

Report to Council

Subject: Local Government Reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

Date: 26 November 2025

Author: Chief Executive

Wards Affected

All

Purpose

To consider the submission of the final business case for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire in line with government requirements.

Key decision

This is a key decision as it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising of two or more wards of the borough.

Recommendations:

That full Council recommends the following to Cabinet for formal approval:

That Cabinet:

- a. Approves submission of **Option 1e** (a Northern unitary based on existing boundaries of Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood; a Southern unitary based on existing boundaries of Broxtowe, Nottingham City, Rushcliffe) as this Council's preferred option for submission to Government by 28 November 2025.
- b. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive to make any minor amendments to the Option 1e submission if required prior to submission to government.
- c. Supports continued collaborative working with other local authorities across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire on implementation proposals for the new authorities.
- d. Notes the risks associated with Local Government Reorganisation and ensures that appropriate governance, communication, financial and management arrangements are put in place to mitigate potential impacts during the transition period.

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. The White Paper described a new architecture of streamlined government, including Mayoral Strategic Authorities and the replacement of all two-tier areas of local government with unitary Councils (Principal authorities).
- 1.2 On 5 February 2025, the Minister of State issued a formal, statutory invitation to the nine Council Leaders within Nottinghamshire, asking each Leader to work collectively with other Council Leaders in the area to develop a proposal for Local Government Reorganisation. The first step in the process was a request to submit an Interim Plan containing options for new unitary councils to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025.
- 1.3 The Interim Plan was developed by officers from across the nine councils, with independent support and advice from PwC. It shortlisted three options for further assessment:
 - ❖ Option 1b –Unitary one consisting of Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood, Rushcliffe. Unitary two consisting of Broxtowe, Gedling, Nottingham City.
 - ❖ Option 1e –Unitary one consisting of Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood. Unitary two consisting of Broxtowe, Nottingham City, Rushcliffe.
 - ❖ Option 2 – Unitary one consisting of Nottingham City only (current arrangement). Unitary two consisting of Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Broxtowe, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood, Rushcliffe.
- 1.4 At an Extraordinary Meeting of Full Council on 19 March 2025, Gedling Borough Council agreed to:
 - ✓ Note the contents of the Interim Plan for Local Government Reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.
 - ✓ The Interim Plan being submitted to Government by 21 March 2025.
 - ✓ Work collaboratively with the other authorities across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire with a view to developing a final proposal for Local Government Reorganisation for submission to Government by 28 November 2025.
- 1.5 On 3 June 2025, the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) issued its feedback on the Interim Plan. The feedback reiterated Government's encouragement for areas to work together to submit a single proposal, whilst acknowledging the opportunity for individual Councils to submit their own proposals. One key theme that emerged more prominently was the need to demonstrate how new unitary structures would enable neighbourhood empowerment, with local areas being invited to come forward

with proposals to create local area committees or other local engagement and decision-making forums.

- 1.6 Following submission of the Interim Plan, PwC were commissioned by all authorities to conduct further appraisal of the three options within the Interim Plan. This appraisal was undertaken with input from officers across all authorities. PwC's appraisal concluded that Option 2 demonstrated the weakest alignment against the MHCLG criteria by leaving Nottingham City Council on its existing boundary and a lack of balance between the two unitary Councils. This option was quickly rejected by all Nottinghamshire Councils. PwC's appraisal also concluded that that Option 1b and Option 1e both met the Government's criteria and *"that the differences between Options 1b and 1e within each criteria are marginal"*.
- 1.7 An update report was brought to [Council on 30 July 2025](#) which brought together (report plus 5 appendices) all of the documentation / letters from central government and the analysis work conducted by PwC. Council recommended that Cabinet approves further development of Option 1e as the preferred option for submission to government by 28 November 2025. This was approved by Cabinet on the same day.
- 1.8 Each council will only be allowed to express support for one option in its submission to government on 28 November 2025. Currently we have indications of the following (to be determined w/c 24 November 2025):
 - Option 1b – Nottinghamshire County, Rushcliffe.
 - Option 1e – Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood.
 - Option Bii – Nottingham City are considering a two unitary option with one authority based on the City with expanded boundaries into parts of Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe (now referenced as Option Bii).
 - Ashfield - have not determined a preference.
 - Broxtowe - have no desire to be part of any reorganisation.

