



# Local government

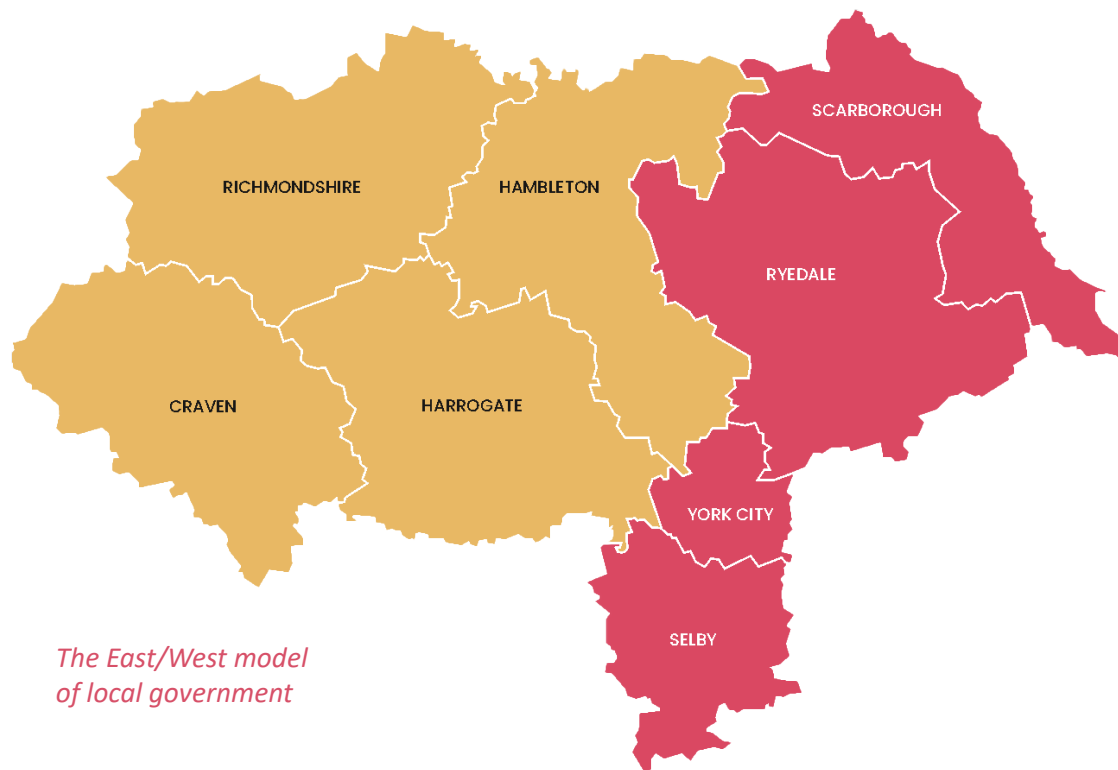
A new local model for North Yorkshire and York

summary approach

**Local government is changing.**

Find out how an East/West model of local government is the right way forward for North Yorkshire and York.

# Introduction



The government has pledged to devolve powers and resources to local authorities in England.

North Yorkshire and York is one of only three areas in the country where the government has invited local authorities to reorganise first. This means replacing the existing councils with a smaller number of new unitary authorities.

This is a big change, and it is important to get it right. So, over the summer, independent experts (KPMG) were commissioned to analyse the options.

The model that emerged as a clear winner, is the East & West model. In this document you can read about the model, and why research has shown it is the best model of unitary local government for our communities, businesses and economy.

If government chooses the East and West model, North Yorkshire County Council, the City of York Council, and the seven district and borough councils (Craven, Hambleton, Harrogate, Richmondshire, Ryedale, Scarborough and Selby) would cease to exist.

They would be replaced by two unitary councils, one in the east and one in the west. Both of these new unitary councils would provide all services to their citizens.

- The east unitary would cover York, Selby, Ryedale and Scarborough areas
- The west unitary would cover Craven, Richmondshire, Hambleton and Harrogate

Both East and West unitary councils would come together to form a Combined Authority. It is likely this would be headed up by an elected Mayor.

