

Our Ref: CL/NI

9th November 2020

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By email to all Parish Clerks – please forward to all Parish and Town Councillors

Dear Colleagues

The County Council has now endorsed the submission to the government of a proposal for a single unitary council to replace the County Council and the seven district councils.

The government requested outline bids by November 9 and final bids by December 9. The government will then assess the proposals submitted against their criteria and consult publically next year on any proposals which meet their criteria.

We firmly believe that our proposal for a new single unitary council, based on North Yorkshire's well recognised geography and delivering strong public services to everyone here is the best option for economic recovery and sustainable local government. Local government in North Yorkshire will need strength and scale to drive renewed economic recovery once we emerge from the pandemic. You can read our full proposal at <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk/proposal>.

This proposal provides a once in a generation opportunity to create a local government system that is stronger and simpler, local and effective, and efficient and sustainable, delivering high-quality local services to every single person and business in North Yorkshire and to drive a revolution in empowering local communities with:

- Local services and access – locally based staff and managers, main offices in every district area supported by over 30 local access points.
- Local accountability - 6 Area Committees, political accountability for the discharge of statutory functions and services at local level, including planning.
- Local action – local parish and town councils and parish meetings, partners and communities coming together in around 25 new Community Networks to identify and deliver against locally priorities.
- Local empowerment – devolution of powers to town and parish councils to run assets and services where they want to do so and it offers value for money, with support provided to town and parish councils to enable them to be ready to do this.

Our proposal would save at least £30m a year through cutting red tape and reducing unnecessary senior manager and elected member costs. Over five years it has the potential to transform public services and save £252m to plough back into local services.

I have heard a rumour that the projected savings are based on the unitary council avoiding costs by devolving services and the cost of these to town and parish councils. This is not true. The projected savings of at least £30m a year would come through cutting red tape and reducing unnecessary senior manager and elected member costs (eg North Yorkshire doesn't need eight council chief executives and senior management teams).

The devolution of services and assets to town and parish councils would only happen where the town and parish council wants to do that and it offers value for money for both councils.

The new council for North Yorkshire would work with all parish and town councils and parish meetings, recognise their value, help with development when needed, and empower them to do more if they want to do so.

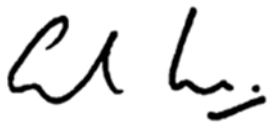
The new council would build a relationship based on respect. All town and parish councils and parish meetings have a right to be heard and their issues responded to. Technology can play a part in helping with this such as our parish portal, but personal relationships with nominated officers and clear lines of communications to key services would be a key feature for the new council.

Many town and parish councils see providing views, raising issues and getting things sorted as their main role, but others will want to do more. The new council would progress discussions with any town and parish council that wants to do more, for example, to deliver services or manage local assets, where this will offer value for money. The new council would initially work with a group of forerunner town and parish councils to develop the concept. Others would follow on as the approach developed. Frameworks to facilitate this approach and provide ongoing advice and support will be developed.

I am grateful for the constructive feedback during and following our webinar for parish and town councils and parish meetings on 19 August, and for over 25 representatives of parish and town councils and parish meetings who have participated in our working group. All of your contributions have helped us to develop our proposal.

I believe this proposal represents a significant opportunity to sustain and improve local government. I look forward to continuing to work with town and parish councils to develop our proposals in the coming months.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Les', enclosed in a thin black rectangular border.

Carl Les
Leader of the Council