

**Blaby District Council  
Council**

<b>Date of Meeting</b>	8 April 2025
<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>Local Government reorganisation and Devolution – March 2025 Submission</b>  This is not a Key Decision and is not on the Forward Plan
<b>Lead Member</b>	<b>Cllr. Terry Richardson - Leader of the Council</b>
<b>Report Author</b>	Chief Executive
<b>Strategic Themes</b>	All Themes: Enabling communities and supporting vulnerable residents; Enhancing and maintaining our natural and built environment; Growing and supporting our economy; Keeping you safe and healthy; Ambitious and well managed Council, valuing our people

**1. What is this report about?**

- 1.1 This report seeks to provide an update regarding the actions taken to date in response to the Government's English Devolution White Paper and the statutory invite letter received from the MHCLG.

**2. Recommendation(s) to Council**

- 2.1 To note the submission made to Government on behalf of all of the districts and boroughs across Leicestershire and Rutland County Council.

**3. Reason for Decisions Recommended**

- 3.1 To ensure all members are engaged and informed and are aware of the process undertaken to date.

**4.0 Matters to consider**

- 4.1 Background  
On the 13 January 2025, Cabinet agreed to delegate to the Leader and the Chief Executive, authority to engage with other local authorities, the government and relevant partners to develop the proposal to create a Mayoral Strategic Authority and develop options relating to local government re-organisation. This is to ensure that Blaby District Council and its residents are represented as far as possible in ongoing discussions with the Government.

The Government wrote to all councils on 5 February 2025 formally inviting them to work collaboratively with other councils in their areas to develop a proposal for local government reorganisation. The Government asked for interim plans to be submitted on or before 21 March 2025, in line with the guidance set out in their letter. Government have outlined that this will not be a pass-fail date for proposals.

Discussions have taken place with all local authorities across LLR and it is a huge accolade that we have submitted a joint plan to Government on behalf of all of the districts and boroughs and Rutland County Council. To align the views of 8 different councils and submit a joint plan speaks to the collegiate and collaborative approach across Leicestershire. This has involved compromise and negotiations, however, we are hugely proud of the attached submission and strongly believe it is the Natural Choice for our locality.

In coming to their view, the Districts and Rutland considered that a key focus has to be how best to unlock the benefits of Devolution for our area and deliver the right approach for LGR.

Alongside the Devolution focus and Government guidance the following have been used as design principles. That any new unitary councils should:

- Strike the right balance between size and maintaining a strong local connection to communities
- Deliver savings and sustainable organisations
- Reflect the way people live their lives and work
- Retain local democratic accountability
- Ensure a strong focus on neighbourhoods, and community partnerships
- Preserve local heritage and civic identities.

Starting from first principles meant looking at a range of options including:

- 1) Two Unitaries: Single County Unitary / City
- 2) Three Unitaries: North / South (Rutland) / City
- 3) Three Unitaries: North (Rutland) / South / City
- 4) Three Unitaries: East / West / City

Maps were generated for each, and considered the following variables:

- Population,
- Workforce,
- Economic inactivity,
- Job density (ratio jobs/workforce), self-containment: commuting,
- Deprivation,
- Proxy for adult social care (pension credits),
- Proxy for children's services (children in poverty),
- Housing (temporary accommodation pressures),
- Financial balance: local authority debt and income

Both the County and the City Councils have submitted their own proposals. The County one outlines a single unitary for Leicestershire, excluding

Rutland with no changes to the city boundaries. The City submission outlines a significantly extended city boundary and a unitary authority that rings around the city including Rutland.

We have now submitted our plans which are attached at appendix A and B. The next stage of the process is to receive feedback on our proposals from MHCLG. We will continue to work on our submission due in November and this will involve further public engagement to fully inform the final proposals.

#### 4.2 Proposal(s)

Our submission is attached in executive summary format and in full at Appendix A and B. To outline our proposal succinctly it suggests:

##### **Devolution**

Following discussions between all Local Authorities in Leicestershire there was a consensus on creating a new Mayoral Strategic Authority for LLR. As such this has been included as a building block within our submission.

##### **Local Government reorganisation**

We have proposed a balanced three unitary model for LLR, 'North, South, City' which is big enough to deliver and close enough to respond.

North - The areas currently served by Charnwood, North West Leicestershire and Melton district and borough councils, and Rutland County Council, would be served by one unitary authority.

South - The areas currently served by Blaby, Harborough, Hinckley & Bosworth and Oadby & Wigston district and borough councils would be served by another unitary authority

City - Leicester City would continue to be a unitary authority based on its existing boundaries.

#### 4.3 Relevant Consultations

Given the time available our ability to undertake full and comprehensive consultation was limited, however, across LLR we managed to engage with over 600 key stakeholders, and received 4646 responses to our survey. The results of this engagement are included at Appendix C. The results showed that 82% favoured the north, south, city model, whilst 18% preferred the single unitary model. The top concerns identified were

- Loss of local identity and representation,
- Service quality and accessibility,
- Financial implications and Council Tax.

#### 4.4 Significant Issues

In preparing this report, the author has considered issues related to Human Rights, Legal Matters, Human Resources, Equalities, Public Health

Inequalities and there are no areas of concern as a direct impact from this report

## **5. Environmental impact**

In preparing this report, the author has considered that there will be no environmental impact.

No Net Zero and Climate Impact Assessment (NZCIA) is required for this report.

## **6. What will it cost and are there opportunities for savings?**

- 6.1 There was an initial budget available of £50,000. This budget is still in place although some spend was coming through at the time of writing the report for the development of the proposal.

## **7. What are the risks and how can they be reduced?**

- 7.1 The following risks have been identified:

<b>Current Risk</b>	<b>Actions to reduce the risks</b>
Services could be impacted negatively due to uncertainty and additional work.	It is noted that during any period of change our services need to continue to be delivered in the best interests of Blaby District residents, Resources will be directed as appropriate and any additional resource be sourced.
That no consensus is reached on local government arrangements for Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland which may result in imposed arrangements.	Continued engagement with the other Councils in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland.
Resource implications to continue to deliver services during a period of change.	The Council will ensure that resources are directed appropriately and reserves utilised to ensure that there is as little impact on service delivery as possible during a period of change.
Recruitment and retention concerns due to uncertainty of future.	Communication and engagement focus for staff. Services will need to be delivered in this and in any new organisation.

## 8. Appendix

- 8.1 Appendix A – Executive Summary – North South City
- 8.2 Appendix B – Full Report – North South City
- 8.3 Appendix C – Engagement Summary

**9. Background paper(s)**

- ## 9.1 MHCLG Statutory Invitation letter

## 10. Report author's contact details

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