



Council

Thursday, 20 November 2025

Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Nottinghamshire

Report of the Chief Executive

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Strategic and Borough-wide Leadership, Councillor N Clarke

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report presents the draft Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation. The Proposal is due to be submitted to MHCLG on 28 November 2025 and will be considered at Cabinet on 25 November 2025.
- 1.2. The Proposal, at Appendix One, has been drawn up in conjunction with Nottinghamshire County Council (who are also meeting on 20 November to consider approving it for submission) and focuses on the Council's preferred option of 1b as agreed at Council in July 2025.
- 1.3. Scheduling an Extraordinary meeting of full Council provides all members of Council the opportunity to review and debate the draft Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation. This follows an all-Councillor briefing on 12 November 2025 and a review of the procedural process for supporting the submission of the Proposal at Corporate Overview Group on 18 November 2025.
- 1.4. As an Executive Function, the final decision whether to support the submission of the draft Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation rests with Cabinet who meet on 25 November 2025.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED 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
- 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

- 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.

Reasons for Recommendation

- 2.1. To ensure that Council meets the requirements of the statutory invitation from Government to submit a Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation for the area of the County of Nottinghamshire and Nottingham City by 28 November 2025.

3. Supporting Information

- 3.1. On 16 December 2024, the Government published the English Devolution White Paper, and subsequently, on 10 July 2025, the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill. The White Paper set out the intention to devolve greater powers to regions and local areas to improve public services and drive economic growth through:
- widening and broadening devolution so that all areas of England have a devolution settlement
 - deepening devolution through the development of a stronger set of powers and resources available to local areas through the new Devolution Framework
 - progressing local government reorganisation in two-tier areas to support a move to simpler structures, unlock further devolution and deliver sustainable public services.
- 3.2. Following the publication of the White Paper, the Government issued a formal invitation to the nine Council Leaders in Greater Nottinghamshire, asking each Leader to work with other Council Leaders in the area to develop a proposal for Local Government Reorganisation, with an interim plan required to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025, and final proposals to be submitted to Government by 28 November 2025.
- 3.3. The invitation outlined six criteria against which proposals for local government reorganisation will be assessed when considered by Government. These were as follows:
- a) A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.
 - b) Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
 - c) Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
 - d) Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
 - e) New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
 - f) New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

- 3.4. The nine Greater Nottinghamshire councils collaborated between January and March 2025 to develop an Interim Plan. The work was supported by Pricewaterhouse Coopers (PwC) who were commissioned following agreement by the nine Council Leaders. The Interim Plan was debated at Council on 20 March 2025. The Interim Plan contained details of the eight initial options considered focusing in on three options that appeared to best meet the six criteria set by central Government. The Interim Plan was supported by full Council and submitted to Government by the 21 March deadline.
- 3.5. Feedback was received from central Government on 3 June 2025 by letter and on 12 June 2025 in person. The initial options as presented in the Interim Plan were supported by central Government enabling the nine councils to progress to an Options Appraisal.

Options Appraisal

- 3.6. Three options were contained within the Interim Plan submitted to Government in March 2025. All three options formed two new unitary councils using current council boundaries as the initial building blocks. The three options were as follows:

Option 1b: One unitary council covering the existing Nottingham City, Broxtowe and Gedling district areas and a second unitary covering the district areas of Ashfield, Mansfield, Bassetlaw, Newark and Sherwood, and Rushcliffe.

Option 1e: One unitary council covering the existing Nottingham City, Broxtowe and Rushcliffe district areas and a second unitary covering the district areas of Ashfield, Mansfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, and Newark and Sherwood.

Option 2: One unitary council covering the existing Nottingham City area and a second unitary covering the existing Nottinghamshire County area including the district areas of Broxtowe, Ashfield, Mansfield, Bassetlaw, Gedling, Newark and Sherwood, and Rushcliffe.

- 3.7. During June and July 2025, all nine councils in Greater Nottinghamshire worked with PwC to appraise these options with further work also undertaken by Finance Directors to test and further develop the assumptions within the financial modelling of the costs and benefits of the options. In addition, officers at Rushcliffe also worked with KPMG to explore a 3-Unitary model.
- 3.8. The Options Appraisal concluded that Options 1b and 1e would likely deliver comparable financial viability but with 1b delivering enhanced benefits to the community in terms of coherent, balanced and sustainable Council at the optimal scale. Option 2 was unlikely to meet as many of the Government's six criteria for Local Government Reorganisation. The principle of a 3-Unitary model for Greater Nottinghamshire was considered to be a viable option but not demonstrably better than 1b or 1e.

