



# Get change right

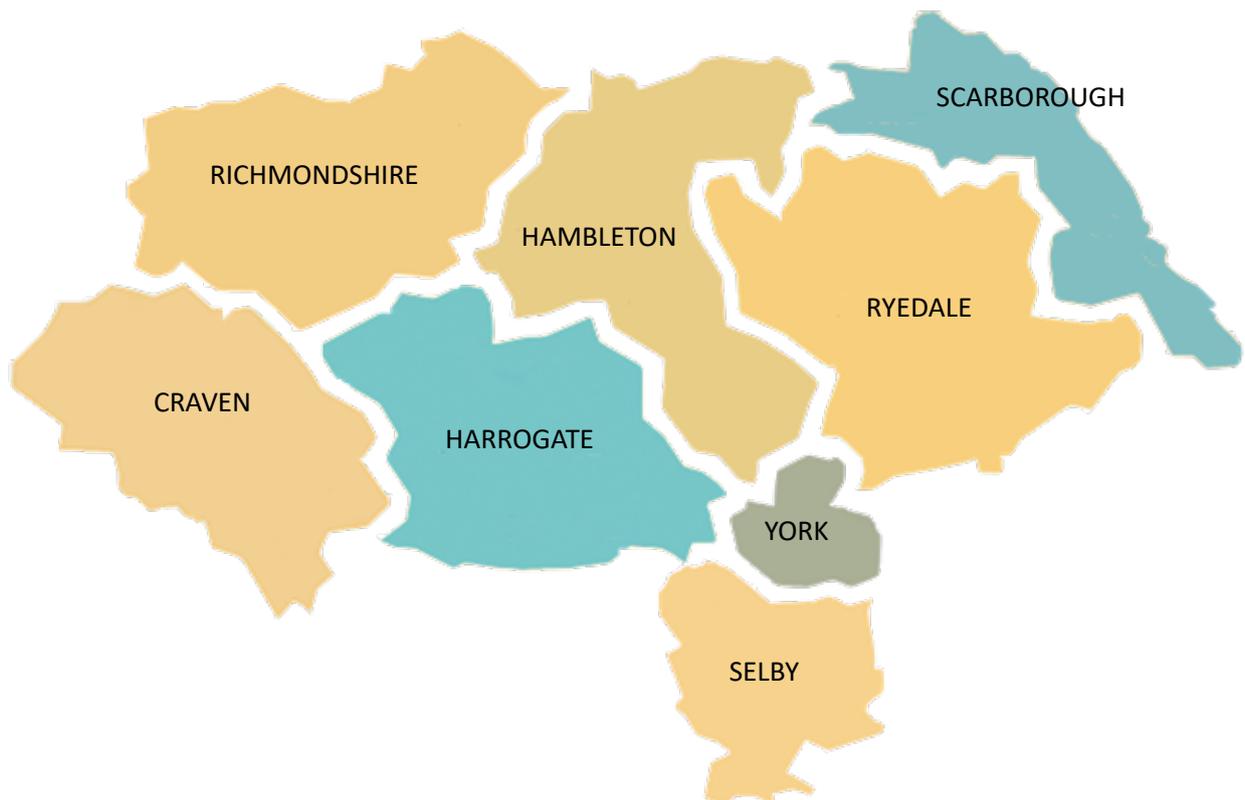
**...key principles**

**Local government is changing.**

**Plans are underway to reorganise local government in York and North Yorkshire. Discover the principles underpinning our proposals for change.**

## York and North Yorkshire population sizes

Craven	57,142
Hambleton	91,594
Harrogate	160,831
Richmondshire	53,730
Ryedale	55,380
Scarborough	108,757
Selby	90,620
York	210,618



# Introduction

The Minister for Local Government has indicated that he wishes to reorganise local government in York and North Yorkshire to a unitary system. In due course, there may be a directly elected a Mayor of a devolved combined authority.

The Leaders of North Yorkshire's District and Borough Councils are working on a proposal for local government reorganisation that builds upon what districts and boroughs already do best – responding to the needs of local people, providing local services, supporting the local economy and providing local accountability, while taking advantage of economies of scale and innovation that come with local whole-geography thinking.

This fresh look at local government reorganisation will identify the best structural model to achieve the best outcomes for the communities and economy in York and North Yorkshire.

