

N2 Combined Authority – Consultation Plan

Objective

The N2 authorities are required to consult with key partners and the wider public on the potential establishment of an N2 Combined Authority. This consultation must take place prior to the submission of an N2 Scheme and Governance Review to Government in mid-February.

Recommendations

- The consultation should not begin until Leaders have signed off the consultation plan at their 19th December meeting. Therefore, timescales are tight.
- The detail of the draft Scheme, Statutory Instrument and the Governance review, running to tens of pages, and containing a degree of necessary legalistic and Local Government terminology, may discourage responses. Documents such as FAQs – summarising the key issues – should be prepared to support the consultation instead. The consultation should focus on the principles involved and not the detail of the Scheme, and should ask a limited number of around five-to-seven questions.
- Good practice suggests that the consultation period should be at least six weeks, but given the only possible consultation period will include the Christmas break, ideally the consultation should be longer.
- Given the joint nature of a Combined Authority, the consultation documents should emphasise joint working with all nine N2 Council logos being given equal prominence on a single internet-landing page that will host the consultation and the explanatory documents.
- Each of the nine N2 Councils should make every effort to promote the consultation via communications with citizens in order to maximise responses. In particular, each Council should link prominently to the single hosting page from the home page of their website.
- To ensure a coordinated approach across the nine authorities, Nottingham City Council's Research Engagement and Consultation team will lead creation of the survey, the single landing page, and will compile and analyse responses.

Consultation design

The consultation will take the form of a single internet page that each N2 Council will direct their citizens to. Given the complexity around establishing a Combined Authority, too much detail listing for example, legislative powers and Terms of Reference, is likely to obscure key issues from most consultees and thereby reduce the response rate. Instead, FAQ documents will summarise the issues at hand and the consultation questions will refer to these explanatory documents.

Proposed Consultation Documents

- Summary text.
- An FAQ.
- The consultation questions.

Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders will be specifically targeted with letters and emails from the most appropriate N2 Authorities. Communications will link to the consultation and request responses. Stakeholders to be specifically targeted include:

Key Stakeholder	Proposed Contact
All N2 MPs	Joint letter signed by the N2 Leaders and Mayor to each MP. If possible, a joint N2 and D2 briefing session for local MPs will be organised in Portcullis House in early January
D2N2 LEP	Joint letter signed by the N2 Chief Executives – addressed to David Ralph
Neighbouring LEPs (Sheffield, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire etc)	Joint letter signed by the N2 Leaders and Mayor to the LEPs' Chairs.
Business Representative Groups (Chamber, FSB, CBI)	Joint letter signed by the N2 Chief Executives – addressed to local leads
Key Businesses	Most relevant N2 Chief Executive
Universities	Joint letter signed by the N2 Chief Executives

Draft Timings

Date	Event Description
19 th December 2014	N2's Economic Prosperity Committee to recommend to the N2 authorities whether to progress an N2 Combined Authority.
19 th December 2014 pm	Launch of the consultation - if agreed by the EPC
19 th December 2014 pm to 6 th February 2015	Seven week consultation period.
w/c 22 nd December 2014	Model letters are sent to key stakeholders from N2 authorities, explaining the background and the issues and inviting them to respond to the consultation.
9 th – 10 th February 2015	Consultation responses are compiled, analysed and reviewed prior to submission to Government.
c.15 th February 2015	Submission of N2's Combined Authority Scheme, Governance Review and ancillary documentation.