

Report to: Cabinet Meeting: 26 November 2025

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Peacock, Strategy, Performance & Finance

Director Lead: John Robinson, Chief Executive

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| Report Summary           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <b>Type of Report</b>    | Open Report / Key Decision                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| <b>Report Title</b>      | Local Government Reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>Purpose of Report</b> | To endorse submission to Government of the Final Proposal for this Council's preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| <b>Recommendations</b>   | <p>That Cabinet:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) endorse the submission of a Final Proposal for a new unitary structure of Local Government for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire, as attached as Appendix A to the report, based on two new authorities, the first based on the existing boundaries of Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Mansfield and Newark &amp; Sherwood and the second based on the existing boundaries of Broxtowe, Nottingham City and Rushcliffe;</li> <li>(b) notes the reference within the Final Proposal to the potential for future changes to council size and electoral arrangements as part of the first Electoral Review, and requests the Leader to write formally to the Secretary of State as part of our submission expressing our Council's support to consolidate all of the Newark constituency within the proposed Sherwood Forest unitary Council;</li> <li>(c) expresses support for continued collaborative working with other local authorities across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire on the implementation proposals for any new authorities;</li> <li>(d) notes the additional workload and risks associated with reorganisation and commits to ensure</li> </ul> |

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|                                       | <p>appropriate governance, communication, financial and management arrangements are put in place to mitigate potential impacts during the transition period; and</p> <p>(e) delegates authority to the Chief Executive to make any minor amendments to Final Proposal if necessary, prior to submission.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| <b>Alternative Options Considered</b> | <p>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 is to participate fully in the process. This includes making its position known on a preferred option that reflects the criteria given for reorganisation.</p> <p>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 Appendix A have been developed through a structured and detailed work programme overseen by Leaders/Mayors with support from Chief Executives, other statutory officers, a wide range of other officers and technical advice and analysis from advisors PwC, Peopletoo and CIPFA. Although support for differing options has emerged, this work has continued.</p> |
| <b>Reason for Recommendations</b>     | <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The proposal takes into account the Government's criteria for submissions, namely:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Sensible single tier of local government.</li> <li>2) 'Right sized' and financially viable local government.</li> <li>3) High quality, sustainable services.</li> <li>4) Meets local needs.</li> </ol>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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|  | <p>5) Supports devolution arrangements.</p> <p>6) Local engagement and empowerment.</p> |
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## 1.0 **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 boundary). 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, Newark and Sherwood District Council agreed to endorse the submission of an interim plan for local government reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to Government by 21 March 2025.

The Interim Plan contained the three options referenced above, referred to as Options 1b, 1e and 2.

- 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 (the single county unitary option) demonstrated the weakest alignment against the MHCLG criteria by leaving Nottingham City Council on its existing boundary and evidencing a lack of balance between the two unitary Councils. This option was quickly rejected by all Nottinghamshire Councils. PwC's appraisal also concluded 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 On 15 July 2025, a further report was brought to Full Council and Cabinet on the same evening to determine which option Newark and Sherwood wished to develop as its Final Proposal for submission to Government by 28 November 2025. Full Council agreed that this should be Option 1e and this was ratified by the Cabinet.
- 1.8 Each council is only 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 at the time of preparing this report.
  - Broxtowe - have no desire to be part of any reorganisation, though have expressed a 'marginal preference' for 1e.

Since the Council and Cabinet meetings on 15 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.

Partner councils progressing the 1e option have also commissioned specific support from advisors Peopletoo who are currently supporting local authorities across the

Country. The focus of their engagement has been adult and children's social care to address concerns raised at the time of the Interim Plan and to explore alternative approaches to current methods of service delivery.

## **2.0 Proposal**

- 2.1 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.
- 2.2 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 highlights why Option 1e is considered to present the best option to meet the Government's criteria and provide a future platform for the delivery of housing and economic growth ambitions in conjunction with EMCCA.
- 2.3 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 spring/summer of 2026 with the aim of new unitary councils being in place by April 2028.
- 2.4 In addition to updating Cabinet on the latest position with regard to the Government's requirement for Local Government Reorganisation, Cabinet is asked to endorse the Final Proposal that is attached for submission to Government by 28 November 2025. Delegation to the Chief Executive is sought to ensure that any minor changes to the Final Proposal can be made prior to submission. These changes are to ensure there are no typographical errors and ensure consistency in formatting/design.

In accordance with previous decisions, it is further recommended that the Leader writes an accompanying letter of support to Government, logging this Council's

support for a boundary change (as part of the first electoral review) that would bring the whole of the Newark Constituency within the area of the proposed Sherwood Forest Council.

### **3.0 Community Engagement**

- 3.1 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](http://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, British Sign Language 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.
- 3.2 Over 96% of respondents lived in Nottinghamshire, with responses received from all nine affected areas. Unsurprisingly, the highest number of responses came from Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe. The survey explored peoples' 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).
- 3.3 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.

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 that it made more sense geographically and/or is a cleaner North-South split with a better division of populations and resources.

