those that break codes of conduct.

We have listened too on the numerous restrictions which hold back councils from modernising democratic engagement, and which potentially put off people from standing for local public office. Therefore, we are seeking views on enabling members to remotely attend formal council meetings and use proxy voting when necessary. We are also removing requirements for members' home addresses to be published, to reduce the risk of members or their families being subject to violence and intimidation.

Finally, autonomy must be combined with clear accountability. The White Paper commits to ensuring every council is fit, legal and decent. It promises to reform our systems of oversight and scrutiny by closing the Office for Local Government, which had a vague and duplicative remit, and committing to overhaul the local audit system in line with the recommendations of the Redmond and Kingman reviews. This means legislating to radically simplify the system, bringing as many audit functions as possible into one body so that it has a clear and focused purpose. I am clear too that there will be no return to the failed and bloated Audit Commission.

You and your fellow local leaders have worked tirelessly to support your residents through extremely difficult times. This government is grateful for your hard work, and I know we will keep working closely as we deliver on the vision of this White Paper and get on with our mission of national renewal.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jim McMahon." The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

JIM MCMAHON OBE MP

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution

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Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Jim McMahon OBE MP

*Minister of State for Local Government and
English Devolution*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Your reference:

Our reference:

To: Leaders of two-tier councils and
unitary council in Nottinghamshire

Ashfield District Council
Bassetlaw District Council
Broxtowe Borough Council
Gedling Borough Council
Mansfield District Council
Newark and Sherwood District Council
Nottinghamshire County Council
Rushcliffe Borough Council
Nottingham City Council

5 February 2025

Dear Leaders

This Government has been clear on our vision for simpler, more sustainable, local government structures, alongside a transfer of power out of Westminster through devolution. We know that councils of all political stripes are in crisis after a decade of decline and instability. Indeed, a record number of councils asked the government for support this year to help them set their budgets.

This new government will not waste this opportunity to build empowered, simplified, resilient and sustainable local government for your area that will increase value for money for council taxpayers. Local leaders are central to our mission to deliver change for hard-working people in every corner of the country through our Plan for Change, and our councils are doing everything they can to stay afloat and provide for their communities day in, day out. The Government will work closely with you to deliver these aims to the most ambitious timeline.

I am writing to you now to formally invite you to work with other council leaders in your area to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation, and to set out further detail on the criteria, guidance for the development of proposals, and the timeline for this process. A formal invitation with guidance for the development of your proposals is attached at Annex A. This invitation sets out the criteria against which proposals will be assessed.

Developing proposals for reorganisation

We expect there to be different views on the best structures for an area, and indeed there may be merits to a variety of approaches. Nevertheless, it is not in council taxpayers' interest to devote public funds and your valuable time and effort into the development of multiple proposals which unnecessarily fragment services, compete against one another, require lengthy implementation periods or which do not sufficiently address local interests and identities.

The public will rightly expect us to deliver on our shared responsibility to design and implement the best local government structures for efficient and high-quality public service delivery. We therefore expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.

This will mean making every effort to work together to develop and jointly submit one proposal for unitary local government across the whole of your area. The proposal that is developed for the whole of your area may be for one or more new unitary councils and should be complementary to devolution plans. It is open to you to explore options with neighbouring councils in addition to those included in this invitation, particularly where this helps those councils to address concerns about their sustainability or limitations arising from their size or boundaries or where you are working together across a wider geography within a strategic authority.

I understand there will be some cases when it is not possible for all councils in an area to jointly develop and submit a proposal, despite their best efforts. This will not be a barrier to progress, and the Government will consider any suitable proposals submitted by the relevant local authorities.

Supporting places through change

It is essential that councils continue to deliver their business-as-usual services and duties, which remain unchanged until reorganisation is complete. This includes progress towards the Government's ambition of universal coverage of up-to-date local plans as quickly as possible. To support with capacity, I intend to provide some funds for preparing to take forward any proposal, and I will share further information later in the process.

Considering the efficiencies that are possible through reorganisation, we expect that areas will be able to meet transition costs over time from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.

The default position is that assets and liabilities remain locally managed by councils, but we acknowledge that there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices. Where that is the case, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation, and Commissioners should be engaged in these discussions. We will continue to discuss the approach that is proposed with the area.

I welcome the partnership approach that is being taken across the sector to respond to the ambitious plans set out in the White Paper. My department will continue to work closely with the Local Government Association (LGA), the District Councils Network, the County Councils Network and other local government partners to plan how best to support councils through this process. We envisage that practical support will be needed to understand and address the key thematic issues that will arise through reorganisation, including managing service impacts and opportunities for the workforce, digital and IT systems, and leadership support.

Timelines and next steps for interim plans and full proposals

We ask for an interim plan to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025, in line with the guidance set out in the attached Annex. My officials will provide feedback on your plan to help support you to develop final proposals.

I will expect any full proposal to be submitted **by 28 November**. If I decide to implement any proposal, and the necessary legislation is agreed by Parliament, we will work with you to move to elections to new 'shadow' unitary councils as soon as possible as is the usual arrangement in the process of local government reorganisation.

Following submission, I will consider any and all proposals carefully before taking decisions on how to proceed. My officials are available throughout to discuss how your reorganisation and devolution aspirations might work together and what support you think you might need to proceed.

This is a once in a generation opportunity to work together to put local government in your area on a more sustainable footing, creating simpler structures for your area that will deliver the services that local people and businesses need and deserve. As set out in the White Paper, my commitment is that clear leadership locally will be met with an active partner nationally.

I am copying this letter to council Chief Executives and to Best Value Commissioners. I am also copying this letter to local Members of Parliament, to the Mayor of the Combined Authority and to the Police and Crime Commissioner.

Yours sincerely,



JIM MCMAHON OBE MP

Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH ACT 2007**INVITATION FOR PROPOSALS FOR A SINGLE TIER OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government, in exercise of his powers under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 ('the 2007 Act'), hereby invites any principal authority in the area of the county of Nottinghamshire, to submit a proposal for a single tier of local government.

This may be one of the following types of proposal as set out in the 2007 Act:

- Type A – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned
- Type B – a single tier of local authority covering an area that is currently a district, or two or more districts
- Type C – a single tier of local authority covering the whole of the county concerned, or one or more districts in the county; and one or more relevant adjoining areas
- Combined proposal – a proposal that consists of two or more Type B proposals, two or more Type C proposals, or one or more Type B proposals and one or more Type C proposals.

Proposals must be submitted in accordance with paragraphs 1 to 3:

1. Any proposal must be made by **28 November 2025**.
2. In responding to this invitation an authority must have regard to the guidance from the Secretary of State set out in the Schedule to this invitation, and to any further guidance on responding to this invitation received from the Secretary of State.
3. An authority responding to this invitation may either make its own proposal or make a proposal jointly with any of the other authorities invited to respond.

Signed on behalf of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government.



F KIRWAN

A senior civil servant in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

5 February 2025

SCHEDULE

Guidance from the Secretary of State for proposals for unitary local government.

