

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. **STEP Fusion** – On Monday 3rd October 2022 Government announced that West Burton A, near Retford in Bassetlaw, has been selected to be the first site in the world to develop a commercial power station that will use the energy produced by fusion reactions to generate electricity.
3. Last month I joined Cllr Keith Girling at the site, where we met with several key stakeholders including representatives from the UK Atomic Energy Authority (UKAEA) who are leading on the project. STEP Fusion offers an inherently safe and virtually limitless source of clean electricity by copying the processes that power the sun.
4. Nottinghamshire County Council coordinated the nomination process for the county working with several partners, including the site landowners EDF, Bassetlaw District Council, Midlands Engine, ERA and local LEPs.
5. We are so proud to have played our part in this amazing, once-in-a lifetime opportunity for Nottinghamshire which will bring incredible benefits to the county and wider region. This will include millions, if not billions worth of investment, putting it at the heart of the Government's plans to revolutionise the way we generate energy in the UK.
6. The West Burton site will be the international hub for carbon-neutral, fusion development, attracting the brightest minds locally and from across the world, boosting skills, training, and creating thousands of highly skilled jobs.
7. Earlier this month I was invited to the home of fusion energy at Culham with the UK Atomic Energy Authority. Here I learned more about the technology and the earlier programmes which have led to STEP. I also had the opportunity to meet some of the fantastic apprentices currently going through the system there. One of the first benefits we will see of STEP will be a new Apprenticeship programme based here in Nottinghamshire.

8. As we enter the first phase of the project, our focus will be on a number of key activities including the concept design development and maturing the design of the organisation to enable it to become a major infrastructure programme.
9. **Devolution Consultation** – Following the extraordinary Council held on Friday 4th November 2022 all 4 upper tier Councils in Nottinghamshire, Nottingham, Derby, and Derbyshire have agreed to go ahead with a public consultation on devolution.
10. The consultation is taking place from Monday 14th November 2022 until Monday 9th January 2023 and is an opportunity for everyone in the area to have their say about the devolution proposals. It is open to residents, businesses, community and voluntary groups, and other organisations in the region.
11. I recently met with a number of businesses and other key stakeholders across the county at events including Nottingham Partners, Newark Business Club and the Mansfield and Ashfield 2020 to discuss the £1.14 Billion deal in more detail. Here I had the opportunity to hear first-hand the kind of things businesses would like us to achieve with extra local powers and funding for skills, transport and the potential to bring new investment and jobs to the area.
12. **Rising to the Challenge/Budget Consultation** – We know that residents are currently facing pressures on their finances, Councils are also subject to many of the same pressures that are driving up the cost of living for people across Nottinghamshire. Demand on our services for older people and for vulnerable children is increasing. Inflation and the challenges in meeting the National Living Wage means our services are more expensive to deliver. This is putting pressure on our ability to balance our budgets.
13. Over the last few months, we have highlighted a number of the challenges ahead of us and how the Council is rising to these challenges. Throughout October/November, I have met with Cabinet Members and Senior Officers at a series of monitoring panels, digging into the departments to see how we can transform and improve some of the services so we can address our financial challenges at the same time.
14. As we look to set our budget for 2023/24 it is extremely important that we hear the views of residents across the county. We are planning to go out to consultation and ask the people of Nottinghamshire which of our services are most important to them, what they think our priorities should be and where are potential opportunities for savings. At the time of writing, subject to cabinet approval the consultation will go live on the 17th November 2022 and close on the 2nd January 2023.
15. **Remembrance** – On Sunday 13th November I had the honour of laying a wreath at the War Memorial at the Civic Centre in my constituency of Mansfield, before following the military parade down to St Peter's for a Service of Remembrance.
16. I am always grateful to local residents across Nottinghamshire who turn out in huge numbers to remember our fallen, we must never forget the ultimate sacrifice they made during these wars, and later conflicts including the Falklands War, to defend our democracy, freedom, and way of life.

17. The Royal British Legion do a fantastic job promoting services of Remembrance, with the money raised through the purchase of a poppy going towards supporting those veterans most in need. Local communities across Nottinghamshire always do a fantastic job of respecting Armistice and everything that it means, with parades, services and displays all around the county. Huge thanks to all of those involved.
18. **Ministerial Visit** – The newly appointed Local Government Minister Lee Rowley recently made Nottinghamshire his first port of call to hear about opportunities to boost the economic prosperity of the county. It was a great chance to discuss a number of our up-and-coming projects such as STEP Fusion, the Development Corporation and the EM Freeport, and the potential benefits they will deliver for the county.
19. It also gave me the opportunity to discuss the funding of local services and the current financial pressures local authorities are under. I explained how we as a council are working hard to mitigate these pressures, whilst raising the case of Local Government for additional funding ahead of the Government's next spending review.
20. **Parliamentary Debate: Nottinghamshire Transport** - In a debate on Nottinghamshire Transport last month, I raised a number of issues including the viability of local bus services which are really struggling at present due to low passenger numbers and driver shortages. Locally, we're looking at innovative longer-term solutions like 'on demand' buses, and Government have stepped in to provide finance until April whilst we work through a plan.
21. I also shared an update of our highways improvements, following our highways review last year. Since then, we have reduced the levels of temporary 'Viafix' repairs by almost 60%, and have doubled the amount of high-quality, long-term resurfacing that were doing.
22. Transport is a key topic across Nottinghamshire because it impacts on all our residents, it was great to have the opportunity to discuss this in Parliament alongside our other brilliant Nottinghamshire MPs, who are continually working to address the issues faced across the county. It's fantastic to see Government investing in Nottinghamshire and to see the County Council make such huge progress in improving local highways.
23. **School Building Programme** – Cabinet Member for Children's Cllr Tracey Taylor recently visited the new £7.9m Bingham Primary School. The 315 place, carbon neutral primary school is one of a number of schools being built across the county to meet the demand for school places. Thousands of school places have been created over the last five years.
24. Works have recently been completed on the new Rivendell Flying High Academy in Gedling. The new school on the Teal Close development in Colwick offers 210 primary places and will meet the demand arising from the building of new homes in the area and the general increase in demand for school places.

