



Additional / To Follow Agenda Items

This is a supplement to the original agenda and includes reports that are additional to the original agenda or which were marked 'to follow'.

Nottingham City Council

The City of Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Economic Prosperity Committee

Date: Tuesday, 27 July 2021

Time: 2.00 pm

Place: Council Chamber, County Hall, West Bridgford, NG2 7QP

Governance Officer: Emma Powley **Direct Dial:** 0115 8764298

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27 July 2021

Agenda Item:

**REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE, NOTTINGHAMSHIRE COUNTY
COUNCIL**
Working Together - Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Councils
Purpose of the Report

1. To update the Committee on activity to promote closer joint working arrangements between Councils in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire.

Information

2. In 2019, the Committee spent some time considering potential opportunities for closer joint working between constituent councils, within the context of the long-term financial challenges faced by local government. Work was undertaken to develop a collective understanding of the opportunities for further joint work, supported by Price Waterhouse Coopers on a pro bono basis.
3. Further work has not been undertaken since then. The County Council's proposals in 2020 to consider formal local government re-organisation, and the impact of the Covid pandemic on all Councils, have both been key factors in this work not proceeding.
4. However, recent developments mean that the national and local context for further positive consideration of the strategic opportunities for joint working is once again a positive one. These developments include:
 - The Levelling Up White Paper, due to be published later this year. The White Paper presents an opportunity to reset the relationship between central and local government and put councils at the heart of delivering the Government's programme to improve opportunities in all parts of the country, including the opportunity for County devolution deals (see Appendix).
 - The election of a new County Council administration in May. Subsequently, the Leader of the Council has met with each Council Leader/Mayor in Nottingham and Nottinghamshire and restated the County Council's commitment to closer collaboration and partnership working.
5. In this context, Nottingham and Nottinghamshire councils Chief Executives met on 23 July to consider potential high-level themes for a recalibrated programme of joint work, with a view to bringing a more detailed report back to a future meeting of this Committee. At the time of writing, potential areas for joint work could include: -
 - Economic development
 - Strategic infrastructure programmes and projects
 - Transport and local/regional connectivity

- Public sector service reform – for example, One Public Estate, and core service/system alignment and reform
 - Moving to net zero carbon status
 - Employment and skills
 - Combatting child and family poverty
 - Supporting Covid recovery and community support
6. In view of the complexity of many of the issues set out above, and the fact that agreed ways forward will take time to both agree and deliver, it is worth highlighting that in order for joint work projects to be successful, early consideration of resourcing requirements, and clarity on the intended outcomes for residents will be essential. In this respect, £200,000 has been set aside from the Nottinghamshire Councils Rates Pool to provide start up funding. Equally, there is merit in the early identification of “quick wins” to provide both impetus and credibility to joint working activity.

Statutory and Policy Implications

7. 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.

RECOMMENDATION

8. That the Committee considers the issues discussed in this report, and agrees to further exploratory work being undertaken to identify potential areas of strategic joint work between Nottingham and Nottinghamshire Councils, in the light of the developing local and national policy environment for local government. This work will be presented to a future meeting of the Committee.

Anthony May
Chief Executive, Nottinghamshire County Council



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15 July 2021

As the Prime Minister set out in his speech today, strong local leadership is critical to this government's levelling up agenda. We are committed to devolving power to local places and closer to citizens, letting dynamic and accountable local leaders get on and deliver.

We have seen the benefits that strong local leadership can bring to an area, through the role that local leaders have played in championing local investment opportunities and supporting the economic recovery in their towns and cities, and in local government's excellent leadership throughout the pandemic.

We want to work with the existing combined authority mayors to ensure they have the powers they need – in exchange for strong local accountability – to deliver, to trial innovative approaches, to support the recovery, create jobs, improve local services and to level up. As we develop the white paper we will engage with them further, building on previous conversations. We also want more places, particularly in our city regions and major urban areas, to agree an ambitious Mayoral devolution deal where there is local support and continue discussions on Mayoral deals within those areas that are interested.

We promised in our manifesto to deliver full devolution in England, and we are eager to work with you to deliver this. We believe this can be achieved in different ways and with freedom of choice, and flexibility on the part of central government, and tailored to suit the needs, identity and history of local areas. We want to widen devolution beyond the cities and provide strong local leadership for all of our places; building on our work at the local level on high streets, towns and local infrastructure with a longer-term offer across larger, strategic geographies to improve their economic, social and environmental wellbeing, improve public services and drive levelling up in these areas. Counties, towns and villages are an essential part of the nation and should neither be excluded from the devolution enjoyed by many cities and suburbs, nor forced to wear a model which can seem ill-fitting.

We will be engaging with councils over the course of the Summer, beginning with a webinar in the next couple of weeks with council leaders, in advance of the Levelling Up White Paper.

While we are keen to work with local areas on what will be most suitable for them, County Deals will be guided by some key principles:

- Strong local leadership will be fundamental. Whilst high-profile, directly elected individual leaders can provide a single point of accountability to local citizens and can act as a champion for their area, we will consider other governance proposals that increase stability and strengthen local leadership.
- County devolution should operate across a sensible economic geography of a suitable scale and one based on local identity, bringing local partners together and with powers exercised at the right level to make a difference for local communities. We will be looking to do county devolution for example with the county council and its nearby unitaries, working with its districts as appropriate; or with the county council and its districts; geographically large unitary authorities, or a combination of say two such authorities where there is a recognisable single identity.
- The nature and appropriateness of proposed governance structures will impact on the nature of the deal and the types of powers and flexibilities provided in a deal. We will expect demonstrable improvements in governance, efficiency and local service join-up as part of the deal that support the delivery of levelling up.
- We expect deals to include significant reform proposals, including ways to achieve greater financial efficiency, administrative streamlining and / or more joined up services in an area. This does not mean local government (unitary) reorganisation is a prerequisite to participation – although that remains a locally-led option available where there is strong local support.

We would encourage you to begin to think amongst local partners about a vision for what you want to achieve in your place and how you can work with Government to deliver on your local priorities. We are interested to hear from you about what specific powers and flexibilities might be helpful to allow you to deliver rather than simply additional funding asks.

Those areas with the clearest, most innovative and readily deliverable proposals that support levelling up will be prioritised. At this stage, this is not a call to commission consultants, or draw up extensive proposals either for new deals or further powers. We would strongly discourage the use of costly external advisers, and councils should not be hiring lobbyists.

We will want to discuss the parameters with you further, first at the webinar and as we develop the Levelling Up White Paper. We will set out further details on the engagement process in the coming weeks.

I hope you will welcome this approach, which is guided by the Prime Minister's and my desire to empower and enhance strong local leadership and to reflect the great variety of places across England providing devolution and localism that is at ease with each part of the nation.



RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP