



Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Introduction

This EqIA is for:

THE FUTURE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN
NOTTINGHAMSHIRE - THE OUTLINE CASE FOR CHANGE

Details are set out:

Full Council – 13 December 2018

Officers undertaking the
assessment:

Steve Derbyshire – Policy & Equality Officer

Assessment approved by:

Date: 4 December
2018

The Public Sector Equality Duty which is set out in the Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to have due regard to the need to: Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

The purpose of carrying out an Equality Impact Assessment is to assess the impact of a change to services or policy on people with protected characteristics and to demonstrate that the Council has considered the aims of the Equality Duty.

Part A: Impact, consultation and proposed mitigation

1 What are the potential impacts of proposal? *Has any initial consultation informed the identification of impacts?*

Local government in Nottinghamshire is facing substantial pressures due to reduced funding, rising costs and demand for care services.

Over the last five years all eight Nottinghamshire authorities have seen a £120 million reduction in Revenue Support Grant from Government. And by 2020, councils will no longer receive Revenue Support Grant funding from Government, with uncertainty about how services will be funded beyond this time. The Medium Term Financial plans report either a budget shortfall in the medium term or a requirement to use substantial reserves to balance budgets. There is a projected total budget shortfall of £71 million across all eight councils, meaning that important local services, which are delivered by all councils will inevitably come under review.

Given the continuing financial challenges that authorities face, it is an opportune time to consider reorganisation of the local government structure in Nottinghamshire to ensure that it is as efficient, effective and financially sustainable as possible and can continue to deliver services that meet the needs of Nottinghamshire residents.

This outline case for change evaluates the opportunities for changing the structure of local government in Nottinghamshire as an enabler of a much bigger vision for the future of the County.

Our vision is to provide twenty first century local government services that take advantage of technology and are locally focused to deliver what people and businesses in Nottinghamshire require.

We want to ensure that Nottinghamshire is the best place it can be for everyone; is healthy, vibrant and inclusive; aspirational and ambitious; where people want to live, visit, learn and work; where ambitions are achieved and there is increased prosperity for residents and businesses.

The outline case for change sets out the current operating context, carries out an assessment of the options and describes the County Council's vision for how a new unitary council could work.

There is a two-phased approach to public and stakeholder engagement. To ensure impartiality an independent social research company, Opinion Research Services (ORS) has been engaged to undertake the public and stakeholder engagement.

Phase 1, the listening and engagement period, has taken place at a very early and formative stage in the County Council's thinking. The purpose of doing so was to clarify at this early stage people's awareness, attitudes, perceptions and concerns about local government and possible reorganisation.

At this stage, the County Council wanted to identify what options it should consider in more detail, and why, rather than what proposals it should be making. The phase one 'listening and engagement' programme was used to understand residents' and stakeholders' perceptions of a wide range of issues and ran from 1 October 2018 – 31 October 2018 during which time residents, stakeholders and staff were invited to provide feedback through a range of routes.

The phase one engagement has shown that at this stage there are mixed views about a move to a unitary council structure. A consistent theme from the engagement was the need for more information to reach an informed view. It is proposed that the phase two consultation will be a formal exercise, providing more detail on a preferred option for residents and stakeholders.

A detailed analysis of the phase one listening and engagement activity undertaken by Opinion Research Services (ORS) is included in the outline case for change.

Phase two of the case for change proposal would include a formal public consultation exercise with residents and stakeholders.

2 Protected Characteristics: Is there a potential positive or negative impact based on:

Age	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Disability	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Gender reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Pregnancy & maternity	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Race including origin, colour or nationality	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Religion	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact
Sexual orientation including gay, lesbian or bisexual	<input type="checkbox"/> Positive	<input type="checkbox"/> Negative	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Neutral Impact

3 Where there are potential negative impacts for protected characteristics these should be detailed including consideration of the equality duty, proposals for how they could be mitigated (where possible) and meaningfully consulted on:

<p>How do the potential impacts affect people with protected characteristics <i>What is the scale of the impact?</i></p>	<p>How might negative impact be mitigated or explain why it is not possible</p>	<p>How will we consult</p>
<p>The outline case for change proposes to release savings for the delivery of front line services, mitigating the impacts faced from reducing central funding and growing demand for services.</p> <p>In addition, it is anticipated, that it could remove duplication and deliver a more responsive service to all residents.</p>	<p>The outline case for change proposes strong mechanisms for listening to local communities and giving residents a real say on local issues; with Councillors who are responsible and democratically accountable for all decisions in their community, in a simplified structure that ensures people always know who to turn to in their local area for help and advice.</p>	<p>A two-phased approach to stakeholder engagement and community consultation to enable residents and stakeholders to have their say on Local Government Reorganisation in Nottinghamshire is in place.</p> <p>Phase 1, the listening, engagement and preparation phase, ran from 1st-31st October 2018. ORS ensured that the representative elements of this phase (the resident focus groups) were representative of the demographics, which included people with protected characteristics.</p> <p>Approval for phase 2 of formal public consultation will be considered at County Council in December. Representative elements of phase 2 will also ensure that representation is sought from all demographics including people with protected characteristics.</p>

Part B: Feedback and further mitigation

4 Summary of consultation feedback and further amendments to proposal / mitigation

The phase one engagement has shown that at this stage there are mixed views about a move to a unitary council structure. The level of support varied across the open questionnaire and the different stakeholder groups, with the business focus group showing a high level of support, but only 37% of the open questionnaire respondents agreeing that there is a case for reducing the number of councils. There were mixed preferences for a one- or two-council unitary structure, with the open questionnaire favouring two councils and the deliberative engagement showing no clear outcome for either option (with the exception of the business focus group which favoured one council).

The listening and engagement phase has taken place at an early formative stage and the results should be seen in that context.

Comments received during the Phase one engagement stressed the need for service access and delivery be a priority for local government in Nottinghamshire taking account of the needs of those without online access and those who live in areas with limited transport links. Any new local government arrangements would need to ensure fair distribution of resources across the County. It was recommended that an easy read consultation format be used to enable all parts of the population to be included.

A consistent theme from the engagement was the need for more information to reach an informed view. The intention of phase one was to gain an understanding of initial views and perceptions and it is proposed that the phase two consultation will be a formal exercise, providing more detail on a preferred option for residents and stakeholders.

Taken together, the questionnaire and deliberative findings show the “starting point” for a possible public debate if the County Council continues to consider the options for change.

Completed EqIAs should be sent to equalities@nottscc.gov.uk and will be published on the Council's website.