## 4.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

| Implications Considered<br>Yes – relevant and included / NA – not applicable |     |                      |     |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| Financial                                                                    | Yes | Equality & Diversity | Yes |
| Human Resources                                                              | Yes | Human Rights         | N/A |
| Legal                                                                        | Yes | Data Protection      | N/A |
| Digital & Cyber Security                                                     | N/A | Safeguarding         | N/A |
| Sustainability                                                               | Yes | Crime & Disorder     | N/A |
| LGR                                                                          | Yes | Tenant Consultation  | N/A |

## Financial Implications (FIN25-26/9823)

4.1 The PwC modelling, together with work completed by Peopletoo have forecasted a potential £485m cumulative savings by year five of the new authority post vesting day, with £148m as annual savings from that point onwards. This is split across three main themes:

- Aggregation benefits - £31m
- Transformation benefits - £67m
- Adult Social Care and Children's Services benefits - £50m

Additionally, CIPFA have been engaged throughout the creation of the financial business cases for both options (1b and 1e) to act as a critical friend, reviewing assumptions to ensure the reasonableness of this in comparison to other financial business cases for LGR up and down the country. They subsequently used the modelling produced by PwC in order to assess the risk and resilience of the proposed authorities. The table below shows the outcomes of this:

Figure 23a: Table showing the resilience and risk assessment undertaken by CIPFA.

| Scenario | New authority           | Comprised of                                                                                            | Risk score | Top 3 risk metrics                                                        |
|----------|-------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1b       | Expanded City           | Gedling, Broxtowe, Nottingham City and 27% of Nottinghamshire County Council                            | 8.18       | Reserves/Income, Growth Above Baseline, Overspend (£000)                  |
| 1b       | Rest of Nottinghamshire | Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood, Ashfield, Rushcliffe and 73% of Nottinghamshire County Council | 7.07       | Reserves Sustainability Measure, Unallocated Reserves, Change in Reserves |
| 1e       | South Nottinghamshire   | Broxtowe, Nottingham, Rushcliffe and 28% of Nottinghamshire County Council                              | 8.35       | Change in Unallocated Reserves, Growth Above Baseline, Reserves/Income    |
| 1e       | North Nottinghamshire   | Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark & Sherwood, Ashfield, Gedling and 72% of Nottinghamshire County Council    | 5.89       | Change in Earmarked Reserves, MRP/CFR, Change in HRA Reserves             |

This is also the case in terms of how Council Tax is harmonised. Authorities will have a maximum of seven years for which to harmonise Council Tax over the area for which it serves, to ensure that all residents within that area pay an equal amount of taxation to fund the services they receive.

- 4.2 At this stage there are no direct financial implications for the Council in submitting a final proposal to Government. 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 attributable to this Council will be known. These will be reported to the Governance, General Purposes and LGR Committee at the appropriate time as the programme of reform develops. As part of a strategic review of reserves, the Council has set aside £0.500m of its existing reserves to fund any future activity necessary to assist with the creation of the new authority that this Council will reside.

#### **Legal Implications (LEG2425/6484)**

- 4.3 Cabinet is the appropriate body to determine the proposals as the decision is an executive function. Full Council has previously recommended to Cabinet in July 2025 that Option 1e should be developed as this Council's preferred option and a Full Council briefing has been arranged for 18 November 2025 to involve and update all members. In addition, the Governance, General Purposes & Local Government Reorganisation Committee received an update on the progress of the Option 1e work in September 2025. The same Committee will receive full information in relation to the Cabinet decision on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2025.

The submission to Government has to be made by 28<sup>th</sup> November 2025, all authorities are required to present one option for reorganisation. Option 1e has already been accepted by this Council as its preferred option to progress to submission and engagement with all Councillors on the final proposal has been undertaken, as such, in line with the Council's call-in procedure, the substance of the decision has already been subject to scrutiny and as such call-in would not apply.

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.

- 4.4 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.

### **Human Resources Implications (HR2526/2377SL)**

- 4.5 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.

- 4.6 At this stage, the Council's workforce has 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 a period of uncertainty for some colleagues. 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.

- 4.7 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.

The transition period will create a significant amount of additional work and 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.

### **Equalities Implications**

- 4.8 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been prepared to support this submission. It has reviewed the potential impact of Local Government Reorganisation on residents 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. A copy of the EIA is attached at Appendix B.

The assessment identifies both potential positive and negative impacts. Potential positive impacts include improved coordination of services particularly around vulnerable service users, for example linking up Social Care and Housing services more closely and improving opportunities for greater partnership working with other service providers such as the 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.

### **Carbon Reduction/Environmental Sustainability Implications**

- 4.9 Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) presents a valuable opportunity for councils to strengthen their carbon reduction plans through enhanced collaboration and shared expertise. By working together within established networks such as the Local Area Energy Partnership and the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA), the new unitary council can develop more ambitious, joined-up strategies for decarbonisation. Ongoing initiatives like Local Area Energy Plans (LAEPs) exemplify this collaborative approach, enabling councils to co-design evidence-based, cost-effective pathways to Net Zero that reflect local priorities and resources. Evidence has already shown that these partnerships foster innovation, unlock additional funding and ensure that best practice is shared across the region. LGR will set the conditions for accelerated progress towards carbon reduction targets while delivering wider benefits for communities.

### **Background Papers**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

[English Devolution White Paper](#)  
[19 March 2025 Report to Full Council – Item 72](#)  
[15 July 2025 Report to Full Council – Item 8](#)

11 September Report to Governance, General Purpose, and Local Government  
Reorganisation Committee – Item 4