

**MINUTES
OF THE MEETING OF THE
COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2025

Held at 7.00 pm in the Council Chamber, Rushcliffe Arena,
Rugby Road, West Bridgford
and live streamed on Rushcliffe Borough Council's YouTube channel

PRESENT:

Councillors R Butler (Chair), M Barney, J Billin, T Birch, R Bird, A Brennan, A Brown, S Calvert, J Chaplain, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G Fletcher, M Gaunt, E Georgiou, P Gowland, C Grocock, R Inglis, R Mallender, S Mallender, D Mason, H Om, H Parekh, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, C Thomas, R Upton, D Virdi, J Walker, R Walker, L Way, T Wells, J Wheeler and G Williams

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:

L Ashmore	Director of Development and Economic Growth
D Banks	Director of Neighbourhoods
R Clack	Deputy Monitoring Officer
A Hill	Chief Executive
P Linfield	Director of Finance and Corporate Services
E Richardson	Democratic Services Officer
H Tambini	Democratic Services Manager

APOLOGIES:

Councillors J Cottey, P Matthews, A Phillips, L Plant, D Polenta and G Wheeler

34 Declarations of Interest

Councillors Brown, Butler, Clarke, Gowland, Om, Upton and J. Wheeler declared an interest in respect of Item 3 Local Government Reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. They confirmed that as dual hatted members of both Nottinghamshire County Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council, they had attended earlier a meeting at Nottinghamshire County Council and voted on the item being discussed this evening. They confirmed that they had come to the meeting with an open mind and were ready to listen to the debate in the interests of Rushcliffe's residents.

35 Local Government Reorganisation in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire

The Leader and Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor Clarke MBE presented the report of the Chief Executive, which provided an overview of the draft Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR).

The Leader referred to its tremendous significance and thanked officers from

Rushcliffe and around the County for their hard work in producing this complex submission. This report presented the strategic case for creating two, new unitary councils, Nottingham Council and Nottinghamshire Council, to deliver clear accountability, better services and stronger local leadership. The Leader stated that despite the Government's guidelines being unclear, a process had to be followed, with residents' needs always coming first; however, he felt that the vast majority of the public did not want LGR, especially as it was not in the Labour Party's Election Manifesto.

The Leader stated that the vision and ambition of this proposal was to apply a strapline of 'Safer, Simpler, Stronger' governance, which would align with the boundaries of the Combined Authority and the Integrated Care Service, providing simplified service delivery. The proposals included Neighbourhood Committees, giving real influence over priorities and funding, with joined up services, allowing councils to act quickly, and it was hoped that the reorganisation would allow a 'digital first' approach. The Leader stated that in respect of economic growth, Nottingham was a national and international hub, with the County focused on clean energy and advanced manufacturing.

The Leader referred to the complicated financial case, which could be summarised as annualised savings of £122m by Year 3, rising to £235m by Year 5, with an anticipated payback period of 1.34 years. In respect of governance, it was proposed that 187 Councillors would represent both authorities, which would reduce current numbers by more than half, increasing workloads for individual Councillors. The creation of Neighbourhood Committees for hyper-local decision making, having a stronger partnership with parish and town councils was envisaged, with further work on this after implementation in 2028. Before then, significant work would be required to produce a comprehensive Implementation Plan, to ensure safe transition and service continuity. The Leader confirmed that the submission aligned with Government priorities and criteria, and that it would deliver better services, empower communities, facilitate economic prosperity, and secure financial resilience, and he felt that Option 1b was the best of the proposed three options.

In moving the recommendations, the Leader referred to recommendation c) and stated that the membership of the Task and Finish Group should be expanded to a suitable number to ensure representation from across the Council.

Councillor Brennan seconded the recommendation and reserved the right to speak.

Councillor J Walker stated that LGR had come to the forefront due to the need for long term financial sustainability, following years of austerity, which had pushed many councils to the brink. She felt that everyone agreed that a way was needed to make collective councils more sustainable, by looking at funding distribution, and it was good that the future shape of Local Government was being discussed. She welcomed the concept of a Task and Finish Group; however, she wished it had been proposed earlier and suggested that it would be better if it was Chaired by an opposition group member. She felt that there had been no real cross-party consultation, referred to the Council's decision to

align with the Reform led County Council and believed that the Conservative Party was in decline. She noted that on this important matter, the administration had chosen not to work with Rushcliffe Councillors but with County Councillors, which no other district had chosen to do.