Criteria for unitary local government

- 1. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.**
 - a) Proposals should be for sensible economic areas, with an appropriate tax base which does not create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area.
 - b) Proposals should be for a sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs.
 - c) Proposals should be supported by robust evidence and analysis and include an explanation of the outcomes it is expected to achieve, including evidence of estimated costs/benefits and local engagement.
 - d) Proposals should describe clearly the single tier local government structures it is putting forward for the whole of the area, and explain how, if implemented, these are expected to achieve the outcomes described.
- 2. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.**
 - a) As a guiding principle, new councils should aim for a population of 500,000 or more.
 - b) There may be certain scenarios in which this 500,000 figure does not make sense for an area, including on devolution, and this rationale should be set out in a proposal.
 - c) Efficiencies should be identified to help improve councils' finances and make sure that council taxpayers are getting the best possible value for their money.
 - d) Proposals should set out how an area will seek to manage transition costs, including planning for future service transformation opportunities from existing budgets, including from the flexible use of capital receipts that can support authorities in taking forward transformation and invest-to-save projects.
 - e) For areas covering councils that are in Best Value intervention and/or in receipt of Exceptional Financial Support, proposals must additionally demonstrate how reorganisation may contribute to putting local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing and what area-specific arrangements may be necessary to make new structures viable.
 - f) In general, as with previous restructures, there is no proposal for council debt to be addressed centrally or written off as part of reorganisation. For areas where there are exceptional circumstances where there has been failure linked to capital practices, proposals should reflect the extent to which the implications of this can be managed locally, including as part of efficiencies possible through reorganisation.

3. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.

- a) Proposals should show how new structures will improve local government and service delivery, and should avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services.
- b) Opportunities to deliver public service reform should be identified, including where they will lead to better value for money.
- c) Consideration should be given to the impacts for crucial services such as social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety.

4. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.

- a) It is for councils to decide how best to engage locally in a meaningful and constructive way and this engagement activity should be evidenced in your proposal.
- b) Proposals should consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance.
- c) Proposals should include evidence of local engagement, an explanation of the views that have been put forward and how concerns will be addressed.

5. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.

- a) Proposals will need to consider and set out for areas where there is already a Combined Authority (CA) or a Combined County Authority (CCA) established or a decision has been taken by Government to work with the area to establish one, how that institution and its governance arrangements will need to change to continue to function effectively; and set out clearly (where applicable) whether this proposal is supported by the CA/CCA /Mayor.
- b) Where no CA or CCA is already established or agreed then the proposal should set out how it will help unlock devolution.
- c) Proposals should ensure there are sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities.

6. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

- a) Proposals will need to explain plans to make sure that communities are engaged.
- b) Where there are already arrangements in place it should be explained how these will enable strong community engagement.

Developing proposals for unitary local government

The following matters should be taken into account in formulating a proposal:

Boundary Changes

- a) Existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for your proposals, but where there is a strong justification more complex boundary changes will be considered.
- b) There will need to be a strong public services and financial sustainability related justification for any proposals that involve boundary changes, or that affect wider public services, such as fire and rescue authorities, due to the likely additional costs and complexities of implementation.

Engagement and consultation on reorganisation

- a) We expect local leaders to work collaboratively and proactively, including by sharing information, to develop robust and sustainable unitary proposals that are in the best interests of the whole area to which this invitation is issued, rather than developing competing proposals.
- b) For those areas where Commissioners have been appointed by the Secretary of State as part of the Best Value Intervention, their input will be important in the development of robust unitary proposals.
- c) We also expect local leaders to engage their Members of Parliament, and to ensure there is wide engagement with local partners and stakeholders, residents, workforce and their representatives, and businesses on a proposal.
- d) The engagement that is undertaken should both inform the development of robust proposals and should also build a shared understanding of the improvements you expect to deliver through reorganisation.
- e) The views of other public sector providers will be crucial to understanding the best way to structure local government in your area. This will include the relevant Mayor (if you already have one), Integrated Care Board, Police (Fire) and Crime Commissioner, Fire and Rescue Authority, local Higher Education and Further Education providers, National Park Authorities, and the voluntary and third sector.
- f) Once a proposal has been submitted it will be for the Government to decide on taking a proposal forward and to consult as required by statute. This will be a completely separate process to any consultation undertaken on mayoral devolution in an area, which will be undertaken in some areas early this year, in parallel with this invitation.

Interim plans

An interim plan should be provided to Government on or before **21 March 2025**. This should set out your progress on developing proposals in line with the criteria and guidance. The level of detail that is possible at this stage may vary from place to place but the expectation is that one interim plan is jointly submitted by all councils in the area. It may be the case that the interim plan describes more than one potential proposal for your area, if there is more than one option under consideration. The interim plan should:

- a) identify any barriers or challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful.
- b) identify the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils that will offer the best structures for delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services across the area, along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities.
- c) include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities.
- d) include early views as to the councillor numbers that will ensure both effective democratic representation for all parts of the area, and also effective governance and decision-making arrangements which will balance the unique needs of your cities, towns, rural and coastal areas, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.
- e) include early views on how new structures will support devolution ambitions.
- f) include a summary of local engagement that has been undertaken and any views expressed, along with your further plans for wide local engagement to help shape your developing proposals.
- g) set out indicative costs of preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team as well as any arrangements proposed to coordinate potential capacity funding across the area.
- h) set out any voluntary arrangements that have been agreed to keep all councils involved in discussions as this work moves forward and to help balance the decisions needed now to maintain service delivery and ensure value for money for council taxpayers, with those key decisions that will affect the future success of any new councils in the area.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation

Contents

1. Our People and Our Place

- a. Introduction
- b. Population
- c. History, heritage and innovation
- d. Outcomes that people experience

2. The Strategic Case for Change

- a. Responding to the requirements of the English Devolution White Paper
- b. The case for change in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

3. Our approach to developing proposals for reorganisation – progress to date

- a. Our collaborative approach
- b. Independent options generation and appraisal by Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC)
- c. Outcome of consideration of potential options for new unitary arrangements at this stage
- d. Wider stakeholder engagement
- e. Input from Commissioners

4. Outline plan for April to November

- a. Approach to preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team
- b. Voluntary arrangements to maintain a focus on service delivery

5. Barriers and challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful

Final Draft: 7 March 2025



1. Our People and Our Place

a) Introduction

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire are situated centrally in England, and, alongside Derby and Derbyshire, constitute the area covered by the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA). The county, including the city, covers 832 square miles (2,156 sq. km) and has three distinct areas: the urban conurbation of Nottingham, one of the UK's Core Cities and an economic, service and cultural hub for the East Midlands, including relatively affluent suburbs surrounding the City of Nottingham; the towns and villages in the north-west which grew out of the textiles and coal industries; and the rural areas to the east and south with their prosperous market towns and villages in the Trent Valley.

There are 7 non-metropolitan districts within the County of Nottinghamshire, namely – Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Broxtowe, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood, and Rushcliffe. The City of Nottingham is a unitary authority (Nottingham City Council). Nottinghamshire County Council is the upper tier authority covering the seven non-metropolitan districts for a range of public services, with Ashfield District Council, Bassetlaw District Council, Broxtowe Borough Council, Gedling Borough Council, Mansfield District Council, Newark and Sherwood District Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council providing local services to their communities.

b) Population

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire have a combined population of 1,173,770 persons. This includes 844,494 persons living across the 7 District Authorities within the County of Nottinghamshire, alongside a Nottingham City population of 329,276.¹

Based on the latest 2021 census, 93% of the total population of Nottinghamshire is White, with 88% being White British (including Northern Ireland), and 4% of the population being Other White.