Since the meeting on 30 July 2025, work has continued on Option 1e and a submission has been developed by officers from across the four councils of Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield and Newark & Sherwood with input from Ashfield and Broxtowe on an advisory basis. PwC and CIPFA have continued to develop the financial analysis of Option 1b and Option 1e to ensure independence and commonality of data for both options. Unfortunately, given the timescales, it has not been possible for the same level of detail to be applied to Option Bii. This is because of the arbitrary nature of the proposed boundaries and the difficulties created by splitting the Borough Councils and calculating budgets.

- 1.9 The proposed Option 1e submission has taken account of the Government feedback on the Interim Plan. 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 proposals 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 Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, in line with the Local Government Boundary Commission for England guidance.*
- e. inclusion of 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 further plans for wider local engagement to shape developing proposals.*

1.10 The proposed Option 1e submission addresses the issues raised by MHCLG in response to the interim plan, and the Executive Summary of the appended submission sets out why Option 1e is still considered to present the best option to meet the government criteria and provide a future platform for the delivery of economic growth ambitions in conjunction with EMCCA.

1.11 Following submission by 28 November 2025, the government will take decisions on how to proceed, including laying any necessary legislation and working with councils to move to new “shadow” unitary councils in May 2027. At this stage it is anticipated that the announcement will be made in the summer with the aim of new unitary councils to be in place by April 2028. Government have provided capacity funding of £369,754 for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to support with preparing proposals for reorganisation. The next steps of Local Government Reorganisation will be a significant undertaking, and there will be a need as a priority to develop an understanding of the likely financial implications of implementation costs, and to set aside financial resources for this purpose.

Community Engagement

1.12 A public engagement exercise supported and approved by all nine authorities was carried out by ‘*Public Perspectives*’ over a six-week period which closed on Sunday 14 September 2025. It invited residents, businesses, and local organisations to share their views on reorganisation. The main mechanism for capturing responses was an online questionnaire open to all interested parties, promoted through councils’ websites, communication channels and promotional/marketing activity, including a dedicated website (lgrnotts.org), as well as outreach events and engagement with stakeholders. The questionnaire was also available in alternative formats on request, such as paper copies, alongside e-mail, phone, BSL and translation support. In total there were 11,483 responses to the engagement exercise. This is a much higher level of response than many other areas. Relatedly, four focus groups were conducted involving 34 residents reflecting the diversity of Nottinghamshire and organised by urban and rural areas. These focus groups

allowed the emerging findings from the engagement process to be unpacked and views about the proposals to be discussed in-depth, both adding further insight as well as validating the findings from the engagement survey.

- 1.13 Over 96% of respondents lived in Nottinghamshire, with responses received from all nine affected areas. Understandably, as the three boroughs affected the most by the options put forward, the highest number of responses came from Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe. The survey explored people's views on their local area, the effectiveness of current council structures, their awareness of LGR, and the potential impact of the proposed changes. Respondents were also asked to comment on the two options being put forward by the councils (the City Council also included questions for their own residents as part of the countywide survey).
- 1.14 Respondents highlighted the need for the new councils to focus on delivering good quality core and universal services like roads and pavements, crime/anti-social behaviour, clean streets, travel and transport. They also highlighted the importance of involving residents in decision-making to ensure that future councils understand and are responsive to the needs of different communities and areas, including urban and rural areas.
- 1.15 The engagement exercise did not demonstrate strong public support for LGR across our area. 58% of all respondents disagreed with the proposal to reduce the number of councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. Nevertheless, the exercise showed that there is more positivity/support towards Option 1e compared to Option 1b, with approximately a third of respondents supporting it or at least stating that it is the best of the two options. Some respondents stated it makes more sense geographically and/or is a cleaner North-South split with a better division of populations and resources. However, notable concerns remain including around the proposed boundaries and the inclusion or exclusion of certain areas.