Councillor Thomas stated that Option 1b would be preserving and morphing the two existing larger councils into two new ones and she could not support it, as Councillors had been promised new organisations, with the Leader accepting her amendment to include that in the resolution at the July Council meeting. Councillor Thomas felt that the proposed names emphasised this lack of change, with residents still being unsure who to contact. She stated that the proposal failed to address concerns regarding critically important upper tier functions, which should be run jointly. The most cost effective option would be a single unitary authority, which had been ruled out; however, she believed that it would still be possible for two unitary authorities to create a structure where the upper tier functions could be run collectively. Councillor Thomas believed the neighbourhood proposals were badly thought through and needed to be more detailed for the Government to consider. Planning required a more local approach and she questioned how this would work over such a large area and was disappointed that this had not been addressed at this stage.

Councillor Birch proposed the following amendment to recommendation a), which was seconded by Councillor Chewings, who reserved the right to speak.

- a) supports the submission and recommends to Cabinet that the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation be submitted by the deadline of 28 November 2025 and sends a letter to Government stating strongly that this Council although submitting a proposal feels the Local Government Reorganisation process does not have public support and the Government should have been open by including this in their election manifesto.

Councillor Birch agreed that this was not in the Labour Government's Manifesto, which the amendment was noting and whilst the situation was far from ideal, a decision had to be made and he felt that Option 1b was the least worst option, with the most coherent geography and giving roughly an urban authority and a rural authority. He questioned how Councillors who were now voicing concerns about LGR had voted in favour of it at the County Council in 2018 and felt that this had to be noted.

The Leader confirmed that he accepted the amendment, which then became part of the substantive motion.

Councillor Gaunt stated that whilst the Government's Manifesto did not specifically mention LGR, it did include a pledge for the devolution of power across England, which amounted to streamlining decision making, improving financial viability and increasing accountability. He stressed the importance of this decision and was disappointed that instead of all Councillors working together from the start, the Conservative administration had refused to consider any part of the Borough joining the City, and he felt that none of the three options being put forward to the Government were acceptable.

Councillor Gowland agreed that the most cost effective option would be a single unitary authority and disagreed that it would not follow Government guidelines, and she advised that the current plan did not fit in with health based partnership maps. She stated that the Labour Manifesto did talk about devolution, this had been an issue for the past 10 years, and she was surprised how quick the projected payback time was. She stated that Option 1b made no sense for residents in West Bridgford and reiterated the need for local representation in the area.

Councillor R Mallender expressed concern about the potential loss of local knowledge, especially for planning and he referred to the need for local representation and expertise, not just in Rushcliffe but throughout the County. Neighbourhood Committees had been mentioned, but there was no detail and it was vital to maintain those lower levels of democracy. Councillor Mallender also referred to the importance of electoral reform and the need for proportional representation, as the current system was no longer fit for purpose.

Councillor Soloman thanked officers for their hard work and stated that she supported Option 1b, as she felt it addressed the challenges faced by Nottingham City Council, whilst protecting the viability of other Nottinghamshire councils and simplifying services. It provided a clear structure, stronger delivery, with significant potential savings, and most importantly she felt that it supported the best interests of local residents. Councillor Soloman spoke about her involvement in the petition, which she believed was intended to advocate for the best outcome for Rushcliffe's residents through cross-party collaboration, and she was disappointed that this had not happened. She felt that decisions must be based on what was right for Rushcliffe's residents, based on geographical similarities, financial savings and streamlined services.

Councillor Calvert thought that two tier authorities should be replaced by unitary councils, and that any of the options proposed would be better than the current system, as they would provide simpler, more cohesive and effective local government, reducing the current disparity in levels of deprivation and enhancing service delivery. He agreed that the proposed new Nottingham Council should include parts of Rushcliffe, and as a minimum West Bridgford, and that the whole County would benefit from a successful core City and in supporting the case for a boundary review, he felt that the current system was untenable. He stated that West Bridgford needed strong, local democratic representation and sought reassurance that if Nottinghamshire Council was established, that would happen, and he hoped that the Government would make a timely decision. He also supported proportional representation.

Councillor Chewings stated that there was no support for LGR, and that it came from a desire to make cuts, rather than making improvements. He felt that the issues facing Rushcliffe were different to those in other parts of the County; however, as a result of this process, the Borough would be linked to them. He also referred to planning and the loss of local knowledge in the decision making process. Councillor Chewings felt that the options being put forward were not fit for purpose and would create a tier of government with no link to the community, resulting in the removal of the embodiment of Councillors' responsibilities for their communities.