Nottingham City however has a more diverse population. 66% of the total population are White, 57% being White British and 7% being other White. 15% of the City's residents are Asian/ Asian British, 10% are Black/ African/ Caribbean/ Black British, and 6% are Mixed/ Multiple Ethnic Groups.

Projecting the Nottinghamshire population to 2031, there is expected to be a considerable rise in the number of persons aged 65 and over, increasing from 220,126 to 265,661 (a 21% increase). Persons aged 0-17 and 18-64 see a similar rise through 2031, of 2% and 3% respectively.²

c) History, Heritage and Innovation

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire are places rich in heritage, history and culture, and where innovation flourishes. From a wealth of professional sports teams and facilities that play host to both national and international competitions, to landmarks such as Nottingham Castle, Rufford and Newstead Abbeys, Holme Pierrepont, Southwell Minster, the Lace Market, Clumber Park and Sherwood Forest, both Nottingham and Nottinghamshire have an abundance of attractions and history that residents and visitors

¹ ONS 2023 Mid-year population estimates.

² ONS Subnational Population Projections (2018-based).

can enjoy and be proud of. Nottingham is a major cultural hub and creative centre for the East Midlands, and is home to a range of nationally important cultural institutions, including the Nottingham Playhouse, Nottingham Contemporary and the Royal Concert Hall.

Our recent past is characterised by the transition away from traditional industries which supported entire communities and multiple generations, up until the end of the 20th century to new patterns of employment. Whilst employment in coal, textile and clothing industries has shrunk, small businesses and start-ups across a range of sectors have replaced these traditional industries, providing the foundations for a strong and vibrant local economy that continues to grow and expand. Towns and villages in the north and west that were the heartland of heavy industry now offer opportunities for automotive, servicing and manufacturing sector industries, with a major concentration of logistics and distribution companies on the M1 and A1 corridors.

The Trent Valley Super Cluster, centred around 3 former power station sites in the north east of the County, is the home of the STEP programme – the UK's world leading effort to build breakthrough nuclear fusion technology and capability to transform the UK's future energy security through limitless clean energy. Building on an initial Government investment of £400m to support the UK Atomic Energy Authority's STEP Fusion programme, the Super Cluster initiative is designed to incubate and drive huge investment the length of the Trent north to south in Nottinghamshire. The programme includes growth in housing, with potential for new settlements, the creation of additional high skilled jobs (15,00+). The catalyst provided by public investment in STEP will act as a lever for billions of pounds of inward investment as part of a drive to create a major UK engine of advanced clean energy research and production.

The developing economic strengths along the M1 corridor and mid Nottinghamshire are part of an ongoing restructuring of the economy to leverage automated distribution, major hubs of advanced manufacturing and materials development, digital and technology (including AI and data). Allied to these developments are associated investments in high tech agriculture, utilising and enhancing the natural characteristics and assets of the Trent Valley. This opportunity also extends to the southern end of the Trent Valley and the East Midlands Freeport area, where the former power station site at Ratcliffe-on-Soar will be redeveloped as a southern hub for clean technology and advanced manufacturing.

A well-connected city of creativity, innovation and learning and a cultural hub in the East Midlands, Nottingham attracts visitors from across the globe and has led the way in local action to deliver 'net zero'. Nottingham is a young, creative and entrepreneurial city with dynamic businesses in growing sectors and a diverse range of industrial strengths including the Creative and Digital, Health and Life Sciences, E-Sports, Low Carbon Clean Technology and Advanced Manufacturing sectors. Nottingham has world class research capabilities driving innovation and growth. It is home to two high performing universities. The University of Nottingham is a research-intensive university, ranked in the World's 100 Best Universities, second in the UK for graduate employability and seventh for research strength. Nottingham Trent University (NTU), Modern University of the Year 2023, has specialisms in creative technologies, art and design, fashion, green sustainable construction, business, medical technologies and health, and sciences including forensics and sport.

The East Midlands has a polycentric economy which has not seen growth that has kept pace with that of other regions. Nottingham is the region's core city and an economic

hub for the East Midlands. Nottingham City's economy generated £11.5bn of gross value added (GVA) in 2022 and when the wider primary urban area is taken into account, this rises to £19.2bn. The wider Nottingham economy generates nearly 15% of the GVA of the East Midlands region and more than 34% of the GVA of the new East Midlands Combined County Authority demonstrating the important contribution the wider city geography and economy makes to the region. Over half of jobs in the City are occupied by residents of neighbouring areas in the conurbation.

d) Outcomes that people experience

Residents across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire experience significantly differentiated outcomes as highlighted in the table below, with local government reorganisation and associated public service reform representing an opportunity to address the disparities in people's outcomes. Residents in Nottingham face continued challenges around participation in and benefit from economic growth and remains a city with significant levels of deprivation and inequality in neighbourhoods and communities. There are also widespread areas of deprivation in parts of the county where people particularly face health related barriers to work.

Name	Ashfield	Bassetlaw	Broxtowe	Gedling	Mansfield	Newark & Sherwood	Nottingham	Rushcliffe
Overall Deprivation	4.28	4.93	6.89	6.69	4.16	5.77	2.96	8.82
Crime	4.86	5.51	6.89	7.08	4.84	6.70	3.70	8.87
Employment	3.66	4.44	5.87	5.39	3.69	5.31	3.41	7.79
Income	4.34	5.37	6.34	6.00	4.58	6.09	3.38	8.03
Barriers to Housing and Services	6.91	6.00	8.55	7.55	6.60	6.10	4.77	7.50
Education, Skills and Training	3.19	4.39	6.07	5.74	3.37	4.99	3.26	8.78
Health Deprivation & Disability	3.45	3.81	6.52	6.42	2.85	5.60	2.47	8.88
Living Environment	7.62	6.93	6.28	7.18	7.27	6.43	3.67	7.56
(IDACI) ³	4.00	5.26	6.14	6.08	4.54	6.01	2.91	8.29
(IDAOP) ⁴	5.34	6.17	6.46	6.48	5.27	6.79	3.12	7.79
Proportion of LSOAs in most deprived 10% nationally	16.22%	7.14%	0.00%	1.30%	14.93%	4.29%	30.77%	0.00%

Table: English Indices of Deprivation 2019⁵

³ Income Deprivation Affecting Children Index

⁴ Income Deprivation Affecting Older People Index

⁵ Table sourced from <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/english-indices-of-deprivation-2019>

2. The Strategic Case for Change

a) Responding to the requirements of the English Devolution White Paper

Government has instigated the requirement to reorganise local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire through the publication of the English Devolution White Paper, and subsequent statutory invitation to Council Leaders/Mayor of 5 February 2025, outlining the need for “simpler, more sustainable, local government structures, alongside a transfer of power out of Westminster through devolution”.