- 3.9. The Options Appraisal was reported to Council on 17 July 2025 and, following debate, Council decided to support the 1b Option and to work together with other councils supporting the same option to work up a full proposal to meet the 28 November central Government deadline. Nottinghamshire County Council also voted to support the further development of Option 1b. Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood, and Gedling councils all felt that the 1e Option provided the most convincing case for development and opted to work together to work up a full proposal for the November submission deadline. Nottingham City Council decided to pursue a hybrid model which was not included in the original Interim Plan, which focused on expanding the existing City Council boundary to contain parts of Broxtowe, Gedling and Rushcliffe (but not whole districts). The City Council's business plan for Local Government Reorganisation has yet to be published. Consequently, there has been no time for Rushcliffe and other authorities to validate or give any substantial assurance regarding Nottingham City Council's extended boundary proposal. Both Ashfield and Broxtowe councils have remained uncommitted to any one option deciding instead to wait until proposals were more firmly developed. No council decided to develop Option 2.

Stakeholder Engagement

- 3.10. During the proposal development phase, a large-scale public engagement exercise has been undertaken. All nine councils commissioned Public Perspectives to undertake a web and paper-based survey open to all residents, businesses, and other interested parties across Greater Nottinghamshire. The survey opened on 4 August 2025 and ran until 14 September 2025. Public Perspectives also convened a number of focus groups to probe the initial feedback in more depth providing more insight into public perception and understanding of LGR.
- 3.11. In total, 11,500 responses to the survey were received across Greater Nottinghamshire. 26% of those responses were from Rushcliffe residents – more than any other council area – accounting for 10.4% of our residents. A report summarising the engagement feedback has been prepared by Public Perspectives and is included within the Proposal document at Appendix One.
- 3.12. The engagement survey run by Public Perspectives was augmented in Rushcliffe with six in-person roadshows in our main villages and towns. These roadshows were supported by senior officers and gave residents the opportunity to raise questions and concerns, as well as promoting the online survey from Public Perspectives. In addition, the Town and Parish Council Forum on 3 October 2025 received a presentation about LGR from senior officers and attendees were provided with an opportunity to discuss LGR and, more specifically, its impact on local governance and engagement. Senior officers have also met with key local stakeholders including the Police and NHS for example.
- 3.13. It is important to note that the engagement exercise and additional stakeholder meetings were not consultation in the traditional sense. LGR is a central Government driven change to the structure of local government. Individual

councils have no control over whether to participate or not, and the centrally set criteria provide very little scope for acting on the views of local residents. The engagement survey designed by Public Perspectives, and the additional roadshows and stakeholder meetings held by Rushcliffe Borough Council, aimed to establish what the new authorities should be prioritising in terms of local services, and what was important to local residents in terms of their community and a sense of place and belonging, as well as identifying what they found difficult about the existing structure of local government that any new authorities could seek to address.

Councillor Engagement

- 3.14. RBC Councillors have received reports about LGR on 20 March 2025 and 17 July 2025 at full Council.
- 3.15. All Councillor briefings were held on 9 July and 12 November 2025 giving Councillors the opportunity to find out what has been happening, key information about the initial submission, options appraisal and final proposal in advance of these documents being debated at full Council. An all-Councillor interactive workshop was held on 14 October 2025 providing Councillors an opportunity to influence significant aspects of the final proposal such as the vision for the two new authorities.
- 3.16. Councillors were also asked to complete a workload survey between 15 October and 5 November 2025. This activity encouraged councillors to reflect on how they spend their time when working as a councillor (on ward matters, advocating for individual residents, or in Council meetings, for example), and to suggest how this might change, or be improved, under LGR.
- 3.17. To formalise Councillor Engagement and ensure continuity of support moving from the submission of the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal on 28 November, through to the decision of central Government in July 2026, through the transition phase and preparation for the 2027 Shadow Authority elections in May 2027, it is recommended that Cabinet set up a Local Government Reorganisation Task and Finish Member Working Group. Draft terms of reference for this Group are contained in Appendix Two. These were also considered at Corporate Overview Group on 18 November 2025.