There is a strong logic for two unitaries of broadly equal population sizes, but we are keeping an open mind on the exact model while we listen to people from across the region, and conduct a study into the options. This autumn we expect there to be a model available to be discussed and voted upon by the seven district and borough councils.

The reorganisation proposal that is being developed will be practical and fair, prepare the ground for future devolution investment and greater decision-making powers, and put the region in the best possible position to deliver efficient public services and economic growth.

Local government reorganisation will affect around 800,000 people and will be the vehicle to deliver future economic growth and sustainable public services – so it is vital to take this opportunity to get change right.

The information that follows sets out the principles which are guiding our thinking.

You can also read more information about our proposals as they develop on our website:

[www.get-change-right.com](http://www.get-change-right.com)

# Timing

We want to get the best deal for residents and businesses. We won't be rushed into a system that fails our communities for many years to come, but we can and will work fast to achieve ambitious government deadlines.

We have written twice to the Minister for Local Government. The first letter set out our intention to put forward an option for the Minister to consider, which fits the criteria he has set. The second letter provided him with an indication that we expect the seven districts and boroughs to vote on our reorganisation proposal as soon as possible this autumn.



# Location

Localism is integral to a strong democracy. The best councils are the voice of their communities.

Any local authority reorganisation must maintain close links to communities and give them a voice. We need a local government structure which makes sense to local people and which is structured in their best interests. It should deliver strong, efficient and responsive local services – embedded in, and connected to, communities.

A North Yorkshire unitary council for all residents outside York would entrench the remoteness many residents already feel towards Northallerton as the administrative centre of North Yorkshire. Our proposal will address the remoteness many residents feel from their county authority.



# Place, identity and belonging

Localism requires that citizens feel connected, engaged, informed and involved in democratic institutions that are strongly linked to the place where they live.

Our residents and businesses have a strong local identity and are passionate about where they live and work.

Building on the strengths of district and borough councils, our proposal for local government reorganisation will retain the best local services, community knowledge and local democratic accountability.

They will provide a structure that best supports the health and wealth of our communities.

We are talking to people representing public services, voluntary organisations, business and residents across North Yorkshire to listen to how they characterise the local place where they live and work. We will be holding meetings online throughout August with stakeholders from every part of the region.

# Representation

The structure for democratic representation should be inclusive, equal and effective.

A North Yorkshire unitary council, alongside a City of York unitary council, would represent a 'monster/minnow' model of a county unitary representing c600,000 people across a geography of more than 3,000 square miles (the largest unitary in England), and a small city unitary representing c200,000 people across a geography of around 100 square miles, which is fatally unbalanced and destined to fail.

A marriage of unequal partners between a North Yorkshire unitary and City of York council under a Mayoral devolution arrangement would give our new Mayor conflict from the get-go. The two unitary councils operating alongside a combined authority Mayor of North Yorkshire and York should be of broadly equal size.

A single authority for the whole of North Yorkshire outside the City of York would mean a councillor is just one voice among many and so have less influence than the influence that would be wielded by councillors on a smaller unitary council.

Councils should be run from a place that is reasonably close in proximity to the residents who they serve. That would not be possible if North Yorkshire was run by a large unitary county council.



## Effectiveness

The new authorities must be able to deliver the best possible local services.

The new settlement will need to maintain, extend and improve the services currently offered to residents.

Effectiveness of service delivery depends on striking the right balance between efficiency and local responsiveness. Two unitary authorities of broadly equal size are more likely to strike this balance than one very small authority in York and one very large authority in North Yorkshire.

Some services, such as children's services, will be less affordable if delivered to a small population and on a proportionately smaller budget, as is shown by the record of the county compared to the City of York. Two unitary authorities of sufficient size would be in a better position to deliver effective and sustainable services in all parts of York and North Yorkshire.

## Responsiveness

The new authorities should be responsive to the needs of local communities.

Geographical proximity of the service provider to the service recipient is critical for them to be responsive to local communities. A unitary authority covering the whole of North Yorkshire would be too large and unsustainable to support our distinct and diverse communities and their needs.

The value of local knowledge and experience has been highlighted by the Covid-19 response in North Yorkshire. District and borough councils have paid out hundreds of millions of pounds to local businesses in an incredibly short space of time, due to the local insights of the districts and boroughs. We have maintained key local services such as waste management, housing and homelessness services, reacting to specific local circumstances with flexibility and speed.