b) The case for change in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

There are local factors which suggest that benefits could be derived from introducing new unitary arrangements in the area. Like many areas across the country, councils locally are under increasing pressure in terms of their ability to respond to increasing and/or complex needs of people in vulnerable circumstances or with additional needs (adult social care, children’s social care, health and wellbeing, housing and homelessness, children with special educational needs and disabilities). This pressure can be seen both in challenges meeting regulatory outcomes and in budget pressures contributing significantly to cumulative gaps in the majority of councils’ medium term financial plans. Whilst local government reorganisation can contribute to addressing the cumulative financial gap it is unlikely to fully address it, hence the need to also focus on opportunities for transformation and public service reform as we move beyond the interim plan phase into developing full proposals for submission in November. Outlined below are some of the early opportunities that we have identified:

Improve residents’ outcomes and experiences through public service reform

There are currently nine councils providing a wide range of services to residents in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. The City Council is a unitary council responsible for all local government services to people in the city of Nottingham. In Nottinghamshire, some services are provided across the whole county by the County Council (including adult social care, children’s social care, libraries and cultural services, school admissions, support for children with special educational needs and disabilities, public health, highways, trading standards, strategic planning, waste disposal), whilst others are provided by the seven local district or borough councils (including sports and leisure, housing, homelessness, waste collection, street cleaning, parks and local spaces, planning, public protection, environmental health, council tax and business rate collection, benefits). In some parts of the county, town and parish provide highly local services. Local government reorganisation offers the opportunity to build on what we do well and make the most of new service synergies to design new ways of working, reflecting the way that people live their lives, and provide a more joined-up approach to:

- supporting people in our communities experiencing difficult circumstances and ensuring a focus on meeting their full range of needs early, for example through bringing together approaches to housing, homelessness and use of the disabled facilities grant with support for vulnerable children or adults;
- providing everyday services that improve Nottingham and Nottinghamshire as a place to live, for example through bringing together consistent approaches to waste collection, disposal and recycling, grounds maintenance, planning, fees and charges and council tax support schemes;

- improving customer experience and accessibility by removing confusion on who to contact for what and connecting people more readily to the support and services that they need in their local area;
- bringing all services up to the highest standards using best practice;
- building services and administrative geographies around citizens and communities, reflecting where and how people live, work and access services.

Designing new unitary arrangements also provides the opportunity to look at new ways of working together across organisational boundaries to provide more integrated and joined up support to residents, shifting towards more preventative and community-based support and driving out efficiencies that will increase spending power for essential services. Early engagement with strategic partners has highlighted the opportunity to design new unitary arrangements that are aligned to the development of the neighbourhood health model as part of the NHS ten-year plan. This will help to improve local ambitions to be support people to live independently in their homes for longer, irrespective of existing council boundaries.

Support financial sustainability through increased efficiency

Local government reorganisation offers the opportunity to reduce duplication and fragmentation within Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, for example through consolidating common functions within organisations, identifying opportunities to commission at scale, introducing new technology and reducing the number of systems and assets that are used currently. One example of existing collaboration to build on is the shared procurement approach, with Nottinghamshire County Council providing procurement services on behalf of Ashfield District Council, Mansfield District Council, Broxtowe Borough Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council. This enables improved efficiency and cost savings through pooling resources, skills and knowledge, and taking a category management approach that enables spend to be consolidated and buying power to be leveraged. Through this approach, a number of frameworks across all our partners have been developed, delivering an efficient and effective contractual solution for the region.

For over a decade the planning authorities across the wider Nottingham conurbation and Housing Market Area (Nottingham City Council, Ashfield District Council, Broxtowe Borough Council, Gedling Borough Council, Rushcliffe Borough Council and Erewash Borough Council) and Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire County Councils have worked together under the Greater Nottingham Planning Partnership. As well as enabling successful aligned Local Plans to help drive growth and housing, it has delivered significant financial savings from pooling resources and sharing the cost of the required extensive evidence base.

Local government reorganisation also presents an opportunity to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in governance. By streamlining decision-making processes, a unified authority can respond more swiftly to community needs, fostering a dynamic environment that prioritises resident engagement and increases the pace of positive change in pressing issues such as housing, transportation and economic development. A unified authority can respond more swiftly to community needs, fostering a dynamic environment that prioritises resident engagement.

Larger unitary councils are better positioned to invest in new technologies and practices that improve service delivery and operational efficiency. This approach will

promote resilience and sustainability in addressing challenges like climate change and public health.

Enables strong, local accountability and connection to communities and neighbourhoods

One of the perceived risks of developing unitary council arrangements is that of a loss of connection between large organisations and their communities, however models in place in existing large unitaries exemplify models that achieve this, for example through Area Action Partnerships or Community Boards.

In addition, we already have in place well embedded arrangements for effectively engaging with local communities, that can be further developed and built on. This ranges from coproduction, where key services are designed with residents, to the strengths-based approach to working with people in vulnerable or challenging circumstances, that enables them to shape the support that they receive. Building from these existing approaches will help us build a framework that helps people to have the greatest control over the things that are most important to their lives - their care, their protection - through to providing consistent, high-quality services for universal services, such as recycling.

An early focus of work following submission of the interim plan will be to develop proposed engagement models at very local levels and develop new and innovative arrangements to enhance connections with communities and to reflect their different needs, including the opportunity to implement in-district boundary changes. This will be key for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire given the diversity of our communities.

Maximise the potential impact of collaborating with the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA) on outcomes for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire residents

The English Devolution White Paper introduces the concept of strategic and principal authorities, with strategic authorities replacing combined authorities and leading on the coordination of levers relating to local growth and issues crossing council boundaries, such as infrastructure planning, transport, and spatial planning, while convening partners for public service reform. Principal authorities (unitary councils) become responsible for delivery of local public services, place shaping and delivering public service reform.

Any changes to local government in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire must take account of potential impacts on the governance of EMCCA. As a Combined County Authority, EMCCA currently has four constituent councils including Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council. Changes to the number of unitaries in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire (and Derby city and Derbyshire) may require further changes to EMCCAs constitution. Having a more efficient and effective system of local government in the East Midlands will support EMCCA in the delivery of its strategic mission around inclusive growth.

The establishment of EMCCA has also acted as a driver of our work to consider opportunities for public service reform. In this, the unitary models under consideration will support reform, consistency and improvement in key areas such as planning, housing and waste, and will also support the regional strategic place-shaping role of EMCCA in key policy areas such as population health and wellbeing and integrated care.

The establishment of EMCCA is also enabling transport and economic strategy to be increasingly co-ordinated at regional level, and has streamlined engagement with Government on issues and opportunities of subnational and national significance and provided the East Midlands with access to greater funding to deliver shared priorities.

Whilst EMCCA has begun to lead on regional strategy development, local government has been crucial to informing that strategy development and translating it to delivery, providing capacity, expertise and routes to market for activity to deliver inclusive economic growth. As EMCCA continues its development, local government will remain key to the effective delivery of shared regional objectives and priorities.

Whilst we have already had the benefit of engagement with officials from EMCCA in the early stages of developing the case for change, formal engagement with the Mayor of EMCCA on potential proposals for local government reorganisation will take place in the next phase of planning, as outlined in section 4.