25. Work has also begun on a multi-million-pound project to build a brand-new permanent school in East Leake. The Millside Spencer Academy is being built on former farming land on Rempstone Road as part of a £14.8m investment in education in the village. The school welcomed its first pupils into the temporary learning village in September 2022 with the permanent accommodation expected to open for the new school year in September 2023. The Academy will eventually have a capacity for 315 primary places plus a 26-place nursery.
26. **Futures Group** – In October I was invited to visit Futures Group on Westgate to talk about their ‘Restart’ scheme which celebrated its one-year anniversary earlier this year. The scheme helps those who are furthest from getting in to work and offers support to long-term unemployed people to help tackle some of the challenges and find employment. So far it has been a big success.
27. Throughout the lifetime of the contract, approximately 130 new jobs will be created within the company, and support provided to over 15,000 people. Centres have been opened in many locations across Nottinghamshire, including Worksop, Arnold and Newark, and expanding on their existing presence in Mansfield, making access to support much easier.
28. We also discussed the future skills and employment opportunities from our devolution deal, where we'll have more local funds and control over these kinds of areas.
29. **Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill Committee** – Throughout October I have sat on the Public Bill Committee for the Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill. This has given me the opportunity to have an in-depth look and really get to grips with the detail of how things such as Development Companies, Devolution Plans, new local skills partnerships, investment zones and other changes might benefit Nottinghamshire.
30. Levelling up and regeneration is an area I am incredibly passionate about, this committee has provided a great platform for me to raise key issues with Ministers and to ensure that Nottinghamshire is at the heart of Government’s plans.
31. **Party Conference** – This year’s party conference was a great opportunity to fly the flag for Nottinghamshire. I spoke at a number of events and panels including:
- Council Services
 - In Communities We Trust
 - Taxpayers Alliance: Great Council Tax Debate
 - Midlands Connect/Rail Industry: Delivering World-Class Rail in the Midlands
 - Delivering a Growing Economy

Progress Report

32. **Budget Update Report** – Cabinet noted the report which highlighted the significant challenges presented by the current financial landscape and the measures which are being developed to address these challenges.
33. Cabinet Members agreed the proposed arrangements for consulting stakeholders about the 2023/24 budget proposals.

34. **Latest Cost Estimate – New Primary School East Leake** – The Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Asset Management recently approved the revised Latest Estimated Costs for the works to provide a new primary school in East Leake.
35. The Cabinet Member for Finance subsequently approved the variation to the Capital Programme increasing the overall budget for the construction of the new Millside Spencer Academy to £14.8m, with additional funding being drawn from the Council's Basic Need allocation from Government.
36. **Enhanced Partnership and Bus Service Improvement Plan** – A decision has been taken by the Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment to further progress the development of the Enhanced Partnership Plans for Nottinghamshire and Greater Nottingham (Robin Hood) areas, pending the confirmation of Government funding.
37. **2022-23 Highways Capital and Revenue Programmes** – The Cabinet Member for Transport and Environment has approved the proposed highways programmes to be delivered during 2022/23.
38. This sets out how the Council proposes to use the £55m it is investing in Nottinghamshire's highways and includes funding secured through successful external bids.
39. **Household Support Fund - Phase Three** – The Cabinet Member for Communities has approved the outline criteria and allocation model for phase three of the Household Support Fund to support those in immediate need in Nottinghamshire for the period 1 October 2022 - 31 March 2023.
40. This has allowed the Council to continue its work with a range of partners to deploy Government funding available to those in immediate need as soon as is practical, whilst complying with Government guidance issued for Phase 3.
41. **LED Street Lighting Improvements in Bassetlaw and Newark & Sherwood Districts** – Cabinet recently approved a variation to the Transport and Environment Capital Programme in order to complete the County Council's Street Lighting LED Conversation Project.
42. **All decisions agreed at Cabinet are published online, you can find more details on the Council's Website - [Democratic Management System > Decisions \(nottinghamshire.gov.uk\)](https://www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk)**

Decisions taken under Special Urgency procedures

43. None.

Other Options Considered

44. None

Reason for Recommendation

45. 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

46. 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

47. 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)

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

Financial Comments (SES)

49. 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