

Response to MHCLG Consultation on Proposals for Local Government Reorganisation in Nottinghamshire and Nottingham

1. Background

1.1 The consultation invites a closed response (strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree, don't know) to the following statements:

To what extent do you agree or disagree that:

1. the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?
2. the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?
3. the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?
4. this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in Best Value intervention and in receipt of exceptional financial support?
5. the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?
6. the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?
7. that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?
8. the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

1.2 Consultees are then invited to explain responses or provide any other comments in a single free text box. Consultees can provide feedback on each of the three submitted proposals or just one proposal.

2 Rushcliffe Borough Council's Response

2.1 Draft responses for the proposal from Nottinghamshire County Council and Rushcliffe Borough Council (1b) are set out below.

2.2 It is proposed that each statement be responded to with 'strongly agree'.

2.3 The following text is proposed to be entered in the single free text box:

1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?

The proposal offers the most coherent, balanced and sustainable configuration for reforming local government across Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and delivers new governance at the optimal scale: large enough to be strategic, yet local enough to remain connected to communities. It achieves a practical balance between urban intensity and rural reach, aligning service design with the way people actually live, work and travel.

It is coherent in geography, meets the financial sustainability criteria by ensuring a balance between the need for services and the ability of local populations to help pay for them, reflects local identity and natural communities, and maximises the potential for delivery of EMCCA's regional growth and devolution framework in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire. We believe this option offers the best opportunity to improve outcomes, strengthen governance, and achieve long-term financial sustainability, enabling Nottingham and Nottinghamshire to lead the way in delivering modern, resilient and people-focused local government.

2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?

The proposal sets out a robust, well-sequenced and deliverable implementation plan. The plan provides clear programme governance, a realistic phased timetable, credible financial transition modelling, and focused continuity arrangements for statutory services. It features:

- *Clear programme structure and governance*
- *Phased, realistic timetable*
- *Detailed financial transition and affordability modelling*
- *Focused continuity of statutory services.*
- *Workforce and TUPE planning*
- *ICT, data and systems migration planning*
- *Risk management and contingency planning*
- *Neighbourhood governance and local continuity*
- *Partner and stakeholder alignment*
- *Communications and engagement*

3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?

The economies of scope and scale created by the proposal will enable consolidation of services, reduction in duplication, and streamlined management structures. We estimate that the combined impact of our proposed approach to implementation could achieve £189m annualised efficiency savings by year 3 post vesting day of the two new councils, rising to an annualised figure of £235m by year 5. In addition, as we develop our approach to implementing the Greater Nottinghamshire proposal there may be the potential to save £550k from the one off LGR transition costs. Delivering the Greater Nottinghamshire proposal is not only safer, simpler, stronger but is also at a lower cost.

The proposed scale provides a broader and more stable tax base, greater flexibility in managing demand pressures, and improved capacity to withstand financial shocks.

4. To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in Best Value intervention and in receipt of exceptional financial support?

Commissioners have been engaged throughout, and care has been taken to ensure a positive path to the future for the Council in Best Value intervention in our partnership. The Financial Case describes how both councils will achieve financial viability and the transformative activity required.

During the preparation of the financial case, we have worked alongside CIPFA to sense check and provide assurance on the work we have undertaken. As part of CIPFA's support, they used their experience from supporting previous reorganisations, reviews after the formation of new unitary councils and their template and supporting guidance to assess the reasonableness of the draft financial considerations in proposals. This included applying modelling principles, tolerances and an assessment of materiality in determining what was proportionate and should be included. It also included determining the reasonableness of the base information needed to consider costs and savings from transition to new councils and the incremental costs and differences between options. The MHCLG

approved template produced by CIPFA has been completed for the proposals to provide a further sense check.

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?

We strongly agree that the proposed councils will be well placed to deliver high-quality, sustainable public services. Bringing services together within two larger, strategically aligned unitary authorities creates the scale and capacity needed to improve consistency, strengthen professional expertise, and modernise delivery.

