

Report of the Chief Executive**Local Government Reorganisation****1. Purpose of Report**

To provide Members with an update on Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

2. Recommendation

Cabinet is asked to NOTE the report.

3. Detail**Request for Reimbursement of Costs**

Members will recall that Cabinet previously considered the resource implications arising from the Council's participation in the LGR programme. In response to concerns regarding the costs incurred by the Council in supporting the programme of reorganisation proposals and associated implementation planning, the Leader of the Council wrote to the Secretary of State seeking clarification on whether any financial support or reimbursement arrangements would be made available to councils for expenditure incurred as a consequence of the Government's LGR agenda.

A response has subsequently been received from the Minister for Local Government, Devolution and Regional Growth. A copy of the Minister's response is attached in the **Appendix** for Members' information.

Nottingham and Nottinghamshire ongoing work

The Council has previously communicated concerns regarding Local Government Reorganisation, and these have been raised with Ministers. However, pending further announcements from Government, it is recognised that officers will continue to engage with the wider programme to ensure the Council remains informed of developments and is able to protect the interests of residents and maintain service continuity.

Since the Government announced a pause in the LGR process, Local Authorities in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire have continued to undertake those activities that are considered appropriate within the agreed "progress and prepare" framework. The focus has been on ensuring that the nine councils are in the strongest possible position to respond to future Government decisions whilst avoiding unnecessary delay in preparatory work.

Progress has been made in establishing the governance, programme management and implementation arrangements required to support this phase of the programme. A comprehensive programme structure is now in place, supported by the Strategic Implementation Board, an Implementation Delivery

Group and a central Programme Management Office. These arrangements are providing increased oversight of programme activity, risks, dependencies and resource requirements.

The partnership has also completed a review of programme activity to ensure that work being undertaken remains consistent with the current national position.

Programme Development

Work is continuing across a range of corporate and service-based implementation programmes. These programmes have been established to consider the requirements, challenges and opportunities associated with bringing together services and functions into future unitary authorities.

Cross Cutting programmes are focusing on areas such as

- Finance
- Legal and Governance
- Human Resources and Workforce
- Data, Digital and Technology
- Assets
- Procurement and Commercial
- Communications
- Customer Services

Alongside these, service-led programmes have been established covering

- Adults Services
- Children's Services
- Housing
- Place
- Community Services
- Corporate Services

The primary focus at this stage is not the redesign of services but the development of a shared understanding of existing arrangements, identification of key risks and dependencies, and the establishment of implementation plans that could support a future transition. This work is helping to build a comprehensive picture of the changes that would be required and the critical activities that would need to be undertaken should implementation proceed.

Workforce and Organisational Development

Partners have agreed that staff engagement and support must remain central to programme planning. Work undertaken to date has focused on understanding workforce-related issues across the nine councils, identifying areas where common approaches may be required and considering how employees can be supported throughout any future transition period.

Constructive engagement has commenced with Trade Union representatives. Partnership-wide sessions have already taken place and arrangements are being developed to ensure that Trade Union perspectives are appropriately reflected in programme discussions and decision-making processes.

Capacity and Resource Challenges

Much of the work currently being undertaken is being delivered alongside existing service responsibilities, transformation programmes and statutory obligations. As a result, several programme areas have highlighted availability of specialist resources as a risk in ensuring the pace of activity is appropriate over an extended period.

The partnership is undertaking a review of capacity and prioritisation. Whilst capacity pressures remain a challenge, they are being actively managed through the programme's governance arrangements and continue to be monitored as a strategic risk.

Developing the Day One Vision

The Strategic Implementation Board has agreed that whilst achieving a safe and legally compliant transition remains the minimum requirement, there should also be an ambition to deliver the best possible experience for residents, employees and elected Members within the constraints of available resources and timescales.

Work underway to define the practical requirements that would need to be in place from Day One. This includes ensuring continuity of services for residents, providing employees with the systems and support they require to undertake their roles effectively, and ensuring elected Members have access to the governance arrangements, information and resources necessary to represent their communities.

Risk Management and Assurance

A risk management framework has now been established across the partnership, providing a consistent approach to identifying, assessing and managing programme risks. Attention is being given to interdependencies between programmes, resource pressures, governance requirements and the uncertainties associated with future Government decisions.

The Strategic Implementation Board now receives regular assurance regarding programme risks and delivery progress, enabling issues to be identified and addressed at an early stage.

4. Key Decision

This report is not a key decision as defined under Regulation 8 of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012.

5. Updates from Scrutiny

Not applicable.

6. Financial Implications

The comments from the Deputy Chief Executive and Section 151 Officer were as follows:

This report provides an overview of the Government's recent announcement in respect of the pause of LGR in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. There are no specific financial implications to report at this stage, although the cost of LGR and its impact on this Council continues to be carefully monitored.

7. Legal Implications

The comments from the Head of Legal Services and Deputy Monitoring Officer were as follows:

The approval of any proposal under the Act is an executive function in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000 Section 9D(2). The Executive will, therefore, be required to make a final decision on approving the Council's proposal for submission, taking into consideration the recommendations of the Council, which is a consultee in relation to this matter.

8. Human Resources Implications

There were no comments from the Human Resources Manager.

9. Union Comments

The Union comments were as follows:

It is probably too early at this stage to make any firm comments until the situation affecting members of staff are fully known. Regular engagement with staff to make them aware of progress and to seek their views on these important proposals is essential to maintaining good staff morale moving forward. We do accept that as the LGR progresses then the implications on staff will be clearer and then we feel that relevant feedback from Unison will thus be provided.

10. Climate Change Implications

Not applicable.

11. 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.

12. Equality Impact Assessment

Not applicable.

13. Background Papers

Nil.