3. Our approach to developing proposals for local government reorganisation – progress to date

a) Our collaborative approach

Political and officer-led collaboration across the nine councils has driven and shaped the approach to developing initial, potential proposals for local government reorganisation in line with Government expectations. Leaders/Mayor have met three times to steer the work, whilst Chief Executives have met weekly, supported by an Officers Working Group, to progress the necessary activity within the timescales required. A set of principles for collaborative working were agreed by Leaders/Mayor on 13 January and continue to inform the approach taken to the work:

- Collaborative
- Open, honest and transparent
- Focussed on improving outcomes, services, financial sustainability
- Acting in longer-term interest, particularly in use of resources, reserves and decision making in the interim
- Evidence-informed, based on data
- Resident-focussed
- Valuing and preparing employees for the future at a time of uncertainty and change

In advance of the statutory invitation being received, and in light of the tight timescales for developing the interim plan required by Government, Leaders/Mayors agreed a set of “local criteria” against which any potential future unitary arrangements would be appraised, to enable work to begin on developing potential options:

Financial and fiscal sustainability

- Financially sustainable local authorities, which are resilient to longer-term economic or policy changes
- Delivers value for money through economy, efficiency and effectiveness
- Delivers financial benefits which outweigh the cost of change
- Risk informed with effective mitigation measures
- Considers Council Tax base and equalisation

How local people live their lives

- Covers a credible geography
- Reflects community identity and makes sense as a “Place”
- Enables sustainable operational delivery for public services
- Seeks to improve connectivity especially for communities that most need support

Offers the potential for public service reform that improve outcomes and experiences for residents

- Enables solutions to challenges impacting on residents’ outcomes and which risk long-term financial stability
- Maximises opportunity to enhance delivery through innovation
- Provides safe and resilient care, help and protection to vulnerable children, families and adults

- Aligns with EMCCA to enable creation and delivery of the housing, environmental, social and economic objectives for Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire
- Considers alignment with all other key strategic partners

Enables strong, local accountability and connection to communities and neighbourhoods

- Ensures services are easily accessible for all
- Strengthens the role of local democratic leadership
- Builds trust with local communities
- Seeks the active input and engagement of residents, businesses and employees
- Ensures viable organisations that are employers of choice with strong leadership and employee value proposition

It was agreed that an external partner would be jointly commissioned and funded by all councils to generate and independently appraise a set of potential proposed options. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) were appointed to provide this independent support. Appropriate project governance arrangements were established to ensure oversight of this activity led by three councils on behalf of the nine.

b) Independent options generation and appraisal by PwC

Approach and methodology

Section 2 of this report sets out the context and drivers for local government reorganisation. The approach and methodology used to assess the viability of options for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire is set out below with the analysis undertaken keeping in mind local and MHCLG criteria.

- Development of a case for change considering the current context in which the councils are all operating and the potential benefits of implementing unitary local government across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. This includes taking into account demography, the geography of the place, potential inefficiencies and fragmentation in the current two-tier system and how service delivery might be improved. This also looks at the need to make the most of the devolution arrangements that are now in place since the establishment of the East Midlands Combined Authority and election of the Mayor.
- The options appraisal assessed initially 8 potential options through quantitative and qualitative analysis which were then presented to the Chief Executives to further refine using four lenses (see below) as a comparative analysis. The list of three options were shared with Leaders / Mayor on the 5th March along with the rationale from that comparative analysis and the outputs of the high level financial case that evaluated the various scenarios, costs and income to understand how sustainable each option would be.

A significant level of stakeholder engagement has taken place throughout this phase of options generation and appraisal including:

- Individual meetings with each Leader/Mayor and their Chief Executive
- A number of working sessions with the Chief Executives (and in some cases section 151 officers) including weekly meetings to discuss progress

- 2 working sessions that included Leaders/Mayor and Chief Executives
- Weekly meetings with a representative officer project group
- Engagement with senior officers to talk through implications of local government reform on service demand and delivery.

Comparative analysis

Each of the eight options (listed below) were considered and evaluated in the context through four different 'lenses' as well as the criteria set out locally and by MHCLG. The outputs of this analysis were discussed by Chief Executives and Section 151 officers on 28th February. The analysis and the discussion on the subsequent discussion provided the context for reducing the list of options from eight to three. These three options were then considered by the Leaders / Mayor on 5th March.

Option	Description
1a	Two Unitary Authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottinghamshire • Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling + Rushcliffe
1b	Two Unitary Authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottinghamshire • Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling
1c	Two Unitary Authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottinghamshire • Nottingham City + Broxtowe
1d	Two Unitary Authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottinghamshire • Nottingham City + Gedling
1e	Two Unitary Authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottinghamshire • Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Rushcliffe
1f	Two Unitary Authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottinghamshire • Nottingham City + Rushcliffe
1g	Two Unitary Authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottinghamshire • Nottingham City + Gedling + Rushcliffe

2	Two Unitary Authorities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nottinghamshire • Nottingham City
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Three core options for further consideration and analysis

The three core options considered by Leaders / Mayor are:

- A new unitary authority combining Nottingham, Broxtowe and Gedling with a new unitary authority for the rest of Nottinghamshire;
- A new unitary authority combining Nottingham, Broxtowe and Rushcliffe with a new unitary authority for the rest of Nottinghamshire;
- Nottingham City remains as an existing unitary authority with a new unitary authority for the rest of Nottinghamshire.

The four 'lenses' used in the comparative analysis were:

- **Geographic synergy:** Analysis of publicly available data to understand the geographic synergy of the two unitary authority options. This included developing an understanding of each areas' proportion of rural and urban populations, Mosaic Segmentation Profiles and the average time or distance to key services.
- **Financial analysis:** Analysis of publicly available information to understand the financial viability of the options. This included understanding existing positions on debt to reserve ratios, current and future council tax take in relation to spend on for both Adult and Children Social Care. There is undoubtedly further work to do now to fully understand the financial implications of the current options.
- **Other comparative analysis:** Analysis of other relevant data points in line with the criteria such as population, deprivation and housing to identify which options are likely to result in the establishment of two councils that are broadly balanced.
- **Outcomes of the financial model:** as set out below, this is used to assess the benefits and costs of local government transformation.