Councillor Grocock reiterated thanks to officers for their hard work and believed that the standardisation of local authority structures into unitary authorities was necessary and referred to the various areas where unitarisation had taken place since the process began in the late 1960s. He stated that this was a long standing and necessary process, and the challenges of delivering public services could not be ignored. Council was reminded that under the current system, decisions were already taken by County Councillors who were miles away from Rushcliffe. He stated that Councillors should be explaining and reassuring residents about the process, rather than alarming them about possible mergers with the City, and Councillor Grocock stated that the proposals put forward by Nottingham City Council were the most sensible and more accurately reflected the urban, rural divide.

Councillor Barney stated that LGR was necessary to find ways of working more effectively, doing more with fewer resources, being more efficient and working together. It was a difficult situation and a decision had to be taken, and he supported the recommendation, as he believed that it was in the best interests for Rushcliffe.

Councillor R Walker suggested that whilst other options, including a single unitary authority, or an expanded City might have merit, due to the stipulated guidelines, they were unlikely to be successful, and he was satisfied that the presented option was the best in the current situation.

Councillor Simms agreed that the process was flawed due to the Government's parameters and that there was not enough time to evaluate all possible options. He stated that he was here to represent local residents, and whilst he did not believe that LGR was the best option for residents, as it was bad for local democracy, the proposed option was the best one for Rushcliffe.

In seconding the recommendation, Councillor Brennan stated that whilst she agreed that there was little enthusiasm for LGR, it was pleasing that Councillors were so passionate about the process, and she genuinely believed that all Councillors were doing the best for local residents. She felt that this was the best option for Rushcliffe and stated that she had not met a resident from Radcliffe on Trent who wanted to join the City. Whilst recognising the ongoing challenges the City faced, Councillor Brennan did not believe that Rushcliffe could solve them, and she questioned even with expanded boundaries how the City would be run to avoid previous mistakes. She questioned there being any reference in the Labour Manifesto to LGR and reiterated the lack of support generally for it and stated that the Conservative Group was fully supportive of cross-party working.

The Leader advised that when the process started, Reform UK had no elected members at the County Council, and Rushcliffe had already said that it did not want to be part of any new Council, which would involve joining the City Council. He stated that Rushcliffe had been very open, with cross-party briefings taking place, and he advised that some Councils were not taking reports to their Council meetings. The Leader confirmed that a single unitary option had been considered; however, it had not been supported, as the population would have been outside the guidelines. Strategic planning would be undertaken by the East Midlands Combined Authority Mayor, and the

Leader was sure that some type of Area Committees would be set up to consider planning applications. The Leader advised that any new council would look at local representation for West Bridgford. He agreed that the process was flawed, being pushed through too quickly and he wished that the process had been different, to allow more discussion; however, a decision had to be taken, and he considered Option 1b to be the best one for Rushcliffe. The leader requested that a recorded vote be taken, which was agreed by four Councillors.

In accordance with Standing Order Paragraph 4.23, a recorded vote was taken for this item as follows:

FOR: Councillors M Barney, T Birch, R Bird, A Brennan, A Brown, R Butler, K Chewings, N Clarke, T Combellack, S Dellar, A Edyvean, S Ellis, G. Fletcher, E Georgiou, R Inglis, D Mason, H Om, H Parekh, N Regan, D Simms, D Soloman, R Upton, D Virdi, R Walker, T Wells, J Wheeler, and G Williams

AGAINST: Councillors S Calvert, J Chaplain, P Gowland, R Mallender and S Mallender

ABSTENTIONS: Councillors J Billin, M Gaunt, C Grocock, C Thomas, J Walker and L Way

It was RESOLVED that Council:

- a) supports the submission and recommends to Cabinet that the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation be submitted by the deadline of 28 November 2025 and sends a letter to Government stating strongly that this Council although submitting a proposal feels the Local Government Reorganisation process does not have public support and the Government should have been open by including this in their election manifesto;
- b) recommends to Cabinet that it delegates authority to the Chief Executive to approve the final design and any necessary minor editing revisions of the Proposal document and submit it to the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 28 November 2025; and
- c) recommends to Cabinet that it establishes a cross-party Task and Finish Group to provide oversight of Local Government Reorganisation in relation to the residents of Rushcliffe on the basis of the draft Terms of Reference at Appendix Two.

The meeting closed at 8.22 pm.

CHAIR