

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION (LGR)

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update Committee on work to prepare a business case for change to local government in Nottinghamshire and for Committee to acknowledge progress of this work and agree the disestablishment of the LGR Members Working Group and that configuration options 1 to 5 outlined at Appendix A are assessed as part of this work.

Information and Advice

2. At Policy Committee on 12 September 2018, members endorsed the approach and provisional timetable to develop a case for change for local government in Nottinghamshire and approved funding of up to £270,000 for external support for the preparation of this case. This case for change will be considered at the County Council meeting in December 2018.
3. This report provides an update on the development of the case for change; including financial validation; options appraisal and the listening and engagement activities, undertaken on the Council's behalf by Opinion Research Services, (ORS), an independent social research company.

Phase One – Public and Stakeholder Engagement

4. A two-phased approach to stakeholder engagement and community consultation to enable residents and stakeholders to have their say on LGR in Nottinghamshire was proposed. Phase 1 -the listening, engagement and preparation phase was agreed by Committee to run from September to November 2018 with approval for phase 2 of formal public consultation to be considered at County Council in December.
5. The engagement work has focused on engaging residents and stakeholders in the discussion around local government reorganisation (LGR), to gain initial insights and opinions on the options locally at a formative stage, to help inform the case for change, and plan for formal public consultation.

6. The key strands of engagement work that have been carried out are:
- a) The development of the '**Future Nottinghamshire: local government reorganisation in Nottinghamshire**' pages on the County Council internet pages at www.nottscc.gov.uk/futurenotts
 - b) The launch of an **open questionnaire** on local government reorganisation, available online and with hard copies at all county libraries, for anyone living or working in Nottinghamshire to complete. This questionnaire was available for completion between 3rd October and 31st October 2018 and 2,948 questionnaires were completed.
 - c) The production of an **engagement document**, to go alongside the questionnaire, providing background and context to Nottinghamshire County Council's public engagement about the structure of local government in the County; explaining the County Council's current thinking and inviting initial views during October.
 - d) A Frequently Asked Questions (**FAQ's**) document provided online on the 'Future Nottinghamshire' web pages and with hard copies in Libraries.
 - e) Three deliberative focus groups of representative residents, with 34 residents attending overall, representing the geography and demographics of the county. These focus groups were held in Retford, Mansfield, and Carlton and were led by ORS.
 - f) Three events were held, during week commencing 22 October 2018, with Parish and Town Councils, businesses and business organisations; and voluntary sector organisations. These events were well attended with over 90 attendees. The format of these events included:
 - a brief welcome and high level context by the Chief Executive who then left the events
 - a presentation and discussion session led by ORS
 - outlining the purpose of engagement;
 - the current local government position in Nottinghamshire and the unitary council system;
 - the opportunity for attendees to clarify issues
 - seeking views on the relative importance of a range of criteria for change eg access and value for money; unitary councils in principle and the range of possible options
7. ORS will provide a report on the outcomes of the phase one listening and engagement work and this will form part of the report to County Council in December 2018.
8. A meeting with District and Borough Council Leaders and Chief Executives to discuss the structure of local government in Nottinghamshire, separate from the ORS led engagement work, was held on 5 November 2018.

Case for Change

9. The work on drafting the case for change is progressing. As part of this work a detailed examination of the potential savings that could be achieved by local government reorganisation has been undertaken by council officers. To ensure accuracy and give stakeholders confidence that the financial data is valid and impartial, Deloitte, a leading accountancy firm, have been appointed, following a competitive tendering process, to undertake an independent validation of all financial data and estimates produced.
10. As part of the development of the case for change an analysis of options for the future configuration of local government is required. The LGR Members Working Group considered seven configuration options taking into account: meeting the government's population criteria of 'substantially over 300,000'; co-terminus boundaries; and a reasonable population density and advised that five options should be considered in more detail. The seven options considered are set out in **Appendix A** and it is proposed to analyse options one to five and not to proceed with options six and seven due to the substantial differences in population density in these options.
11. It was agreed at Policy Committee in September that a 'critical friend' with extensive expertise in this field be procured to provide independent advice and constructive feedback on the outline case for change. Ameo Ltd have been appointed to this role and commenced work in early November to ensure that the case for change contains all the necessary elements to meet the governments' criteria

LGR Members Working Group (MWG)

12. The MWG has met twice since the Policy Committee meeting in September considering a number of issues to do with LGR including configuration options and a presentation by Opinion Research Services on the public and stakeholder engagement and consultation work. As the Labour Group, the main opposition group, has now formally withdrawn from the MWG it is proposed that the MWG no longer meets.

Other Options Considered

13. None

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

14. To provide members with an update on progress on the development of the case for change and seek approval to the disestablishment of the MWG and for 5 configuration options to be further appraised.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below.

RECOMMENDATION/S

It is recommended that Policy Committee:

- 1) Acknowledges the progress of the work to develop a case for change and the engagement with stakeholders and the public as outlined in the report
- 2) Receives the business case for change at County Council on 13 December 2018
- 3) Agrees that the LGR Members Working Group is disestablished
- 4) Agrees that configuration options 1 to 5, outlined at Appendix A, be assessed as part of the development of the case for change.

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Chief Executive

For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments. (HD- 1/11/2018)

Policy Committee is the appropriate body to consider the recommendations within the report.

Financial Comments (NDR – 02/11/2018)

There are no financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

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.

- Policy Committee Report September 2018
Local Government Reorganisation Development of the Case for Change

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All