Officer Engagement and Development of Proposals

- 3.18. Significant engagement has been undertaken with the Council's workforce to keep them informed and engaged in the process of Local Government Reorganisation and also to ensure their natural fears about the future are tackled in an open, transparent and timely manner.
- 3.19. The Chief Executive held four briefing sessions (three different locations and online) for staff in April, June, September and November with each providing an update on LGR activity and the opportunity for staff to ask questions. More regular updates have been circulated via email to staff and a special page for

Local Government Reorganisation has been posted on the internal staff website.

- 3.20. Officers representing the full range of service delivery teams from both Rushcliffe Borough Council and Nottinghamshire County Council met on 16 and 17 September 2025 to take part in a 'Hackathon'. This dynamic and fast-paced event focused on creating two entirely brand-new councils serving the residents of Greater Nottinghamshire with the full provision of a unitary authority. Groups of officers from both councils collaborated on the first draft of visions for both authorities, brainstormed names and taglines, and discussed innovative ways in which their collective expertise and experience could be brought together to deliver better outcomes for residents and businesses across both Greater Nottinghamshire.
- 3.21. Initial ideas from the Hackathon were then used as the basis for further investigation and debate within professional groups or outcome focused teams drawing from expertise from both authorities.
- 3.22. As well as meeting weekly with senior officers from authorities across Greater Nottinghamshire, the Chief Executives of Rushcliffe Borough Council and Nottinghamshire County Council have met frequently to progress key elements of the draft Proposal. There have also been regular meetings of Chief Financial Officers across all Greater Nottinghamshire authorities with assistance from PwC. Collectively, this has been key to the swift development of the Proposal document.

The draft Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation

- 3.23. The draft Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation is contained at Appendix One.
- 3.24. For the purpose of the Proposal, the proposed unitary council covering Broxtowe, Gedling and Nottingham is referred to as Nottingham Council, and the proposed unitary council covering Ashfield, Bassetlaw, Mansfield, Newark and Sherwood and Rushcliffe is referred to as Nottinghamshire Council.
- 3.25. The draft Proposal is currently in a written form only and Councillors should note that work is being undertaken to develop this into an appealing, easy to read document containing infographics and design features to illustrate key points. The focus until this point has been on developing the content of the draft Proposal and ensuring the proposals contained within offer the best possible opportunity for the success Greater Nottinghamshire.
- 3.26. Councillors are also asked to bear in mind that the key audience this document is targeted at is not Councillors, or residents within Greater Nottinghamshire, but Ministers at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and the Civil Servants that support and advise them. Draft proposals will be assessed against the six criteria for local Government Reorganisation as set out in paragraph 3.3 of this document. Therefore, every effort has been

made to highlight how the proposal meets these criteria, to include references to key Government policies and concepts, and to appeal to decision-makers in this instance. More resident-friendly local communications will be launched after the submission to convey what the changes could mean to local people.

- 3.27. The draft Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation presents a strategic argument for the creation of two unitary authorities covering Nottingham (a geographical footprint overing the existing areas of Nottingham City, Broxtowe Borough Council and Gedling District Council) and Nottinghamshire (covering the areas currently represented by Ashfield District Council, Mansfield District Council, Bassetlaw District Council, Newark and Sherwood District Council, Rushcliffe Borough Council, and Nottinghamshire County Council).
- 3.28. One proposal document presents the case for the creation of two separate new unitary authorities. It contains two visions, outlines the similarities and differences between the two authorities, and presents the financial case for Local Government Reorganisation in Greater Nottinghamshire.
- 3.29. The document contains an introduction to Greater Nottinghamshire – People, Place, and Potential – as well as a short summary of the journey so far including the Interim Plan and Options Appraisal exercises. It then sets out the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal including the overarching vision for the area, an explanation of how the two new unitary authorities will look and feel, and then how they will deliver local services and economic growth. The Proposal then looks in more detail at how services within key outcome areas will be delivered, including case studies to focus on how residents will benefit from redesigned services, before the operating models for each authority are outlined. The document goes on to set out the financial case for change, presents an outline implementation plan, and highlights how the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal meets the Government criteria for Local Government Reorganisation.
- 3.30. We would like to draw Councillors' attention specifically to page 143 of the Proposal document which focus on the mechanics of what was expected to be the dissolution of nine separate councils and the creation of two new unitary authorities. Learning from pilot areas has shown that in reality this approach is both risky and fraught with potential legal difficulties. Therefore, the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal presents an alternative approach to creating the two new authorities which allows for a swifter, less risky and, hopefully, easier transition period.
- 3.31. If successful, Greater Nottinghamshire would adopt a Continuing Authority model of governance through the transitional period which leverages existing organisations rather than creating new legal entities. Shadow Authorities will be elected for each Continuing Authority following the MHCLG decision. These councillors will represent their future populations in each unitary area. It is proposed to use the current Nottingham City Council and Nottinghamshire County Council (as the two councils that cover the entirety of the geographical area represented by this Proposal) as the Continuing Authorities which will enable transition costs to be reduced (by avoiding the need to establish new

