



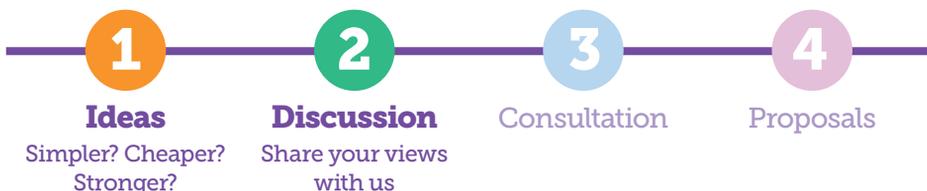
Engagement Document

# How local government could work in Leicestershire

Local government services in Leicestershire are currently provided by the County Council and seven district councils (Blaby, Charnwood, Harborough, Hinckley & Bosworth, Melton, North West Leicestershire, Oadby & Wigston). This is known as a two-tier structure. The County Council is responsible for 81% of local government expenditure and the district councils collectively for 19%.

Elsewhere in the country, one council is responsible for all local government services in its area. This is known as a unitary structure. Town and parish councils are present in both two-tier and unitary structures.

**The County Council is starting to consider how a unitary structure in Leicestershire could work.**





**"The financial situation facing councils is bleak and with service demands and national funding reductions ramping up, it's clear to me that we have to consider change. This is something I hope we can all agree on.**

**"Across Leicestershire, local government is facing millions of pounds of savings, meaning we simply can't go on paying for old fashioned bureaucracy and duplication. The time is right to explore options to save money and join up services - and build a system of local government fit for the 21st century. This has to be about services for residents, not structures.**

**"A Cabinet report we've published shows there is a strong case for a single unitary council but also assesses a two-council option – you can read more in this leaflet and I'd encourage you to share your ideas with us before any formal consultation."**



**Nicholas Rushton,  
Leader of Leicestershire County Council**

## **A conversation has started about reshaping local government across Leicestershire. If change were introduced, the aim would be to:**

- 1 Save money** – up to £30m a year - through fewer managers and administrators and fewer councillors and council offices
- 2 Join up services** – to reduce duplication and improve services – and protect them for the future
- 3 Provide better value for council tax** – which could also be reduced
- 4 Reshape and strengthen the role of local government** – to make it fit for purpose and to strengthen the roles of its elected members
- 5 Create strong links to local communities** – to work more closely with town and parish councils, and to encourage the establishment of new town councils in those areas that want them
- 6 Speed up how health, social care and housing services can work together** – to improve support for vulnerable and older people
- 7 Give Leicestershire a stronger voice** – to work with the Government, investors and partners
- 8 Cut red tape for businesses** – to drive growth in the local economy and boost jobs
- 9 Simplify local government services** – to reduce confusion over who does what
- 10 Improve planning for the future** – to ensure much-needed new homes are in the right locations and have the necessary roads and other infrastructure such as broadband in place from the start

**Starting the conversation allows people and organisations to respond to these ideas at this early stage. The ideas can be developed further.**

# The Process

The Government can invite proposals for change in local government structures. With a view to this possibility, the County Council has identified two different unitary options – a one-council and a two-council option.

This document contains some information about these options and we would like to know if you have any comments about what we say. Information about how to reply is on page 8. If we decide to take any option forward, this will be at a later stage, and we will engage in a consultation process before doing so.

## Timescale

Change would not be immediate. If the Government were to invite proposals, the process could take several years from start to finish. But the County Council believes there is a time pressure arising from the increasing financial pressures on the Council's budget and that district council budgets will also be under pressure.

By the end of March 2019 the County Council will have saved £200 million since 2010. The latest forecast shows that the County Council can balance its budget for the next two years but only by taking more tough decisions. The scope for further savings is running out as demand for social care services in particular continues to grow. So the Council believes that other options to protect front-line services and to invest in them have to be considered.



# Stage 1

**The County Council believes that any new local government structure should be simpler, cheaper and stronger. It favours a unitary structure and has identified two options:**

**Option 1** – a single unitary council for Leicestershire

or

**Option 2** – two unitary councils for Leicestershire

in both cases to replace the County Council and the seven district councils.

An initial assessment of the options has been undertaken:

- **Option 1 – a single unitary council for Leicestershire**  
This is estimated to save £30m a year
- **Option 2 – two unitary councils for Leicestershire**  
This is estimated to save £18m a year

The majority of savings come from a reduction in the numbers of senior managers, administrators and 'back office' or support services required to run one or two councils rather than eight.

The initial assessment has been on both financial and non-financial grounds. The latter include improvements to services and the removal of confusion as to the responsibilities of councils, making it easier for everyone to do business and for an elected council to represent Leicestershire most effectively. More information is available in the Cabinet report - [www.futureleicestershire.org](http://www.futureleicestershire.org)

The initial assessment points to the relative benefits of a unitary structure being greater in Option 1. **At this stage, a single unitary council for Leicestershire is suggested as best placed to meet the present and future challenges facing local government.**

# How could change improve services?

**Changes to a unitary structure may offer significant benefits, including:**

## **Health, Care and Housing**

- create one anti-social behaviour team, pooling funding, removing duplication and simplifying governance
- improve care packages for people at home - by working with the NHS to prevent hospital admissions and get people home from hospital more quickly
- simplify social care by providing one single point of contact and easier access to support
- create one housing plan to support care leavers, children with a special educational need or disability, and vulnerable families
- speed up the creation of integrated services - offering support with housing, adaptations and assistive technology - by removing barriers
- improve public health by bringing together alcohol licensing and substance misuse treatment, and all leisure services, sport and physical activity

## **Culture and Leisure**

- develop one, over-arching approach to culture, leisure and learning, which is joined up with public health
- simplify routes into volunteering and maximise funding for adult learning

## **Highways**

- merge management of all vehicle fleets and depots
- join up services such as clearing fly tipping and street sweeping with minor highway maintenance, grass cutting, forestry and drain cleaning
- manage on-street and off-street parking as one, joined up service

## **Waste**

- create one waste collection, disposal and recycling service, reducing confusion and the cost of contracts

## **Economic Growth**

- create one Local Plan – setting out how land is used and what is built where - making strategic planning and delivery easier
- provide one voice when working with the Government, Midlands Engine, Leicester and Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership and other partners on economic growth

## **Trading Standards**

- bring together Trading Standards and Environmental Health

## **Property**

- make better use of the properties owned and run by eight councils

## **Revenues and Benefits**

- one service dealing with benefits and collecting council tax, with links to social care

# Stage **2**

**We want to engage with our stakeholders on these ideas.  
There may be other options which people want to put forward.**

The views of residents, council tax payers and service users are really important, but stakeholders also include MPs, district councils, parish and town councils, the NHS, criminal justice agencies, businesses, universities, the voluntary sector and others – responses will help to shape our proposals for future widespread public consultation.

Give us your comments:

- **Email County Council leader Nicholas Rushton:**

leader@leics.gov.uk

- **Write to:**

Nicholas Rushton  
Leicestershire County Council Leader  
County Hall  
Glenfield  
LE3 8RA



**Visit our website:** [www.futureleicestershire.org](http://www.futureleicestershire.org)

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