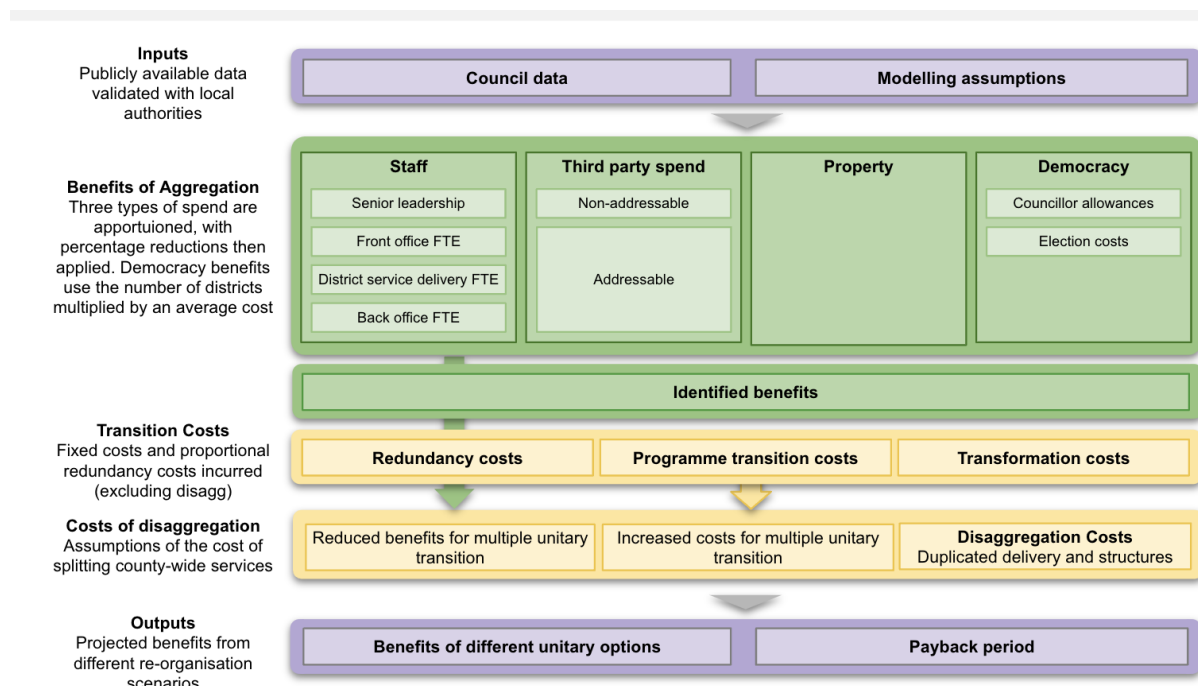
Option	Rationale / appraisal
1b	<p>This option would appear to go some way to meeting the criteria associated with identifying sensible geographies, in terms of concentration of the local population (in that it would see the establishment of one authority serving residents primarily living in urban areas and another serving residents primarily living in towns and rural areas). On the basis of the analysis completed to date, it would not appear to create an undue advantage or disadvantage for one part of the area. It would meet the requirement to establish new unitaries serving 500,000 people or more and would deliver efficiencies and a basis on which to manage transition costs. It would also appear to satisfy the criteria relating to areas which include a council in Best Value intervention in that it would offer some space for the city to grow. To some extent, it would avoid the unnecessary fragmentation of key services and, by extension, would ensure consideration is given to the “crucial services” named in the Minister’s letter (though not completely). It would also appear to satisfy all aspects of the requirement to consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance, though there are facets of identity and cultural and historic importance that complicate this somewhat. Finally, it would establish a reasonable basis to support current and future devolution arrangements.</p>
1e	<p>This option would also appear to go some way to meeting the criteria associated with identifying sensible geographies, albeit it would establish two authorities serving more of a mix of urban, town and rural residents. It would meet the population criteria, deliver efficiencies, provide the means to manage transition costs and appear to satisfy the requirements relating to areas which include a council in Best Value intervention in that it would offer the greatest opportunity for the city to grow. To some extent, it would avoid the unnecessary fragmentation of key services and, by extension, would ensure consideration is given to the “crucial services” named in the Minister’s letter (though not completely). This option would also appear to satisfy aspects of the requirement to consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance, albeit in a different way to option 1b. Finally, it would establish a reasonable basis to support current and future devolution arrangements.</p>

2

This option would appear to meet the criteria associated with identifying sensible geographies (in that it would see the establishment of one authority serving residents in primarily urban areas and another serving residents primarily in towns and rural areas). However, it would not provide additional room for the city to grow and would be likely to result in the creation of an undue advantage / disadvantage across the two unitaries serving the whole of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire geography. It would not meet the population criteria, in that one of the authorities would not meet the 500,000 threshold. It would be more likely to satisfy the criteria relating to the unnecessary fragmentation of key service areas (in that it would not require the disaggregation of services currently administered by the County Council) and, by extension, would ensure consideration is given to the “crucial services” named in the Minister’s letter. Arguably, it would be less likely to satisfy the requirement to consider issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance (in that it may leave communities that do identify with the city in a different geography). Finally, it would establish a reasonable basis to support current and future devolution arrangements.

Financial modelling - methodology

To estimate benefits, costs and potential savings, the model set out below was used to develop indicative figures surrounding each of the options included in this report. These figures are based upon data that were either publicly available and validated by the relevant council or provided individually by councils. The model used is set out below:



Financial model definitions

Set out below are the definitions of the elements of the financial model:

- **Transition costs:** Costs involved in moving from existing systems to another. This includes fixed costs and redundancy costs incurred (excluding disaggregation). These are one-off costs to reorganisation within Nottingham & Nottinghamshire.
- **Benefits of aggregation:** Benefits that would arise from reorganisation. This primarily looks at the benefits of collapsing multiple local authorities into a fewer number of local authorities. This will include savings made on: Staff, Third party spend and Property. In addition to this, benefits arising from savings on running democratic processes are also defined. There are percentage reductions applied to each type of benefit saving.
- **Annual benefits:** Annual benefits that are generated as a result of reorganisation. These are calculated as a sum of the front office, service delivery and back office expenditures, as well as Third Party Spend, senior management, property and democracy costs.
- **Recurring benefit after 5 years:** The recurring annual benefit after five years of reorganisation. It is estimated that the full benefits will be realised after five years.
- **Payback period:** The payback period is the time required for the investment in unitarisation to generate sufficient cash flows to recover its initial cost

High level analysis of potential financial benefit

Set out below is a summary of the potential benefit that could be realised from local government reform. This is a high-level initial analysis given the timeframe and there is still significant work to be undertaken to fully understand the financial implications.

Option	Transition costs (£)	Annual benefits (£)	Net benefit after five years (£ total)	Payback period (years)
Option 1b: Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Gedling	£32,699,893	£31,650,073	£82,300.511	2.0
Option 1e: Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City + Broxtowe + Rushcliffe				
Option 2: Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City	£24,362,811	£29,585,010	£87,155,993	1.6

For the purposes of the high-level options and financial analysis at this stage it has been assumed that there would be approximately one councillor per 5000 of the electorate across the existing Nottinghamshire County Council area. This is not dissimilar to the current Nottingham City ratio of one councillor per 5818 of the electorate. For context, there is a not insignificant variation in the number of electors per councillor as evidenced by the Local Government Boundary Commission electoral [data](#). Further detailed work will be undertaken in the next phase of planning to November, to establish the appropriate numbers of councillors in any options progressing to proposal.

c) Outcome of consideration of potential options for new unitary arrangements at this stage

Following consideration by Leaders, the three potential options outlined above have been included within this interim submission. The interim options included within the submission are those considered to be the most potentially viable options based on the analysis to date. However, it was recognised that further work is necessary to complete a robust assessment against the Government's criteria. This work will continue post submission to Government and in anticipation of feedback on the interim plan.

In discussing the options appraisal, Leaders expressed a desire to work with Government and consider a range of boundary changes. In order to create new principal authority structures that are most reflective of natural communities and local identities requires work to review where there are strong justifications for changes to boundaries. Whilst Leaders acknowledge these are complex processes, it is important to local Leaders that potential changes are considered. The Government invitation specifically references the potential for boundary changes. Leaders recognised the guidance in the Minister's letter and in dialogue with MHCLG that existing district areas should be considered the building blocks for potential proposals and welcomed the acknowledgement from Government that where there is a strong justification, more complex boundary changes will be considered. We would ask that Government consider this in the feedback provided to local partners.

