

Nottingham & Nottinghamshire

# Case for Devolution

A summary of our vision for change



Councils across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire are working together on a series of projects to tackle critical issues such as the economy and climate change.

Our intention is that this collaboration will bring much needed investment into our area.

Leaders from the nine councils, which cover a population of more than 1.1 million people, are also working on ways to make local government services more impactful and better for residents and businesses through collaboration.

## Context

This new approach is in response to the government's call for local leaders to work jointly on the new "levelling up" agenda including devolution – a key initiative to ensure every area has the powers and resources needed to recover from the Covid-19 pandemic and ensure economic growth and prosperity.

Government are particularly keen to see this collaborative approach in areas which have been hard hit by Covid and which have missed out on public and private investment over the years.

The government's Levelling Up White Paper is expected to set out plans for further rounds of local devolution.

New devolution deals will take a more flexible approach and be bespoke to the needs of individual places.

In readiness for this publication, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire councils are preparing the case for the city and county to hold greater powers - moving some of those currently controlled by central government in London.

Holding powers and funding at a more local level gives us the opportunity to improve public services and enrich the lives of people who live and work in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

Local and bespoke solutions to the area's particular challenges are only possible with the requisite local decision-making powers.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire are home to more than 1.1 million people and nearly **40,000** active enterprises.

The economy of the city and county has a diverse mix with a core city, historic market towns, countryside, and distinct culture and communities.

The county and city's economy generates more than **£26.5 billion** GVA yet has much untapped potential for growth.

Despite this potential, the area has historically received some of the lowest levels of government investment.

The resurgence of economies such as ours is critical for the renewal of the UK economy.

Devolution and joint working are important as we face complex financial, economic and social challenges in our region, which require an innovative and dynamic response – we cannot face them operating within the status quo and expect any significant change.

Nottingham city and three districts in North Nottinghamshire (Mansfield, Bassetlaw and Newark and Sherwood) are top priority areas for “levelling up” as recognised by government; whilst Ashfield similarly is among the most disadvantaged communities in the region.

We know there are problems in our city and county – comparable with many other areas nationally – of inequality in skills and health, in particular, of lower wages and less secure jobs. We want to improve the lives of all Nottingham and Nottinghamshire residents and ensure no one is left behind.

#### Our ambition is to:

- > Attract significant inward investment, boosting economic growth and raising productivity, as well as growing the private sector.
- > Raise living standards and achieve a demonstrable reduction in inequalities including in poverty, health and social care.
- > Deliver high quality places to live for all residents.
- > Regenerate our city and town centres, unlocking difficult sites for development.
- > Tackle climate change and protect local people from its impacts.
- > Deliver better services for residents.
- > Secure better outcomes and value for money for local taxpayers through public sector reform and efficiencies.
- > See Nottingham and Nottinghamshire realise its true potential as a core city and county working together, restoring local pride.

#### We will build on our existing track record working together. A strong foundation is in place with recent successes including:

- > Transforming Cities Fund was awarded **£99m** in investment in March 2020 for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire projects.
- > Local councils, with support from local public and private organisations, have been successful in securing funding up to **£121m** from the Towns Fund.
- > Our new Development Corporation, EMDevco, is working to generate **£4.8** billion of GVA for the region’s economy per year, as well as **4,500** homes and **84,000** net additional jobs.
- > Local councils are working in partnership with our D2N2 Local Enterprise Partnership, universities, businesses and colleges to increase opportunities and access jobs, education and training for local people.
- > Partners are working across the region on our response to Covid-19 and the post-pandemic recovery, including delivering vital Covid-19 grants to businesses.

- > Our N2 Environmental Strategy group has brought local councils together with the Midlands Energy Hub and universities to coordinate our approach to delivering a zero carbon future and address the climate change emergency.
- > Transport for the East Midlands provides collective leadership on strategic transport issues, agreeing major investment priorities and providing collective input into the work of Midlands Connect and the Department for Transport.
- > Nottingham City Council is spearheading a blueprint for the future of cities through the Broadmarsh re-development, working jointly with the Greater Broadmarsh Advisory Group and supported by Heatherwick Studio and Stories.
- > Collaborative work to deliver the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Integrated Care System, improving health outcomes and tackling inequality.
- > There is joint work and a strong political consensus across the region on the development of a coherent vision for HS2, the electrification of the Midland Mainline and wider Midlands Engine Rail.
- > Partners across the region are working on a business case for an inland Freeport, centred on a port of entry at East Midlands Airport.
- > Ratcliffe-on-Soar power station has made the shortlist of what is hoped to be the world's first prototype fusion energy plant.
- > Partners are working together on "Tomorrow's NUH", part of the government's billion-pound hospital building programme.

**These examples demonstrate the potential of collaboration across the city and county, as well as with our neighbouring counties – but the current system is constraining.**

**A devolution deal and working more collaboratively would change this, providing local determination of strategic priorities and a stronger unified voice for the city and county's priorities in discussions with government.**

## The Ambition

Securing a Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Deal is ultimately about changing things for the better for local people and giving all our residents and businesses the best possible opportunities and experiences.