The proposal demonstrates that unifying services will reduce duplication, streamline decision-making, and enable more coherent planning across areas such as social care, housing, transport, and environmental services. This integrated approach supports earlier intervention, better use of data, and more joined-up support for residents—key ingredients for improving service quality

Two new unitary councils, Nottingham Council and Nottinghamshire Council, will replace nine existing Councils, ending duplication and confusion and creating one clear line of accountability in each area. This is more than structural change; it is a complete reset of how local public services work together, aligned with the East Midlands Combined County Authority (EMCCA), the Integrated Care System (ICS) and policing boundaries to form a single, coherent geography for public service reform.

In the future, residents will only need to tell their story once. Whether they need a care package, help with housing or support through their child's school, services will join up seamlessly behind the scenes. Local people will no longer be passed between departments or organisations. They will experience councils that are easy to reach, quick to respond and accountable for the things that matter, from fixing roads and keeping streets clean to improving schools, running libraries, building new homes, maintaining parks and supporting families.

These will be next-generation councils, using data, automation and AI to anticipate need and design services around people's lives. Shared information will allow early help, prevention and better outcomes, not repeat contact and frustration. Through smarter systems and clearer responsibilities, we will spend less on process and more on delivery, reducing costs, improving results and making every pound go further.

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?

The Greater Nottinghamshire proposal is rooted in community. Our proposals are grounded in the outcomes our residents tell us are most important and focused on implementing national Government reforms – from Families First to SEND, housing delivery to neighbourhood health.

Widespread engagement with our residents, businesses, voluntary and community sector, Town & Parish Councils, our strategic partners, our workforce, our Councillors and Trade Unions has shaped the Greater Nottinghamshire proposal.

By contrast, in its development, proposal Bii was not subject to comprehensive public consultation.

Our experience of working with families and communities tells us that strengths-based approaches, anchored in neighbourhoods are critical for public service reform. This is why we have placed Neighbourhood Public Services at the core of our Greater Nottinghamshire proposal. Stronger community engagement will deliver genuine opportunities for meaningful neighbourhood empowerment. This recognises that people want more choice and control over their local services and creates a safe, simple and strong framework to rewire local public services from the bottom-up. We have used existing district areas as the building blocks for our new unitary Councils. More complex boundary changes have been tested and these do not demonstrably improve the public service delivery or financial case. Our simpler approach will reduce risk for our residents and achieve benefits sooner with a quicker and lower cost transition. We have provided details of our initial assessment of Councillor numbers and an outline of how Neighbourhood Public Service Committees can provide locally accountable governance structures to engage and empower residents.

7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?

The proposal establishes a strong basis to support current and future devolution arrangements, maximising the potential for delivery of EMCCA's regional growth and devolution framework in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

The two new Councils will work together with EMCCA, coordinating access to integrated housing settlements and grant funding from central

government to maximise opportunities for accelerating and increased housing delivery. Greater stability in housing investment and regeneration funding will help ensure continuity of programmes despite market fluctuations and, most critically, we will be better placed to provide the housing that local residents need as well as providing certainty of the crucial services that some of the most vulnerable members of our local community.

The proposal also supports devolution to our communities, through Neighbourhood Public Service Committees, as explored in our response to question 8.

8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

The creation of new unitary councils offers the opportunity to develop new neighbourhood governance models which can strengthen democracy and give residents and communities more say over the decisions that impact their lives.

We have heard through stakeholder engagement that residents want more decisions made at a more local level – that is, a level much closer than our previous District and Borough Council boundaries.

Subject to the forthcoming guidance indicated in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, we propose to Establish Neighbourhood Public Service Committees (NPSCs) within new unitary councils, rooted in community and reflecting natural neighbourhoods defined by residents. Initial thinking suggests that these will typically serve a population of 30,000-50,000. NPSCs will have devolved funds and influence mainstream council spending in defined areas, shaping and prioritising services such as parks, highways, community safety, planning, and grants.

Our vision is to embed local convening structures that create the opportunity for true devolution, building local governance that enables national and regional policy to be grounded in neighbourhood decision-making, integrated planning and public service delivery. Our proposal creates a stronger role for local people to have a voice, ensuring that policy is shaped and informed by Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's residents.

NPSCs will not replace Town and Parish Councils but will co-exist, sharing resources and collaborating to improve local outcomes. There is an opportunity to enhance and define the relationship with Town and Parish councils, further empowering local communities and strengthening local democracy.

Proactive work and engagement with Town and Parish councils will be a key priority under the next phase of planning as part of the “democracy” workstream outlined in the implementation plan.