

REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE REPORT: KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

Purpose of the Report

1. The report seeks to update Members on various matters relating to the Leader's portfolio and the work of the Executive.

Information

2. **Visit to Nottingham College / Emtec** - Early in February, I visited the Ruddington Campus of Nottingham College, home to Emtec, one of the industry's leading training providers, whose focus is on raising standards, competence and professional recognition of individuals engaged in the global automotive industry.
3. **STEP** - On 6 February I was delighted to meet with George Freeman, Minister of State in the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology, at the former West Burton power station site in Bassetlaw.
4. It was announced last October that the decommissioned coal-powered West Burton power station near Retford was the chosen site for the STEP (Spherical Tokamak for Energy Production) fusion project, selected from an initial list of 15 prospective locations.
5. The minister visited Nottinghamshire to announce that UK's STEP prototype fusion energy plant had taken another big leap forward through the creation of a new delivery body for the programme, named UK Industrial Fusion Solutions Ltd.
6. The Government is providing £220 million of funding for the first phase of STEP, which will see the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) produce a concept design by 2024. The STEP prototype reactor will be used to research and develop the technology and enable a fleet of commercial plants to follow in the years after 2040.
7. The programme will create thousands of highly skilled jobs during construction and operations, attracting other high-tech industries to our county and the region, furthering the development of science and technology capabilities nationally.

8. **East Midlands Development Corporation (EM DevCo)** – I continue to attend meetings of the EM Devco Ltd Oversight Authority, alongside other local council leaders and senior officers, the most recent meeting having taken place on 13 February 2023.
9. EM Devco is managing projects that will have a positive and far-reaching impact on local people and places, similar to the long-lasting transformational impact seen in other parts of the country, like the Olympic Park in London and the Salford Quays development in the North West. For Nottinghamshire residents this will mean more jobs, more houses and better transport.
10. **Harworth and Bircotes** - On 16 March Councillor Keith Girling and I visited Harworth & Bircotes Town Council to discuss local projects and opportunities to collaborate. We discussed ongoing work to bring forward new investments in social housing for older people, and how our officers can work together to make improvements on a variety of local sites.
11. **Chancellor's Budget** - I was pleased to hear positive news for our County in the Government's recent Budget, which included new East Midlands Investment Zone opportunities and Levelling Up Partnerships for Mansfield and Bassetlaw. We will work together with local partners on plans for these projects, including putting forward appropriate locations and opportunities for Investment Zones. These Zones will focus on key areas of science, technology and innovation, and require us to work with university partners on key areas of research and development. This will sit under our new Combined Authority.
12. **Levelling Up Partnership** - As the name suggests, an opportunity for us to work with District Partners in those named areas on a plan for further change and investment. This builds on the over £200m of Levelling Up-type funds now allocated in North Nottinghamshire. I'm keen to ensure that, with the added flexibility of developing a plan in partnership rather than having to bid into Government as with previous funds, we develop something that is meaningful for the long term, based on clear data and shared priorities.
13. **Engagement with stakeholders** - I recently visited and spoke to local businesses and stakeholders at the Nottingham City Business Club, where we discussed the challenges, process and opportunities of devolution, and I answered questions from local partners. This is part of an ongoing engagement process where, alongside the other three Council Leaders in our devolution partnership, I continue to reach out to appropriate groups across the County to explain what is happening.

Progress Report

14. **Devolution** – The previous item on today's agenda is to seek approval for the proposal to create the East Midlands Combined Authority for the areas of Nottinghamshire, Derbyshire, Derby and Nottingham, following the statutory consultation that ran from 14 November 2022 to 9 January 2023.
15. There were 4,869 responses to the consultation overall, from members of the public and people answering on behalf of an organisation. The number of responses was higher than similar consultations on devolution in other areas. The majority of respondents backed the proposals on most of the consultation's themes, such as proposals around the powers and funds we can access for transport, skills and housing.