The districts and boroughs have been instrumental in meeting community needs during the Covid-19 crisis, supporting voluntary community services and dealing with a huge increase in demands for benefits. In some places, this has meant linking up district, parish and town councils with the voluntary sector and regional structures because – with our grass roots knowledge and local contacts – we were best placed to do that.



## Efficiency

Services should be delivered in the most efficient way, reducing cost.

Establishing the City of York Council as a tiny unitary consolidates inefficiency, not out of administrative inadequacy, but because services would be delivered to such a small population and savings could not be found from economies of scale.

We need to maximise the savings that can be generated from single tier government by establishing two unitary authorities of roughly equal population size. Two unitary authorities of broadly equal size offer the best potential cost reductions without compromising local responsiveness.

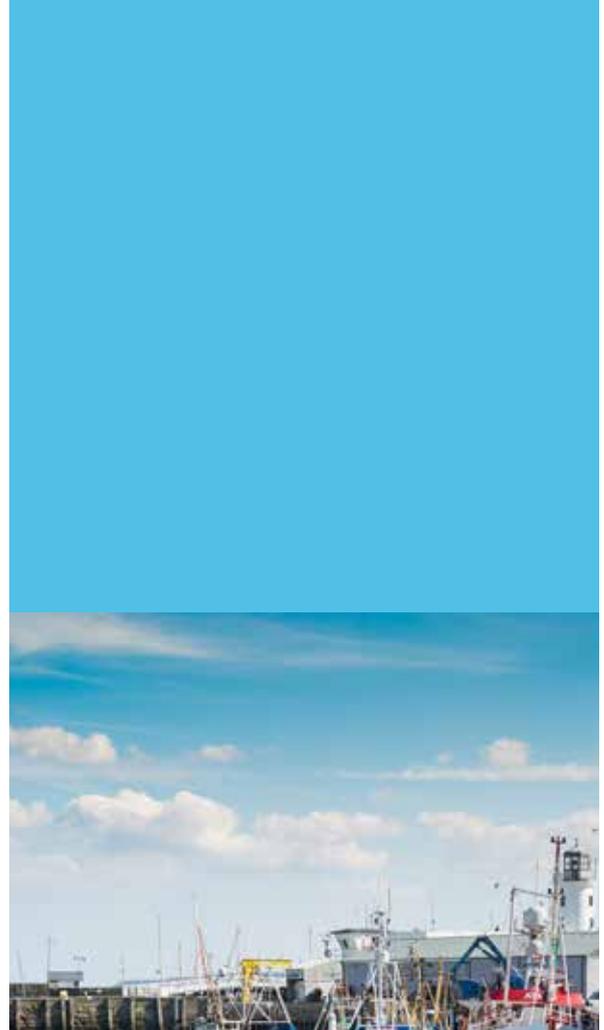
When calculating savings, we need to include savings in the City of York.

# Investment, recovery and growth

Fundamental to economic recovery from Covid-19 is the need to tap into investment of people, businesses and communities.

Districts and boroughs have been at the heart of the Covid-19 response and it is the local economic development teams who are driving the recovery. We are at the heart of the recovery movement to create a greener, fairer and stronger region. These links can be best retained in a new unitary authority structure by keeping local government as close to local residents as possible.

Through LEPs and through a devolved combined authority, local government has a crucial role in driving economic growth and supporting business. Our new unitary arrangement should be able to prioritise those things that local government can do to support economic recovery, such as promoting skills development, transport and infrastructure.



## More information

For more details and to comment on our case for local government reorganisation in York and North Yorkshire, please go to:

[www.get-change-right.com/consultations](http://www.get-change-right.com/consultations)

Or contact the Leaders of the district and borough councils in North Yorkshire:

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This information has been compiled by the Leaders of North Yorkshire’s district and borough councils:

- Cllr Richard Foster of Craven District Council
- Cllr Richard Cooper of Harrogate Borough Council
- Cllr Mark Robson of Hambleton District Council
- Cllr Angie Dale of Richmondshire District Council
- Cllr Keane Duncan of Ryedale District Council
- Cllr Steve Siddons of Scarborough Borough Council
- Cllr Mark Crane of Selby District Council

They have launched a campaign: “Working together to get change right”, to oppose a mega-sized council bid, and develop an alternative proposal based on workable geographies and a grass-roots understanding of local communities and economies.