Once this structure is in place, the government has indicated it would be open to devolution negotiations. Devolution would bring additional powers and more than £2bn of investment in initiatives to drive economic growth, such as housing, roads and the green economy.



# Why East & West is best

## East & West makes sense... for residents and communities

The Government has said that the optimal population range for a unitary council is between 300,000 and 600,000 people.

The East & West model provides two well-balanced authorities within those parameters.

- To the east of the county, Selby, York, Ryedale and Scarborough have a population of 465,000 residents
- To the west, there are 363,000 residents in Richmond, Hambleton, Craven and Harrogate

The East & West model also provides the most balanced ratio of working age and older people.

This is important because working age people pay taxes that help to pay for the services councils provide. Getting the balance right means we can afford to do more, and helps to protect services for everyone for the future.



*Balanced East/West unitaries or  
one mega-council?*

*“Diverse communities need a  
local-based offer.”*

## East & West makes sense... for efficient local services

The East & West model would mean two councils operating in the North Yorkshire and York geography, instead of nine. The two councils would be larger than district and borough councils are now, but each council would still be small enough to stay “local”.

Services that are currently delivered by district and borough councils would be delivered across a bigger geography. This would allow the new unitary councils to streamline the way they work and benefit from economies of scale, without losing the grass-roots connection that people value in their current district and borough councils.

Services that are currently delivered by North Yorkshire County Council across the whole of North Yorkshire (eg highways, education and public health) will cover a smaller area than they do now, so they can be more responsive to specific local needs.

The East & West model has the greatest potential for long term efficiencies, estimated to be at least £33m per year. These savings would be reinvested back into the frontline services that matter to communities and businesses, which means better value for money for the taxpayer.

Including York in the East & West model is important for the financial security of York. The City of York Council’s reserves are the lowest of any council in the area, which could mean that York faces financial issues in the future if action isn’t taken.

By including York in this new local government model, there is the opportunity to improve efficiency, make savings and reinvest, which York will not be able to do if it continues to stay separate.

## East & West makes sense... for business and the economy

Local government restructuring must be able to support the economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and drive economic growth for the future.

Reforming local government will unlock devolution, which will bring an estimated £2.2bn in additional investment to our region. That is good news for business. However, there are some advantages to restructuring specifically on East & West lines.

The East & West model reflects the economic footprints that already exist in our region, and will allow the two new unitaries to maximize the growth opportunities along the major corridors formed by the A1(M) and the A64.

The creation of East & West authorities will also enable investment to be more evenly distributed, and will give us the best chance of “levelling-up” skills and jobs across all our region.

Most importantly, the size of the East & West unitary authorities will retain the close connections between local government and businesses, ensuring businesses continue to have a “voice” in the decisions that affect them.



*Balanced East/West unitaries or one mega-council?*

*“Bringing some authorities together would work better than a sprawling local authority with little connection to the residents.”*

*Balanced East/West unitaries or one mega-council?*

*“One mega council is not the answer. This could lead to a loss of jobs, services and faith in the council system.”*



## East & West makes sense... for supporting vulnerable people

At this time, North Yorkshire County Council provides adult and children’s social care services across North Yorkshire. The services are highly-rated, but financially unsustainable.

The City of York Council provides adult and children’s social care services in York. The children’s social care service requires improvement, but the council has low levels of financial reserves and is not in a position to invest significant sums in its services.

The East & West model has the potential to save the most money, which could be used to support important services, and allow York to achieve higher standards in children’s social care.

## East & West makes sense... for democracy

Local accountability is an essential ingredient of good local government.

The best councils are the voice of their communities, and are structured in a way that citizens feel connected, engaged, informed and involved in democratic institutions that are strongly linked to the place where they live.

*“The best councils are the voice of their communities”*

The East and West unitary authorities meet the government’s “optimal” size criteria. That means elected councillors will keep their “local” connections, will be accessible to constituents, and will be able to make their voice heard in an overall council that is not too big for a councillor to have influence.



