

## Report of the Chief Executive

**Local Government Reorganisation**1. Purpose of Report

To update Cabinet on proposals for local government reorganisation. This links to the Council's vision that Broxtowe will be a greener, safer, healthier place where everyone prospers.

2. Recommendation

**Cabinet is asked to RESOLVE that:**

- 1. A contribution of £6,000 be agreed towards the cost of an options identification and appraisal study by independent consultants be approved.**
- 2. An extraordinary Council meeting be arranged for 19 March 2025 to discuss the Council's response to the Government's invitation for proposals in March.**

3. Detail**Process and Timetable**

The government's white paper on devolution makes a statutory invitation to all authorities formally inviting all Councils in two tier areas and small neighbouring unitary Councils to work together to submit plans for reorganisation.

Interim plans are to be submitted by March 2025 – working with other Councils in the area rather than each authority producing competing proposals.

There is an intention for final proposals to be submitted in Autumn 2025 (after local elections).

Government intend a phased approach and anticipate new unitary authorities by April 2027 and 2028. Where local consensus is not achieved, the Secretary of State has power to determine a solution.

Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) boundary changes are possible, but there are additional steps and complexity in the procedures required.

Nottinghamshire County Council did not make an application to be considered as part of a priority group of local authorities.

**Criteria**

The white paper mentions a minimum size criteria of 500,000 population for principal Council structures.

The existing government “tests” for successful proposals in existing legislation are:

- Improve local government (outcomes and services, value for money and efficiency, cost savings and recovering the cost of change, stronger and more accountable leadership, immediate and long-term sustainability.)
- Command ‘a good deal’ of local support.
- Cover a credible geography.

Robust proposals with evidence is required – set within a broader vision for public service reform.

A letter has been promised by the end of January to include more detailed criteria to be considered by the Secretary of State when making decisions.

**Joint working in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire**

To develop options for future unitary (principal) Council arrangements in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire which lead to improved outcomes for citizens and strengthened local democracy, Leaders agreed a set of values and principles to guide how we will work together in developing the options and some initial local criteria to help shape/appraise options:

- Collaborative, including joint commissioning and shared communications messages where agreed.
- 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.

**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 East Midlands Combined Council Authority (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.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire local authorities have agreed to jointly commission an options analysis from independent consultants. Broxtowe’s share of the costs involved will be £6,000. This work forms the basis of future discussion by individual authorities and Nottinghamshire as a whole.

**Costs of change**

Government expects that in most cases the costs of reorganisation will be met within the geography. This includes accounting for any historic debt of existing authorities.

**4. Financial Implications**

The comments of the Head of Finance Services were as follows:

There is no budgetary provision for the cost of an options analysis from independent consultants. If Members were to approve the proposal, the one-off cost of £6,000 would be funded directly from General Fund Reserves in 2024/25.

5. Legal Implications

The comments from the Head of Legal were as follows:

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report

6. Human Resources Implications

Employees are being kept informed through an intranet page and senior manager roadshows. Updates are given in weekly briefings, and GMT question time which happens quarterly.

7. Data Protection Compliance Implications

This report does not contain any OFFICIAL(SENSITIVE) information and there are no Data Protection issues in relation to this report.

8. Background Papers

Nil.