2 Proposal

- 2.1 The purpose of this report is to provide full Council with an update on the Government's requirement for Local Government Reorganisation, including the work undertaken to determine which option to develop as a final proposal(s) for submission in November 2025.
- 2.2 The proposal is that full Council recommends the following to Cabinet for formal approval:
 - a. Approves submission of Option 1e (a Northern unitary based on existing boundaries of Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood; a Southern unitary based on existing boundaries of Broxtowe, Nottingham City, Rushcliffe) as this Council's preferred option for submission to Government by 28 November 2025.
 - b. Delegates authority to the Chief Executive to make any minor amendments to the Option 1 e business case if required prior to submission to government.

- c. Supports continued collaborative working with other local authorities across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire on implementation proposals for the new authorities.
- d. Notes the risks associated with Local Government Reorganisation and ensures that appropriate governance, communication, financial and management arrangements are put in place to mitigate potential impacts during the transition period.

3 Alternative Options

To ensure that the Council meets the requirements of the statutory invitation from government, it is required to submit a final proposal for Local Government Reorganisation for the area of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire by 28 November 2025.

The Council could decide not to respond to the Secretary of State's invitation, however, a new structure will be implemented irrespective of this. Notwithstanding concerns about some aspects of reorganisation, the Council has determined that the responsible thing to do on behalf of the borough is to participate fully in the process. This includes making its position known on a preferred option that reflects the criteria given for reorganisation.

Councils could have developed proposals in isolation rather than collectively across the whole area 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 proposed options for Local Government Reorganisation outlined in this report and detailed in the appendix 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 and CIPFA. Although support for differing options has emerged, this work has continued.

The transition period will create a number of risks. There will be a period of uncertainty for staff, members and partners etc. This could affect morale, service continuity and create financial and resource pressures.

It is proposed that taking account of the criteria for:

- 1) Sensible single tier of local government.
- 2) 'Right sized' local government and financially viable.
- 3) High quality, sustainable services.
- 4) Meets local needs.
- 5) Supports devolution arrangements.
- 6) Local engagement and empowerment.

That the proposed Option 1e is the best for Local Government Reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. It is also noted that from the public engagement of those respondents expressing a view on the future structure,

it is Option 1e that makes most sense to them. In addition, the financial analysis shows that this is the most cost-effective option.

4 Financial Implications

At this stage there are no direct financial implications for the Council in submitting a final proposal to Government. The financial implications arising will depend upon the eventual form that any future Local Government Reorganisation might be for this Council.

At this stage it is not possible to quantify the costs and benefits to the Council and local residents, but the financial implications will be far reaching over a period of time. Areas that will need detailed research and financial assessment/modelling may include:

- Any short-term capacity funding.
- A sizeable long-term investment fund.
- Future integrated financial settlements.
- Consolidation of existing funding streams.
- Potential freedoms and flexibilities on existing financial arrangements.
- The costs associated with Local Government Reorganisation and setting up a new strategic authority.

As matters become clearer on timescales and the inevitable detailed work that will be undertaken by officers within and across Nottinghamshire, a fuller understanding of the financial implications will be known. These will be reported to Members for decision at the appropriate time as the programme of reform develops.

No specific allocation has been made as part of Gedling's agreed budget for 2026/27 but will be determined prior to the budget being completed. If this is not possible to determine, the Leader under Financial Regulations can approve a virement up to £50k from reserves or request additional funds through Cabinet and full Council.

5 Legal Implications

Full Council is the appropriate body to consider the content of this report in a consultative capacity as the decision is currently an executive function.

Under the Local Government Act 2000 (the 2000 Act) any function which is not specified in the Local Authorities (Functions and Responsibilities) (England) Regulations 2000 (the Functions Regulations) is to be the responsibility of the executive (Leader and Cabinet). The invitation to submit proposals to MHCLG falls under Part 1 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. This part of the 2007 Act is not referred to in the Functions Regulations and as such is an executive function— exercisable by Cabinet as a key decision. The full Council (or another committee) can act in a consultative capacity by discussing and guiding Cabinet, as such this report is being brought to Council to formulate recommendations for Cabinet.