The position reached by Leaders was led by the comprehensive evidence base and analysis that has been independently appraised. Leaders accepted that options in this plan represent the potential options that are most likely to meet most of the criteria once the full analysis is complete and the views of strategic partners are fully taken into account. At this stage, there is not yet consensus as to which of the potential proposals is preferred. We anticipate that strong and clear feedback from Government will support the process that follows the County Council election through which a consensus will be sought on a preferred option.

It is understood that some councils may still wish to continue to explore additional proposals alongside the three core options set out above.

For the purposes of developing a business case for one or more preferred options post the 21 March, further detailed analysis will be required to ensure that the opportunities and benefits of local government reform can be fully realised.

d) Wider stakeholder engagement

In parallel to the options development and appraisal, initial stakeholder engagement has taken place primarily focussing at this stage on strategic partners. The approach has been to introduce the Government's ambitions outlined in the English Devolution White Paper, and within this context, to explore the potential for public service reform to improve the lives of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire residents, and the role that local government reorganisation could play within this.

Two initial engagement discussions have been held between council officers from the nine local authorities, with officers representing key public service institutions across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, including Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care Board, East Midlands Combined County Authority, Nottingham University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service, Office of the Nottinghamshire Police and Crime Commissioner, Vision West College Nottinghamshire, North Nottinghamshire College, Nottingham College, Nottingham Trent University, University of Nottingham, and the Department for Work and Pensions, with a further session planned for 10 March 2025. Areas explored as part of the discussion included the following:

- Taking this as an opportunity to build on our strengths and our ability to innovate as a partnership – whether in designing approaches to meet the needs of people with vulnerabilities or in driving clean energies approaches through STEP
- Taking this an opportunity to support improving our residents' outcomes, particularly in terms of health and wellbeing and employment and skills, and to join up with the wider public service reform agenda, for example around the NHS 10 year plan and developing a model for neighbourhood health and the emerging police and crime plan priorities.
- Consideration of scale – and which functions make sense to be planned and delivered at which scale – from sub-regional through to hyperlocal – balancing scale and efficiency with connection to community and reflecting local need
- Consideration of approaches to aligning different public sector bodies to enable stronger partnership working arrangements and future integration or co-location to better meet people's needs holistically – particularly across health, wellbeing and social care
- The need to maintain a focus on improving service quality and improving outcomes during the process of local government reorganisation

The nine councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire directly employ 18,297 people; many of whom are also residents in the area, as well as employing thousands of school-based staff and having arm's length arrangements with a number of organisations providing essential services. Given both the implications of local government reorganisation, and the significant contribution that employees have to make in shaping future arrangements, early engagement has been undertaken by many councils with their employees, to develop their understanding of the process and build the foundations for future, more in-depth engagement over the next phase of developing proposals.

Further engagement with stakeholders including town and parish councils, residents, businesses and wider public, private and voluntary sector partners is planned for the next phase of option development and will be covered in section 4.

e) Input from Commissioners

Nottingham City Council (NCC) is currently under intervention, with Commissioners appointed under direction of the Secretary of State. Whilst the Commissioners main focus is on securing that Authority's future and sustainable compliance with its best value duty, the Secretary of State has asked them to support local government in Nottinghamshire as a whole in their work on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Their remit is to assist in developing proposals that are robust and sustainable across the whole area, and to support the councils in increasing value for money through securing effective and efficient local government for the residents of Nottinghamshire. The Commissioners have a wealth of local government experience, including delivering local government reorganisation in other parts of the country. It should be noted that although they have been appointed by the Secretary of State, they operate independently of her and her ministers.

We have welcomed having these Commissioners working with us on LGR. They have so far held one-to-one meetings with most of the authorities involved in the work in this area and have also attended some partner meetings which have been considering the various options. We are appreciative of their advice and support in moving this agenda forward.

4. Outline plan for April to November

It is proposed that all nine local authorities continue to work collaboratively to further develop options following submission of the interim plan and in working towards the deadline of 28 November 2025 for submitting final proposals. The informal collaborative working arrangements that have been in place between elected members and officers across the nine councils to develop the interim plan will be maintained, and developed into a more formal programme approach.

Outlined below are the main activities that we anticipate undertaking to arrive at the point of final proposal(s):

4.1 Refining the options appraisal to inform decision-making on which proposal(s) to work up to a full business case (April to June)

This phase will involve ongoing refinement of the options appraisal through further gathering and analysis of evidence to support the identification of a preferred option or options, ensuring the full set of government criteria are considered. This phase will also be informed by feedback from Government which is expected to be received following County Council elections in May. That feedback will be openly and transparently shared so that all partners can engage collaboratively in shaping the further refinement of potential proposals. At the end of this phase there will be a formal decision-point for Councils in respect of which option(s) should be developed into full proposal(s) for submission to Government in November.

4.2 Developing our full proposal(s) and full financial case (June to October)

This phase will involve developing the full proposal(s). Developing the full proposal(s) will include undertaking the following activities:

- Developing our vision for the new council(s), including the improved outcomes we would expect to deliver for the people and places we serve.
- Designing a high-level target operating model for the new council(s); including customer offer, ways of working, culture and values, how technology and information will be utilised and describing what residents will experience.
- Identifying opportunities for service synergies - consolidation of existing functions, simplification of processes and opportunities arising from bringing functions together
- Designing the arrangements that will be put in place at a locality level to build engagement and ensure the new council(s) is / are responsive locally.
- Clarify the democratic structures that will be put in place - e.g. structures and numbers of councillors, key milestones and decision points that need to be mapped out in advance
- Determining how the new council(s) will support EMCCA - e.g. what will its role be in commissioning services from the new council(s).
- Describing how the new council(s) will work towards more ambitious public service reform, working with other providers in the geography.
- Determining how any new council(s) will work together to share certain functions.

- Developing an implementation roadmap, which will identify the target and interim states for the new council(s).

This phase will also involve developing the full financial case as part of the proposal(s); identifying the costs associated with the implementation of unitary local government across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, taking more precise account of data concerning:

- the establishments of all impacted councils;
- assets and liabilities (including physical assets, reserves, debt and minimum revenue provision);
- contracting and other partnership arrangements;
- IT architecture;
- grant funding and additional income; and
- Council Tax implications.
- Developing the investment and benefit profiles that will drive implementation.
- Developing the investment strategy required to fund implementation.

4.3 Communications and engagement (April to November)

We are committed to undertaking comprehensive communications and engagement activities over the spring and summer to ensure that proposals to be submitted to Government in November meet local need and are informed by local views. This is likely to involve public consultation.

The intention is for the councils to build on early engagement work with strategic partners and the workforce in the next phase of proposal development, by developing a comprehensive communications and engagement strategy to support the development and submission of our proposals. This would include a focus on:

- workforce engagement,
- member engagement, including the provision for members to come together for visioning workshops and design discussions,
- engagement with the Mayor of EMCCA, including consideration of how the proposed unitary arrangements can support the inclusive growth agenda and within the context of EMCCA's path to becoming an established mayoral strategic authority,
- stakeholder engagement - working with MPs, the town and parish councils, as well as public, private and voluntary sector partners to discuss, explain and consider the changes being proposed, and
- community and resident engagement - focus groups, engagement meetings and other forms of communication.

Consolidating the responses and views gathered during this activity will inform the development of the November submission and evidence support and / or opposition to the establishment of the new council(s).