legal entities for the transitional phase), allow the transition process to be streamlined and frontline services to be maintained, reduce friction during the transition for contracts, procurement, and alternative delivery methods, and ensure clarity of governance, lawfulness and business continuity is in place from day one.

- 3.32. The document (at Appendix One) is not intended to be an exhaustive list of everything that is needed in a new council, it will not answer every question that you may have about how services are going to be provided in the future or how the new authorities will meet resident needs whilst staying within budget. It demonstrates the potential of the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal and how this configuration of two new unitary authorities best meets the centrally set Government criteria.
- 3.33. It appears at this point in time that three proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Nottinghamshire will be submitted to central Government on 28 November. This might suggest that there has been a certain amount of rivalry and competition between councils over the last few months. However, significant elements of all three proposals have been drawn from a collective pool of information created during the early stages of Local Government Reorganisation and all three proposals have benefitted from support and analysis from PwC. All councils remain committed to working together proactively and positively after a central Government decision about the future of Local Government in Greater Nottinghamshire is made in July 2026.
- 3.34. Councillors are asked to review the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal document and confirm their support for Cabinet to approve its submission to MHCLG on 28 November 2025.

What happens next?

- 3.35. Assuming support is given to the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation by Cabinet on 25 November and that the Chief Executive receives delegated authority to sign-off the final document, the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal will be submitted to MHCLG on 28 November 2025.
- 3.36. It is expected that following submission of the proposals, central Government will undertake a public engagement activity of its own in spring 2026 to seek the views of local residents and inform its decision, which is expected in July 2026.
- 3.37. It could be assumed, therefore, that local activity on Local Government Reorganisation is less prominent over the next six months. However, this is unlikely to be the case as preparations for the transitional phase will start early in the new year and are not dependent on which proposal the Government decides to support. MHCLG have published a checklist of tasks to be completed between now and July 2026, including areas such as workforce and HR; cyber, digital, data and technology; procurement, contract management and supplier alignment; finance and council tax; project team mobilisation and local

protocols. Preparations will also commence for the election to the Shadow Authorities in May 2027 with activities and awareness raising to encourage a wide diversity of prospective candidates to stand as local representatives on the new authorities.

- 3.38. To ensure ongoing Councillor engagement in Local Government Reorganisation activities, Council is asked to consider recommending to Cabinet that a Member Task and Finish Working Group is established. Draft Terms of Reference are included at Appendix Two.

4. Risks and Uncertainties

- 4.1. Increasingly there will be further work pressures on services and staff as the Council moves into a transitional phase alongside maintaining ordinary service delivery. This risk applies to each of the proposals being submitted and not specifically to the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal. Financial resource is being set-aside to help mitigate this risk (currently £1.09m in the Organisation Stabilisation Reserve (OSR), the appropriations from the OSR is being reported in Finance update reports to both Corporate Overview Group and Cabinet).
- 4.2. There will be significant risks (both upside and downside) once the new authorities are in place; demonstrated by the significant benefits and costs anticipated as a result of the transition into the two unitary authorities in the Finance Section of the Proposal (Section 6).