*Balanced East/West unitaries or one mega-council?*

*“A large area could mean that groups disadvantaged in terms of getting access to councillors, office staff or services.”*



*Balanced East/West unitaries or one mega-council?*

*“I think it is important for the councils to have knowledge of the local area and businesses. I feel with one large council this local knowledge, help and support would be lost as everyone becomes a number in one large depersonalised entity.”*

## East & West makes sense... for devolution

The government has made it clear that it will only devolve powers and resources to areas where there is a Combined Authority. It is expected that government will require an Elected Mayor to be in place. The Mayor and the Combined Authority will have an important role in driving economic growth and future investment in our region, so it is important that the structure is right, and works well for all.

*“Equally sized authorities would mean an equal partnership”*

The East & West model of equally-sized authorities would mean a fair and equal partnership within the future Combined Authority. This would give the Mayor a manageable structure, and the best opportunity to deliver on his/her role to deliver the ambitious vision set out in the region’s devolution proposal.

# The alternative proposal

North Yorkshire County Council has proposed an alternative model of local government reform.

Under this model, the County Council would, in essence, continue, and would merge with the seven district and borough councils to create a single mega-council covering the whole of North Yorkshire. The City of York would remain separate and untouched by local government reform.

**The option of a mega-council for the whole of North Yorkshire has been put forward and rejected by government in the past. The reasons given for the rejection at that time were that a county-wide unitary authority may have difficulties representing its electorate, would be seen as remote by most of its citizens, and the arrangements to try to introduce localism over such a large geography were overly complicated and unworkable.**

- The North Yorkshire-wide mega-council would create one unitary authority covering 618,000 people (and 97 per cent of the geographic area). This would compare with a much smaller unitary authority for York's 210,000 citizens (3 per cent of the area). These are outside the government's optimum population sizes for unitary authorities.
- A mega-council will be too remote from the people it should serve. Services would be delivered across a huge area and local responsiveness would suffer.
- A mega/minnow model, which is what North Yorkshire/York would represent, would create an unbalanced Combined Authority, causing issues for the Mayor and undermining devolution and the levelling-up agenda.
- Under the mega-council model, the number of elected councillors would reduce by approximately 200, making it more difficult for people to access their democratically elected representative and have a voice in decisions that affect them.
- Over the summer, a number of engagement meetings were held with residents, businesses and parish councils. Feedback from those meetings indicates that many people already feel remote from the County Council and are uncomfortable with the idea of a mega-council, run from a Northallerton HQ distant from their communities.

*The alternative to the East/West model is a North Yorkshire mega-council - the largest unitary geography in England - in an unequal partnership with the much smaller City of York*





## Opportunities we can take...

- Close the North-South divide within the region and support the 'levelling up' agenda
- Be a catalyst for investment
- Establish parity of influence between authorities within the Combined Authority, to allow for effective decision making on new investment for the region such as improved transport links and the development of York Central
- Unlock the potential of York, Ryedale and Scarborough as a tourism powerhouse to create stronger connections with National Parks, market towns, the heritage coast and other attractions in its surrounding area
- Give York and Harrogate lead roles in becoming centres of digital and green technology

## Challenges we can overcome...

- A Budget shortfall, requiring savings of nearly £40 million over the next three years
- Overspend in adult social care, and rising demand
- York's inability to deliver its housing targets and an effective Local Plan
- OFSTED requiring improvement in York's Children's Services
- Poor broadband and mobile connectivity in parts of the County
- Increasing inequality and levels of deprivation in some urban areas



# Next steps

Councils have been invited to submit an outline bid to Government by November 9, proposing how unitary authorities could be created within North Yorkshire and York.

A more detailed bid will be submitted by December 9.

When the Secretary of State has received the submissions on future local government restructuring, he will undertake a further consultation on his preferred model. He will then table primary legislation in Parliament to create the new unitary authorities.

The new elected authorities would come into being in May 2022 at the earliest. Soon after, a new Combined Authority for the region will be created and elections could follow in May 2023 for North Yorkshire Combined Authority's first directly elected Mayor.

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

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

The Leaders have worked together, across political party lines, to develop an proposal for local government reorganisation based on workable geographies and a grass-roots understanding of local communities and economies.

**MORE INFO AT: [WWW.GET-CHANGE-RIGHT.COM](http://WWW.GET-CHANGE-RIGHT.COM)**

