



Successful leadership
from a global city on
a compact scale

Summary

This document acts as an addendum to the previous representation made to Government on 9 November.

It provides supplementary evidence to show:

- The overwhelming support for York to remain as a unitary authority on its existing footprint from a wide range of critical stakeholders
- The support of residents, with **70%** of all respondents preferring York to remain as an independent council and to work closely with a single new North Yorkshire council. Only 8% supported an East/West model
- The areas requiring further evidence within the District Councils' proposal
- The support of both York's Full Council and Scrutiny for a York and North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership Agreement.

The evidence presented here, in addition to that contained within our initial submission, provides a clear message from York that:

York remaining as a unitary authority alongside a new North Yorkshire unitary authority is widely supported as a foundation for the health and prosperity of our region.

An unnecessary merger with neighbouring authorities is unwelcome, unproven and unacceptable to the city.

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1. Background

- I.1. On 9 November, City of York Council submitted a representation to Government to provide evidence for why York should remain as a unitary authority on its existing footprint as part of the re-organisation of local government in York and North Yorkshire.
- I.2. The background and context is included within the first report, available here: <https://www.york.gov.uk/downloads/file/6173/successful-leadership-from-a-global-city-on-a-compact-scale>
- I.3. City of York Council determined that it should continue to develop further evidence to support this process, specifically in the following areas:
 - An update on stakeholder feedback across the city
 - Further work to understand the views of York's residents
 - Consideration of the proposal being put forward by the Districts
 - Considerations from Scrutiny of the York and North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership
- I.4. This supplementary report updates on this additional work and seeks to support the process of evaluating the proposals which have been formally submitted.

2. Stakeholder Feedback

- 2.1. The Government requires models of unitary government to “command a good deal of local support as assessed in the round overall across the whole area of the proposal.”
- 2.2. City of York Council has engaged a wide cross-section of the city’s population and stakeholders as part of its consideration of proposals to reorganise local government in North Yorkshire.
- 2.3. The Council has been consistent and transparent in articulating why it believes that retaining the current status of York as a unitary authority is the most appropriate way forward as the city seeks to respond and recover from Covid-19 and to allow for the most efficient means of progressing towards a devolution deal for the region.
- 2.4. Consultation activity has looked to engage stakeholders across the city. There has been an overwhelming level of support to retain City of York Council.

Stakeholder support

- 2.5. City of York Council has engaged with a large and varied range of stakeholders as it has sought to consult on local government reorganisation in the region.
- 2.6. A consensus view has emerged from partners in the city and in its immediate hinterland that the retention of the local authority on its current footprint, in strategic partnership with a new single unitary authority for the rest of North Yorkshire, is the most appropriate way forward for the city and its neighbours.
- 2.7. To ensure that all stakeholders were aware of the Government’s proposals and the Council’s position on this matter, the Council conducted several sectoral roundtable sessions. These included discussions with those indicated in the table below:

Roundtable discussions	
City Leaders	Schools and Academies Board
LEP Board	Cultural Leaders Group
City Guilds	Business Leaders
Charitable and Voluntary Sectors	

- 2.8. The Council was keen to understand and address any questions that stakeholders had regarding local government reorganisation. Feedback from these sessions was positive and there was wide support for the Council's position.
- 2.9. Throughout the process, the Council has continued to update stakeholders on developments and has been responsive to queries raised.
- 2.10. The case for retaining the current status of City of York has gained significant support from across the partnership network in the city.
- 2.11. This support has been received from stakeholders within the following fields:
- The business community;
 - The culture and heritage sector;
 - The health and social care sector;
 - The charitable and voluntary sector
 - Schools;
 - Universities;
 - Guilds;
 - Parish Councils;
 - Science sector; and
 - Sports organisations
- 2.12. Support has also been received from senior residents of the city, including Honorary Aldermen and former Councillors.
- 2.13. The support has been given for a range of reasons. There has been agreement that the stability of the current arrangements and the durability and resilience of the relationship between the Council and its partners, particularly at a critical time of great concern to many organisations, is of paramount importance. There is broad recognition

that the removal of this link will be detrimental to the future of the city and its partner institutions.

2.14. Specific statements of support include:

“We regard the retention of City of York Council as a requirement for the alignment and streamlining we need in order to more readily break down boundaries between health and care and simplify joined up working.”

Simon Morritt Chief Executive, York Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Phil Mettam Accountable Officer, NHS Vale of York Clinical Commissioning Group

Professor Stephen Eames CBE Chair, Humber, Coast and Vale Health and Care Partnership

“Given the need for the council to be prioritising Covid Recovery at this time, unnecessarily drawing York into structural changes at this time is unwelcome and would be detrimental to city wide efforts to build back better.”