Each Council will take the proposal(s) through their own governance arrangements prior to submission to Government ahead of the 28 November 2025 deadline.

a) Approach to preparing proposals and standing up an implementation team, including indicative costs and coordination of potential capacity funding

The intended approach is for a cross-authority programme team to be established with secondees from across the 9 councils, providing dedicated capacity to progress this work moving forwards. The programme team structure will depend upon the proposal(s) being developed, however the skill-mix needed will include programme and project management, service design expertise, communications and engagement, legal and democratic services, HR and organisational design, and finance. Thematic groups leading on specific policy areas will be established as required to support the development of the detailed proposal. External technical support will be commissioned to provide additional expertise and capacity as required throughout the process. A combination of backfill costs, external technical support and wider programme costs such as consultation and engagement lead to estimated costs to be in the region of £3-4m. As the work progresses and we focus on a single preferred option, we will then be in a position to more accurately reflect the total costs of preparing and delivering an implementation plan.

b) Maintaining a focus on service delivery and ensuring value for money for council taxpayers whilst developing proposal(s) for new unitary arrangements

In addition to the programme of work to develop the proposal(s), during this period, each of the nine local authorities will work together to agree a set of voluntary arrangements based on the themes and functions that should be viewed through a Local Government Reorganisation lens when informing our future decision making and planning. The purpose of this is to help ensure a smooth transition from current arrangements into the implementation of new local authorities across the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire area, whatever they might be. The themes to be considered for the development of voluntary arrangements will include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Finance
- Contracts
- Estates
- Recruitment
- Communication
- Major Procurement
- Shared Resources
- IT Development & Infrastructure

5. Barriers and challenges where further clarity or support would be helpful

The following areas have been identified where further clarity or support would be beneficial:

Process

- Leaders are resolved to undertaking public consultation over the summer. Feedback is invited on the weighting that is given to public feedback when Government appraise options and the strategic case. Learning from other areas that have gone through reorganisation including a neighbouring unitary in respect of approaches to consultation would be welcome as would detail on the scope/approach of the consultation in the spring undertaken by Government.
- In our estimation, the costs of reorganisation will be higher in areas that have both two tier and small unitary to reorganise. Whilst local partners have endeavoured to use internal expertise, inevitably, some use of independent and technical skills may be required, particularly to ensure that the disaggregation of critical services to vulnerable people is effective and safe. Our current estimate is that the wider cost of the next phase of work will be in the region of £3-4m. These cost pressures will come on top of existing service pressures and are likely an underestimate, not least given the bandwidth of leadership, management and transformation resources which are already focused on our current pressures. Can Government confirm that these additional costs will be reflected in the allocation of capacity funding? Could Government confirm arrangements for determining governance of capacity funding and whether one accountable body be required for the whole area or one per new unitary created?
- Leaders have followed a principle and criteria led approach built on a shared evidence base. Local criteria were agreed by Leaders before receipt of the Ministers' letter and are being used to reflect local circumstances. Can Government confirm whether these additional criteria will be considered in the assessment process that Government intends to follow when considering proposals against the national criteria, is there any weighting of criteria? To support partners in coalescing around a single proposition, it will be important that the feedback from Government in respect of our emerging thinking is clear and unambiguous. Given Government desire for pace, strong and clear feedback will be a prerequisite if we are to work on a single business case for November.
- Whilst this interim plan contains the potential proposals most likely to meet the Government criteria, it is based on partial analysis. A challenge has been the time and resources available to model and evaluate every possible option diligently. Government support may be required for local partners to introduce new or alternative options over the coming period should they emerge and be supported by evidence and local partners.
- Engagement with MHCLG has been welcomed although relatively limited. We recognise this will be due to capacity and prioritisation of resources. Our experience of creating the East Midlands Combined County Authority was characterised by a strong central-local partnership with allocated senior officials working excellently alongside and in strong partnership with local colleagues. We believe we will be more successful if our local collaboration is enhanced with collaborative input from a senior civil servant/s who can be engaged directly in

our local system. Our experience is that when we create a shared endeavour between central-local government, we can make transformational change happen at pace.

Boundaries

- Given the mix of urban and rural geography in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, whilst the rationale behind using districts as the building blocks for potential new unitary arrangements is understood, there remains an appetite to explore disaggregating district boundaries. In order that this can be incorporated into planning for the future phases, Government is requested to provide an indication of the requirements, process and procedures for review of boundaries. Feedback is sought on implications boundary change requests would have on reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire?

Finances

- We recognise the Government's position on the treatment of debt. The local councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire have a cumulative debt in the region of c£1.6bn. How this is addressed will be critical to the financial resilience of new unitary councils which must not be unfairly burdened by legacy debt. Local partners are seeking dialogue with Government with respect to levels of indebtedness and the impact the treatment of debt might have on final options. It may help to discuss models we with sector bodies and Government for the division of the debt across 2 unitaries.
- What impact will the Spending Review have on potential proposals? Whilst partners have taken every effort, including independent input from PwC, to model potential future financial scenarios, we recognise the potential for significant change as Government puts local government finance on a 'firmer footing'. Partners will want to review proposals in light of SR announcements later in the year. Should there be significant changes to funding arrangements, then local partners will have to see temporary protection from any negative impacts of the Government's proposed funding reforms. Maintaining local support and critical services during the reorganisation transition period would be severely impacted by reductions in funding. To enable better medium term financial planning during the uncertainty of reorganisation, we would require any reductions to be deferred to provide a more stable funding base.

The role of town and parish councils, and implications for charter towns

- What are the implications for Charter Towns within proposed new unitary arrangements?
- The English Devolution White Paper references "rewir[ing] the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice". Can Government issue further guidance on this to be considered as part of the development of proposals?

Civic and ceremonial arrangements

- Nottingham and Nottinghamshire have a range of civic and ceremonial roles including the Lord Lieutenant for Nottinghamshire and the High Sheriff of Nottingham. What are the implications of reorganisation on these Offices and roles? How can reorganisation be carried out in ways that safeguard and strengthen the role of these important civic functions?

Policy reform

- Partners are committed to moving quickly through the initial preparation phase of reorganisation and moving to designing and shaping new principal authorities for Nottinghamshire. Partners would wish to have direct Ministerial engagement to hold discussions directly with decision makers, particularly in MHCLG, the Dept of Education, Dept of Health and Social Care, the Home Office and Treasury to ensure the design of new authorities is optimised for the implementation of national reforms in terms of childrens services including SEND reform, the NHS 10 Year Plan and Neighbourhood Health linked to Adult Social Care and across a Public Service Reform portfolio.

People Services, quality, risk and regulatory impact

- Reorganisation is a significant endeavour, the planning and implementation of which must not impact on the day to day delivery of high quality services, particularly to those who are most vulnerable. Recognising that some of our local people services are on improvement journeys, what support will be available from Government to ensure that services can continue to be resilient, including in financial, workforce and quality terms through the reorganisation process. Does Government have a risk assessment of the cumulative impact of reorganisation on the sustainability of care services and the care market?
- How will regulators take the impacts of reorganisation into account including impacts and risks of disaggregation? We would wish to flag the need for proportionality from regulators so that any inspection activity that is brought forward, including in monitoring visits is seen with in the context of the pressures reorganisation will have on organisations.