

Dear ,

I am emailing all branch members to ask you to take part in the government's consultation about the future of local government in North Yorkshire. I am afraid this is quite a long email, but please do have a read when you get a moment and please consider taking part in the government consultation.

## **What is happening?**

You may remember that the government announced last year that it would like to see devolution for York and North Yorkshire, with an elected mayor, but this would also require local government to be changed to a unitary model. This would mean that the District and Borough Councils would cease to exist and all services would be provided by one council.

60% of our branch members (excluding retired members) work for either the County Council or one of the three District Councils we support (Hambleton, Richmondshire and Selby). Clearly, any changes to how local government operates in North Yorkshire will have a big impact on those members.

The government has launched a consultation on two proposals:

- **Option one** – One council for North Yorkshire, with City of York Council remaining as it is
- **Option two** – two new councils for the whole area, split east/west (Harrogate, Craven, Richmondshire and Hambleton in one council; York, Ryedale, Scarborough and Selby in the other).

## **What is the branch view?**

We felt it was really important that our branch had a view on these proposals, and that we engage with the government's consultation. Last year, our branch agreed that the three most important principals for all our members are:

1. Protect jobs and avoid compulsory redundancies
2. Level-up terms, conditions and pay
3. Minimise disruption to staff and services

We looked carefully at both options and decided that the 'one council' for North Yorkshire would be the proposal that would best meet our three priorities above. In particular, from a staff perspective the creation of two brand new councils would cause significant disruptions for the circa 21,000 staff who work for councils across York and North Yorkshire. The 'one council' proposal would mean only about 3,500 staff being moved to a new council (District and Borough Council staff would transfer on their existing terms to the new County Council).

With the east/west proposal there are no guarantees on being able to retain and 'level-up' terms and conditions as these would be two completely new councils.

In respect of services we felt that the east/west proposal would be far too risky for

the services that we provide to the residents of York and North Yorkshire. Currently 80% of services are provided by North Yorkshire County Council; including social services, adult social care, schools, highways and children's services. Splitting up these services would be far too risky and would impact on vulnerable adults, children and families.

The biggest benefit being put forward for the east/west split is that the two new councils would be closer to residents and that the 'one council' for North Yorkshire would be too remote. We think this is disingenuous, as the east/west councils would still cover a huge area. The likelihood would be that the east council would be based in Harrogate and the west would be based in York. The geography of both would still mean distances such as Selby to Whitby, or Bentham to Green Hammerton.

You can find out more about the branch position on LGR at the branch website, [www.northyorks-unison.org.uk/lgr](http://www.northyorks-unison.org.uk/lgr).

## How to take part in the consultation

Anyone can take part in the government consultation. You don't have to live in North Yorkshire, and you can ask friends and family to respond too. Follow the link below to the government consultation website, and you will see that you can respond either by completing a short survey with pre-prepared questions (takes about 15 to 20 minutes) or you can send more detailed responses via email.

If you opt to complete the short survey, there are some notes below that may help you.

- **Q1** - Many of you live in North Yorkshire so can tick the box that says 'Resident living in affected area'. If you live in the City of York area you can also tick this box, because York is affected by the districts' proposal. If you live outside either area you can still take part – everyone has a stake in the community affected because we all work for North Yorkshire communities - just tick 'Resident not living in affected area'.
- **Q3** – You are responding as an individual, not on behalf of an organisation - so just put 'n/a' in this box.
- **Q4** - As above – you are responding as an individual not on behalf of the council, so it's best to add your own personal email address here rather than your work email.
- **Section about the districts' proposal** - You don't necessarily have to complete this section – you'll be able to submit your response without it - but you may wish to do so.

The consultation closes on 19 April, so please respond before then. You can, of course, express support for the east/west proposal but we hope that you will be able to support our branch position as we think it is the option that will best protect our members who work for both the County Council and the District/Borough Councils. We also think it is the option that will best protect services for residents.

## Further information

We have produced a detailed submission, which can be downloaded below. It is quite a detailed document, but it might help you when responding to the consultation.

[Download our branch submission](#)

## What happens next?

The government will consider the two proposals and the outcome of the consultation and we expect a decision in the summer as to which proposal will be implemented. The likely date for the new arrangements to be in place would be from April 2023, although there is a small chance that the 'one council' proposal could be implemented from April 2021 if a decision is made early. Please keep checking our website pages for the latest news and information.

Finally, please be assured (especially if you work at one of our councils) that UNISON and this branch will be working hard on your behalf to negotiate the best possible outcome for you. Now, more than ever, it is really important that as many of your colleagues as possible are in UNISON. Please encourage your friends and colleagues, particularly at our councils, to join UNISON today. The more members we have, the stronger our voice will be when it comes to protecting and improving terms and conditions at the new council(s).

[Join UNISON today - please share this link with your colleagues where you work](#)

Thank you for all that you do for our communities, and for being a UNISON member. If you want to share your views on LGR, please [email the branch office](#).

Kind regards  
**Wendy Nichols**  
**Branch Secretary**