16. The most contentious area was, predictably, governance. Residents overwhelmingly backed the direction of travel in terms of the opportunities and outcomes we seek, and we will ensure that the feedback on the system of governance is appropriately considered and implemented where possible. Analysis of the feedback is publicly available and will be considered in our final proposals, submitted to Government in the coming weeks.
17. **Nottinghamshire County Budget 2023/24** – At our last Council meeting, Members approved our Budget for the upcoming financial year. Our 2023/24 budget ensures we can continue to fund and deliver vital statutory and popular discretionary services throughout the County, while asking residents for no greater financial contribution than is necessary at this time of significant cost of living pressures. It gives us a platform to build on, in order to be able to develop the services that we offer in our communities.
18. **Highways, Transport & Environment Investment in 2023/24** – Nottinghamshire County Council will be investing £44.6 million into local highways, transport and environment over the next 12 months.
19. More than £30 million of this is being allocated to capital maintenance schemes to improve local roads and other highway assets, including £3 million of additional County Council funding towards this work, and an **extra £3.3 million announced in the Chancellor of the Exchequer's recent Spring Budget**.
20. £4.8 million is being allocated to integrated transport schemes (e.g., pedestrian crossings, capacity improvements, speed management schemes), including £350,000 of additional County Council funding for road safety schemes, as well as allocations to fund major transport scheme business cases.
21. £12.3 million of funding is secured to deliver Southwell Flood Risk Alleviation scheme; Active Travel Programmes; Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure funding; and potential bus improvements through the Bus Service Improvement Plan.
22. **Promoting Nottinghamshire** – At the Cabinet meeting on 9 March I was pleased to support plans for this year's events promoting the County, and also celebrating the forthcoming Coronation of King Charles III. These also include Nottinghamshire Day, the County Show and Robin Hood Festival.
23. We are working with Nottinghamshire County Show organisers to ensure the Council has a significant presence at the Show on 13 May 2023 and in future years, offering fun and engaging activities aligned with our Nottinghamshire Plan objectives, particularly the creation of a healthy, prosperous, green Nottinghamshire. Key themes will include outdoor education activities, support to rural communities including mobile libraries, and initiatives to support the delivery of our Carbon Neutral plan and meeting the Council's environmental targets.
24. Nottinghamshire Day will take place on the 25 August 2023, celebrating the identity, heritage, culture, and local traditions of our county and championing our communities, enabling participants from inside and outside the County to better understand and celebrate the histories and traditions of the places we live, work, and enjoy our leisure time. The celebration of Nottinghamshire Day will be incorporated within the Robin Hood Festival which takes place over the bank holiday weekend of the 26 – 28 August 2023 at Sherwood Forest.

25. **Nottinghamshire Visitor Economy Framework** – continuing the theme of promoting Nottinghamshire, I'm pleased to note that earlier this month, the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Asset Management approved the revised Nottinghamshire Visitor Economy Framework (VEF), embedding a more partnership-based approach in to how we manager our county's tourism opportunities.
26. **All decisions agreed at Cabinet are published online, you can find more details on the Council's Website - [Democratic Management System > Decisions \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](http://nottinghamshire.gov.uk)**

Decisions taken under Special Urgency procedures

27. None.

Other Options Considered

28. None

Reason for Recommendation

29. This is a noting report to update the Full Council on matters relating to the Leader's portfolio and the work of the Executive since the last meeting, as required by the Constitution.

Statutory and Policy Implications

30. 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 NHS Constitution (public health services), 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. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

31. There are no financial implications arising from this report.

RECOMMENDATION

1) That the contents of the report be noted.

**COUNCILLOR BEN BRADLEY MP
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

For any enquiries about this report please contact:
Phil Rostance, Executive Officer

Constitutional Comments (CEH)

32. Full Council is required to receive this report, which is to note, as set out in the Constitution.

Financial Comments (SES)

33. There are no financial implications arising 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.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- None