Together we have identified a wide range of priorities where we think we can make a real difference for residents. The five priority themes are:

**Education and Skills**



**Transport**



**Environment**



**Economy and Infrastructure**



**Land and Housing**



## Priority Theme

### Education and Skills



#### Benefits we're seeking to achieve

- > Increased skills levels and a better equipped workforce.
- > Better support into employment, particularly for those furthest away from the labour market.
- > Accelerated delivery of the government's Skills for Jobs White Paper.

## Priority Theme

### Transport



#### Benefits we're seeking to achieve

- > Improved infrastructure and connectivity.
- > Better public transport, walking and cycling.
- > Cleaner air.

## Priority Theme

### Environment



#### Benefits we're seeking to achieve

- > Engagement of local people, with a focus on improving the environment for those most in need.
- > Maximise public sector investment in areas such as: Public service estate; domestic homes refit; vehicle replacement; air quality measures.
- > Improved waste management services for local people.
- > Accelerate delivery of existing strategies and cooperation on policy development ahead of the Environment Bill.
- > Enhanced and protected green and blue infrastructure: increased woodland cover, cleaner rivers, increased biodiversity.
- > Improved flood alleviation.
- > Accelerate net zero targets for some and assist all to achieve existing targets.

## Priority Theme

### Economy and Infrastructure



#### Benefits we're seeking to achieve

- > More and better coordinated investment in infrastructure.
- > Regenerated city and town centres, and communities: increased occupancy rates, improved public realm.
- > Accelerated delivery of full fibre and 5G connectivity, improving people's quality of life and equipping businesses to compete on a global scale, working faster and more efficiently.
- > Achieving benefits of Smart Cities approach for all of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.
- > A dedicated statutory delivery vehicle – East Midlands Development Corporation – enabling more inward investment.

## Priority Theme

### Land and Housing



#### Benefits we're seeking to achieve

- > Unblocking challenging sites through partnership working.
- > More affordable housing.
- > Improved health outcomes and reduced social isolation through enabling people to stay in their communities.
- > Reduced health and social care costs.
- > Accelerated work on One Public Estate.

#### **We have created a long list of other areas which we will continue to develop.**

##### **These include:**

- > Health and social care.
- > Visitor economy, heritage and culture.
- > Youth services and support to vulnerable adolescents.
- > Community safety, cohesion and reducing reoffending.
- > Public sector reform.

## How we will work together

We already have a joint City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Economic Prosperity Committee (EPC), which we propose to use as the governance vehicle for partnership discussions.

All councils will come together under the EPC to determine priorities and ensure distributed leadership across priority themes and devolved powers and resources.

We have already completed initial legal checks to confirm that the EPC has the potential to be a vehicle for devolution and identified the necessary steps we need to take to make this a reality.

**The following workstreams have been identified as key areas of focus in the coming months:**

- The content of a devolution deal (ask, offer, benefits) with sponsorship by leaders and leadership by chief executives.
- Implementation plan to deliver the deal.
- Building our Levelling Up team.
- Governance.
- Mapping communications and engagement of delivery partners and stakeholders. Nottingham and Nottinghamshire would seek to work with a wide range of partners across industry, higher and further education and the wider public sector.

## Next Steps

As part of this approach, leaders from nine councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire have been meeting to formulate a plan for joint actions.

Although it is early days, themes and priorities are emerging, with a focus on transport and infrastructure, skills and employment, and climate change.

Detailed programmes of activity will be formulated in the coming months, and early conversations are being held with government, to seek devolved powers and resources to drive the ambition of local leaders.

In return, leaders are in discussions about joining up local services.

Potential examples include joint working to deliver the new waste collection duties contained in the Environment Bill; areas where there are currently skill shortages, for example planning, and some back office functions which could be provided in a more streamlined way.

If this initiative is successful, there would be tangible outcomes and the public would notice the difference in the short and medium term.

For clarity, this approach does not require the creation of additional tiers of government or the creation of a regional or local Mayor.

**To move our work forward, we will take the following action:**

- Leader sponsors have been identified and scopes are being prepared for each priority theme.
- Work to develop those theme areas on the longer list.
- Agree resources to drive forward the work at the next EPC meeting, with the costs met jointly by local councils from existing resources.

The involvement of a wide range of partners including Nottinghamshire Police, the D2N2 local enterprise partnership, our local universities and our integrated care system will be crucial to the success of this programme and work and early conversations are starting to happen as plans take shape.

We are focussed on a devolution deal for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

That said, we want to work with our partners across the East Midlands to track their progress and work in a complementary way. We are in conversation with Derby and Derbyshire to consider synergies and ensure maximum benefit. For the wider region, we support a refreshed Alchemy project, which has been central to regional collaboration on our Development Corporation and Freeport – and is core to continued partnership working across the East Midlands, in the Midlands Engine.

This pre-existing regional vehicle could potentially facilitate the kind of inter-county cooperation that you might otherwise achieve through a Combined Authority, allowing us to draw on our individual devolved powers and put them to use together where it's beneficial, subject to our neighbours being able to bring forward similar deals in the future.

The early signs of this joint working are positive, with leaders recognising they are stronger together.

Crucially, leaders know the challenges we face are greater than any one organisation and that partnership and collaboration are critical to improving both the long-term future of communities, and the day to day lives and prospects of local people.