Structural and boundary change in England is governed by the 2007 Act and regulations made thereunder. If, following due process including statutory consultation by Government, a structural change is approved by Government, a structural change order will be made by way of secondary legislation to implement the change and establish a single tier of local government and abolish the relevant councils. An order would include provision for transitional arrangements and elections.

On 10 July 2025, the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill was published. This piece of legislation is currently progressing through parliament and has now reached the Report stage in the House of Commons. Once it has received Royal Assent, it will provide further detail on the roles and responsibilities of new authorities as well as other governance arrangements.

6 Staffing Implications

At this early stage, it is difficult to predict the full impact on the Council's workforce, however there will be at least some changes in the uppermost tiers of management. For the remaining majority of the workforce it is not expected that there will be any significant changes prior to the new unitary Council being formed. This message has been communicated to staff through staff briefings from the Chief Executive and through cascade feedback from managers. Staff are reassured that the need for services remains, bins will need to be collected, streets cleaned, and officers will be required to continue this.

A new larger organisation will offer many new opportunities for staff to progress their careers, with larger and/or broader management roles, a wider range of specialist roles, and opportunities to step into different business units such as social services etc. The Council is working to support staff with this by focusing on workforce development and engaging more closely with staff through regular one-to-ones which have replaced annual performance development reviews.

At this stage, the Council's workforce and trade union representatives have been provided with regular updates. Further work will ensure that there is a clear understanding of the implications for staff from the reorganisation streams of work, however there is no getting away from the fact that the process of reorganisation over the next two years will provide for a period of uncertainty for the workforce. This may result in a higher turnover of staff and potential difficulties in the recruitment of new staff. Work is underway to develop staff and give them the confidence moving forward with any new opportunities that may arise.

Regulation 3 of the Local Government (Structural and Boundary Changes) (Staffing) Regulations 2008 (Employment Regulations) confirms that the transfer of functions to a new unitary council shall constitute a relevant transfer under the TUPE Regulations. The only exception in respect of this relates to the position of the Head of Paid Service.

Moving forward, there will be a considerable impact on staffing capacity to develop the necessary implementation programme for the new authorities once the Secretary of State announces the final proposals. That work will have to commence immediately.

7 Equalities Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been prepared to support this submission. It has reviewed the potential impact of Local Government Reorganisation on residents in Gedling and across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire with the potential merger of areas. At this stage, high level data has been used to inform the submission and further work to fully assess equality implications will be undertaken.

The assessment identifies both potential positive and negative impacts. Potential positive impacts include improved coordination of services particularly around vulnerable service users e.g. linking up Social Care and Housing services more closely and improving opportunities for greater partnership working with other service providers e.g. NHS. Potential risks include the dilution of minority voices within a larger authority with reduced representation for some groups, rural access challenges, the loss of specialist services if rationalised, and uncertainty during the transition period.

Actions identified that will mitigate any negative impacts and/or promote inclusion include:

- Maintaining parish and neighbourhood voice and representation.
- Enhanced local involvement and empowerment through the identified neighbourhood model.
- Ensuring day-one continuity of services, especially safeguarding and support for vulnerable groups.
- Retaining local access points for essential services, with accessible transport and non-digital routes for engagement.
- Protecting minimum funding levels for specialist services.

8 Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications

At this stage, no implications have been identified, however further assessment will be undertaken as the new unitaries develop.

9 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Equality Impact Assessment

Appendix 2 - Option 1e submission

10 Background Papers

[English Devolution White Paper](#)

[Gedling Interim Plan report – Council on 19 March 2025](#)

[Council report - Local Government Reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire – Council on 30 July 2025](#)

11 Reasons for Recommendations

To ensure that the Council meets the requirements of the statutory invitation from Government to submit a final proposal for Local Government Reorganisation by 28 November 2025.

Statutory Officer approval

Approved by: M Hill

Date: November 2025

On behalf of the Chief Financial Officer

Approved by: F Whyley

Date: November 2025

On behalf of the Monitoring Officer