5. Implications

5.1. Financial Implications

Section 151 officers across all nine authorities have been reviewing assumptions and analysis, and validating figures that inform the analysis, and the resulting work undertaken by PwC on both the 1b and 1e proposals. This gives assurance regarding the overall modelling to date. The reality is that once a new authority is in place its elected representatives will determine changes to the modelling, for example, both the position on harmonising Council Tax when budgets are set and the final operating structure of the new authority. The Nottingham City Council boundary extension proposal has not had the same assurance given the lateness of the work undertaken.

Section 6 of the report details what the potential day one budget position looks like and net assets and liabilities for the two new unitary authorities in 1b. It focuses on potential savings and costs of transition and payback periods for both unitary authorities. There is some sensitivity analysis focusing on other public sector reform and the speed of change. Both the capacity and capability to deliver the change are key factors in transitioning to the two new unitary authorities.

In terms of financial resilience based on CIPFA's resilience index, there are a range of risk scores, although nothing that warrants concern. As expected, given funding issues surrounding adult and children's social care, it would be

expected that the upper tier authorities have more challenges and therefore higher risk scores. Noting Rushcliffe does have the best risk profile.

The financial analysis has been completed against a backdrop of likely significant changes to government funding, particularly with regards to Fair Funding. The analysis does not include the impact of Fair Funding for the upper tier authorities where the magnitude of change is expected to be more impactful. This is the approach adopted for both 1b and 1e options. We are aware Nottingham City Council's boundary extension option is likely to be based on what the City Council considers as an up-to-date financial position and we believe assumptions surrounding Fair Funding. This will be inconsistent with the financial analysis in the 1b and 1e options and is unlikely to include any analysis of the potential impact of Fair Funding in relation to Nottinghamshire County Council. Therefore, making it difficult to undertake a 'like-for-like' comparison and moves away from the principle of using the same data set for all the options. The assumptions underlying the City's revisions have not been assessed outside of the City Council itself and as such it is not possible to validate these assumptions. This data was provided too late to put into the model and although it is welcomed that the City Council believe their financial position is improving, partner authorities agreed that the use of unaudited and unvalidated data to produce the business cases would undermine the financial analysis provided. Hence, a collective decision was taken to use the last known published financial statements and public approved medium-term financial plans from partner authorities.

5.2. Legal Implications

The relevant legislation is the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007. Under Section 2 of the Act the Secretary of State has issued an invitation to councils in Greater Nottinghamshire to submit proposals for a single tier of local government. The Secretary of State has the power to implement proposals with or without modification, but the Act prevents any Order being made unless consultation has been carried out with all affected authorities and others considered appropriate. This statutory consultation will be led by Government and is separate from the Council's own engagement activity.

If the Government decides to proceed, the necessary legislation will be prepared in the form of a Structural Changes Order (SCO) for parliamentary approval. The SCO will establish the new single tier of local government and make provision for the abolition of predecessor councils. The SCO would place a duty on all affected councils to co-operate, to provide information as reasonably requested, and to prepare for the transfer of functions, property, rights and liabilities.

At this stage there are no direct legal implications for the Council. If implemented, there will be significant contractual, property and staffing implications requiring further legal advice, which will be addressed through the transition process.

The decision of approving a submission on Local Government Reorganisation to the Secretary of State, is one for the Council's Executive i.e. Cabinet.

5.3. Equalities Implications

Nottinghamshire County Council has carried out an Equalities Impact Assessment on the Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal and this is attached at Appendix Three. This will be kept under review and updated throughout the transitional and final implementation stages of Local Government Reorganisation.

5.4. Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

There are no Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 implications associated with this report.

5.5. Biodiversity Net Gain Implications

There are no biodiversity net gain implications associated with this report.

6. Link to Corporate Priorities

The Environment	The Council will continue to champion these priorities as plans for Local Government Reorganisation progress.
Quality of Life	
Efficient Services	
Sustainable Growth	

7. Recommendations

It is RECOMMENDED 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
- 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
- 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.

For more information contact:	Adam Hill Chief Executive 0115 914 8577 ahill@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	Report to Council 20 March 2025 – English Devolution White Paper.pdf Report to Council 17 July 2025 – Local Government Reorganisation Update.pdf
List of appendices:	Appendix One – Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal for Local Government Reorganisation Appendix Two – Draft Terms of Reference Local Government Reorganisation Task and Finish Group Appendix Three – Equality Impact Assessment for Greater Nottinghamshire Proposal