

Report to Cabinet

Subject: Results of the consultation on local government reorganisation in Nottinghamshire

Date: 31 January 2019

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Wards Affected

Borough wide

Purpose

To inform Cabinet of the responses received in connection with the consultation exercise conducted on the appropriate local government structure in Nottinghamshire.

Key Decision

This is not a key decision

Recommendations

THAT:

1. The responses received in connection with the consultation exercise conducted on the local government structure in Nottinghamshire are noted;
2. The Leader of Nottinghamshire County Council, the local Members of Parliament and the Secretary of State be informed of the results of the consultation exercise;
3. A copy of the summary of responses received be circulated to all Gedling Borough Councillors; and
4. A summary of responses be included in the Spring edition of the Council's Contacts magazine.

1 Background

- 1.1 Members will recall that on 8 November 2018 Cabinet agreed to conduct a specific consultation exercise to obtain the views of residents and businesses in the borough on the appropriate local government structure in Nottinghamshire. This was in response to Nottinghamshire County Council agreeing that the current two tier structure was an inefficient and ineffective way to deliver services in Nottinghamshire and therefore they instructed their officers to continue to prepare a formal business case for a unitary authority.
- 1.2 The consultation period ran from 26 November to 21 December 2018. In order to generate as many responses as possible:
- Hard copies of the consultation document were delivered to each household and business in the borough;
 - Online completion was encouraged; and
 - Social media and 'Keep Me Posted' were used to continually promote the consultation and share information to a wide audience.
- 1.3 The consultation document asked respondents to answer the following question:
- “Do you want Gedling Borough Council to be abolished and replaced with a larger council that is responsible for your local services and makes decisions for the whole county area?
- Yes/No”
- If the respondent was unsure whether to answer yes or no, an opportunity to explain the reason(s) why was also provided.
- 1.4 During the consultation period, the Council received 9292 responses in total. 4142 of these were completed online and 5150 returned by post, however 569 paper copies were blank. This was an extremely good response rate for a borough wide consultation exercise. By way of comparison, the Council received 3,422 responses to the Gedling Conversation Residents' Satisfaction Survey in 2017 and Nottinghamshire County Council received 2,948 responses to its open questionnaire seeking views on local government reorganisation across the County carried out in 2018.

1.5 The key findings from the responses are as follows:

- 8019 respondents (91%) answered 'No'
- 640 respondents (7%) answered 'Yes'
- 136 respondents (2%) were unsure.

A more detailed summary of the findings can be found in Appendix 1.

1.6 Nottinghamshire County Council was due to consider a report at the meeting of full Council on 13 December 2018 which recommended that approval should be given to undertake further public consultation in respect of local government reorganisation in Nottinghamshire. This report was withdrawn from the agenda and a statement issued by the Leader of the County Council on 11 December 2018, which confirmed the matter had been paused while more time was taken to reflect. Information on the County Council's website states "The outline business case for change-which includes a proposal for a new system of unitary local government in Nottinghamshire has been paused while further work is carried out on the opportunities for refining the current two tier structure.

2 Proposal

2.1 It is proposed that Cabinet notes the responses received in connection with the consultation exercise conducted.

2.2 The County Council has simply 'paused' consideration of a proposal for new unitary government in Nottinghamshire but has not made a decision to cease progressing the plans completely. It is important that the views of the residents and businesses in the Borough are taken into account in any future proposals and it is therefore proposed that the Leader of the County Council, the local Members of Parliament and Secretary of State are informed in writing of the Gedling Borough consultation responses. In addition, given the impact of local government reorganisation it is important that the Borough Council and all councillors understand and can properly represent the views of residents and businesses, as such it is proposed that the detailed summary of responses at Appendix 1 be shared with all Gedling Borough councillors.

2.3 It is usual practice for the high level results of the Gedling Conversation Satisfaction Survey to be included in the Contacts magazine so that residents are aware of the views received. Given the importance of this issue and the high level of responses received, it is also proposed that the results of this consultation exercise are communicated in the Spring edition of the Contacts magazine.

3 Alternative Options

- 3.1 Not to note or share the responses of the response received in connection with the consultation exercise conducted on the appropriate local government structure in Nottinghamshire, however to do so will mean that the views of the residents and businesses in the borough are not listened to or represented.

4 Financial Implications

- 4.1 On 8 November 2018 Cabinet agreed a budget to conduct the consultation exercise and the costs have been contained within the agreed budget.

5 Appendices

- 5.1 Appendix 1- Summary of responses to consultation.

6 Background Papers

- 6.1 None identified.

7 Reasons for Recommendations

- 7.1 To ensure that the Executive is informed about the views of residents and businesses in Gedling received in response to the consultation exercise.
- 7.2 To ensure that the views of residents and businesses in Gedling are shared with and can be taken into account by the Leader of the County Council and Secretary of State when considering whether to pursue an alternative structure of local government in Nottinghamshire.
- 7.3 To ensure that elected members and Members of Parliament are informed of and can properly represent the views of residents and businesses in any future discussions regarding the structure of local government in Nottinghamshire.
- 7.4 To notify residents of feedback from the consultation exercise.