

17 December 2021

Agenda Item: 4

## **REPORT OF THE LEADER OF NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **JOINT WORKING AND DEVOLUTION PROGRAMME UPDATE**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To update Committee on the progress of the Joint Working and Devolution programme.

#### **Information**

2. Nottingham and Nottinghamshire's 'Case for Devolution' was approved at the 29 October 2021 City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Economic Prosperity Committee (EPC) meeting. This report provides a summary of progress on this fast moving programme since the last meeting of this committee.

#### **Discussions with Government**

3. A successful meeting was held with Minister Neil O'Brien MP on 10 November 2021. Key discussion points included:
  - Devolved powers would be held by upper tier leaders. It is critical however that through the EPC, districts and boroughs are part of the conversation and decisions are made by consensus where possible. The expertise and resource of district and borough councils is crucial to the delivery of the best deal for Nottingham and Nottinghamshire communities.
  - Regardless of whether a devolution deal happens, all Nottingham and Nottinghamshire councils have a strong commitment to continue to work on service transformation, through the EPC structure.
  - Government was interested in the proposals around early intervention and preventative services to support young people and how this would form a "unique selling point" (USP) of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire case for devolution. It was agreed that work to support young people would become the sixth priority theme.
  - A key theme running throughout the case put forward for devolution is offering scale and resilience. The transformational impact of pooling our resources and expertise was emphasised.

- In the Levelling Up White Paper, the Government will set out the wider framework for devolution, the type of powers available through a devolution deal and the geographies covered.
4. It is expected that further discussions will take place with Government following the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, now anticipated to be in January 2022.

### **Development of the priority themes**

5. Scopes are being developed for the first six priority themes:
- Education and skills
  - Transport
  - Environment
  - Economy and Infrastructure
  - Land and Housing
  - Enabling and supporting young people through their journey to adulthood
6. Discussions have started with partners to agree their contributions including:
- The case for devolution and draft priority theme scopes were revised to address the feedback received at the 29 October 2021 EPC meeting
  - A session was held with the Chief Officers Forum on 1 November 2021, with very positive feedback and engagement from partners
  - A meeting is scheduled with Nottingham Trent University Vice-Chancellor Professor Edward Peck and all Further Education Principals. This will build on earlier conversations held with universities and further education colleges
  - The young people theme is gathering momentum. A meeting with the National Youth Agency (NYA) on 29 November 2021 led to an agreement to work together on an outline business case.
  - A meeting is scheduled to discuss the involvement of the Police and Crime Commissioner.
  - A meeting is scheduled between Anthony May, in his role as Chair of the Safer Nottinghamshire Board, and Lord Coaker of Gedling, Independent Chair of the Nottingham Crime and Drugs Partnership Board, to discuss cooperation in the context of devolution.
  - Nottingham Trent University have also offered to play a supportive role in reviewing the scopes.
7. Lead Members for each priority theme will be engaged as the scopes are progressed into outline business cases.
8. A “critical friend” group of young people is being convened. This group will help to shape the content of all the priority themes. Listening to young people’s voices and including their ideas from an early stage will strengthen our devolution proposals immensely. The intention is to build on this first step, with the strong participation of young people forming a unique and innovative element of the Nottingham and Nottinghamshire case for devolution.
9. A long list of other areas of focus has been prepared and will continue to be developed. These include:
- Health and social care

- Visitor economy, heritage and culture
- Community safety, cohesion and reducing reoffending
- Public sector reform

## **Governance**

10. A working group has been convened to review the governance of the Joint Working and Devolution programme. Work is at an early stage and will be reported to an EPC meeting in the New Year.

## **Resources**

11. On 29 October 2021, the EPC approved the establishment of a dedicated programme team to drive forward the work as well as an annual budget of £450,000, funded through the shared business rates pool. Nottinghamshire County Council's Policy Committee on 2 December 2021 approved the establishment of the programme team, with the County Council acting as the host organisation and employing body.
12. The team is a resource which will be deployed under the strategic direction of the EPC to drive collaborative working and devolution. Due to the need to progress the programme at pace, the jobs have been advertised as expressions of interest across Nottinghamshire public service agencies. Interviews are planned for December 2021 and January 2022 to enable appointments to be made as soon as possible.

## **Mapping**

13. A mapping exercise is underway to analyse our collective strengths, challenges, and existing partnerships. The results will inform the devolution proposals and ensure existing resources and forums are used wherever possible to progress the work, avoiding duplication. An update will be provided to the EPC in the New Year.

## **Communications**

14. Joint communications took place around the publication of the "Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Case for Devolution" as part of the 29 October 2021 EPC papers. A revised communications strategy is being prepared following initial feedback from the EPC. Ongoing communications activity is taking place to maintain momentum on the programme.

## **Next Steps**

15. The short term priorities for the programme are to:
  - Develop scopes for the six priority themes into outline business cases, including the engagement of lead members, by the end of January 2022.<sup>1</sup>
  - Recruit a team to drive forward the work by the end of January 2022
  - Agree a revised communications strategy for the programme at the next EPC meeting
  - Work on the long list areas of focus
  - Present the results of the mapping exercise at the next EPC meeting
  - Keep Government updated on progress.

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<sup>1</sup> Please note this date is provisional and subject to further discussion with chief executives and lead members.

## **Other Options Considered**

16. Do Nothing - Nottingham and Nottinghamshire councils could choose not to respond to the devolution agenda and continue with existing arrangements. This option was rejected as all councils have agreed to explore joint working as a priority and to take no action would prevent the benefits and opportunities outlined in the report 'Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Case for Devolution', taken to the 29 October 2021 meeting of this Committee, from being achieved and utilised.

## **Reason/s for Recommendation/s**

17. The right devolution deal would enable all Nottingham and Nottinghamshire councils to deliver economic and social prosperity across the city and county. It is therefore important that councils continue to work together to develop the case for change.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

18. 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**

19. The financial implications of producing a devolution proposal for government were considered at the 29 October 2021 meeting of this Committee. This report contains no further financial implications.

## **Implications for Service Users**

20. The Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Case for Devolution is ultimately about changing things for the better for local people and giving all our residents and businesses the best possible opportunities and experiences. The programme continues to be developed with this primary objective in mind.

## **Implications for Sustainability and the Environment**

21. Enhancing and protecting the local environment and addressing climate change is a Priority Theme under this programme of work. The intention is to support delivery of existing strategies and cooperation on policy development ahead of the Environment Bill. An ambition is included to accelerate net zero targets for some Councils and assist all to achieve the existing targets set.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

It is recommended that Committee:

- 1) Notes progress to date on the devolution and joint working programme.
- 2) Approves the next steps listed under paragraph 15.

**Councillor Ben Bradley MP**  
**Leader of Nottinghamshire County Council**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**  
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### **Constitutional Comments (LW 07/12/2021)**

22. The recommendations set out in this report are matters which may be determined by The City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Economic Prosperity Committee under the terms of reference for the Committee set out in the Committee's constitution

### **Financial Comments (SES 07/12/2021)**

23. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 19 of the report.

24. The financial implications of producing a devolution proposal for government were considered at the 29 October 2021 meeting of this Committee. This report contains no further financial implications.

### **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 2 December 2021 – Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Case for Devolution Resourcing Requirements](#)
- [Policy Committee 2 December 2021 – Appendix 1 Case for Devolution](#)
- [The City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire EPC 29 October 2021 – Case for Devolution](#)
- [The City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire EPC 29 October 2021 – Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Case for Devolution Resourcing Requirements](#)

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All