Jon Flatman, Chairman, York City Knights

“York’s proportionate contribution to the proposed devolved region economically and in terms of its distinct identity, strengths and potential cannot be overstated, and for that reason the Chamber supports the opportunity to retain that distinct identity within the devolution and unitarisation proposal.”

Andrew Digwood President, York and North Yorkshire Chamber of Commerce

"Since the 13th century the Freemen of this City have had a responsibility to promote what they see as the interests of the Businesses and residents of York. As such the Gild has no hesitation in supporting the council's proposals to retain the existing borders of

the City, as the best interests of those who live and work here. We urge everyone who cares about the future of our City to sign this petition."

Tom Gibson, Clerk to and Past Master of the Gild of Freeman of York

"We already sit in uncertain economic times and changes to the existing structure of York as an authority have the potential to create unnecessary uncertainty as we seek to make further investment around the City."

Max Reeves Director, Helmsley Group

- 2.15. The Council is aware that a range of stakeholders, including from the sectors above, have sent letters of support directly to Luke Hall MP, Minister for Regional Growth and Local Government (and the Minister's predecessor Simon Clarke MP). The Council is grateful for the support partners have shown.
- 2.16. The Council will continue to engage with partners and residents throughout the period in which the Government is considering local government reorganisation models in North Yorkshire.

Cross-party political support

- 2.17. The case made by City of York Council enjoys broad political support.
- 2.18. At Full Council on 29 October 2020, the case to retain York on its current footing was supported by 41 Councillors (with only two against).
- 2.19. The three largest political groups on the Council have all been vocal in their support in addition to support from Independent Councillors.
- 2.20. The Leader of Council has said:

“It is clear to see that any change to York’s footprint would either increase the cost to residents, or stretch services further, and make it harder to meet York’s own unique challenges. We fundamentally believe that decisions affecting York, should continue to be made here in York.”

2.21. The Deputy Leader of the Council has said:

“Residents have clearly told us that what matters is retaining the size of our city, and that residents do not support being forced into a merger which would also be costly in terms of increased council tax.”

2.22. The Leader of the Opposition Group on the Council said:

“We want decision making and public accountability to remain within our own localities, and not for it to be taken elsewhere to a new body, which if it fails to reflect people’s natural sense of community and place, will fail to represent them on the key issues and public service delivery that Councils are responsible for. “

2.23. The Leader of the York Independents Group said:

“The City of York can trace its origins back to Roman times, with its own city government going back to before the Norman Conquest. If this ancient and noble city is now mistakenly submerged alongside its several neighbouring authorities within a bland corporate-style body, then apart from all the other disadvantages of such a move, this will destroy York’s unique sense of identity and will amount to no less than cultural vandalism”

2.24. Additionally, the Member of Parliament for York Central, Rachael Maskell MP, has also publically stated her support for York’s case. She has said:

"York is such a special place, we cannot afford to dilute its influence or detract from the focus needed to drive forward its economy. At such a challenging time as this, there should be no distraction from the need to respond to the current pandemic and economic crises. A mass reorganisation of local government is in no-one’s interest."

3. Resident Opinions

Telephone Survey

3.1. To gain a broader sense of the representative opinions of residents across York, a telephone survey was undertaken in November. The full details of the survey are attached in a report from NWA Social and Market Research, working within the ethical codes of conduct of the Market Research Society.

3.2. From a sample of 504 residents (with a confidence interval of +/- 4% at 95% confidence level), the following observations were made:

3.2.1. When presented with two possible options for the future of local government in the City of York:

3.2.1.1. More than two-thirds (**70%**) of all respondents said that they would prefer **'York to remain as an independent council and to work closely with a single new North Yorkshire council'**,

3.2.1.2. Only one-in-twelve (**8%**) overall said that they would prefer **'York to become part of a new council, with City of York Council merged with the current Scarborough, Selby and Ryedale Councils'**

3.2.2. The majority support for York to remain as an independent council was consistent across all age groups, rising to over three-quarters (**77%**) of those aged 55 to 74 years.

3.2.3. Residents were asked how strongly they felt a connection to the geographies represented by the two options. Respondents' strength of feeling of belonging to the 'City of York' area was much higher than that to the 'Eastern part of North Yorkshire': the large majority (**83%**) of all respondents said that they feel a **'very strong' or 'fairly strong' connection to the 'City of York'**.

- 3.2.4. Only 4% felt that they are ‘not at all strongly’ or ‘not very strongly’ connected to York;
- 3.2.5. However, with regards to the ‘Eastern part of North Yorkshire’, a third (34%) of all respondents feel ‘not at all strongly’ or ‘not very strongly’ connected to this area, and less than a quarter (22%) feel a very or fairly strong connection.
- 3.2.6. Residents were asked how important they felt the council’s reasons were for remaining as a unitary authority. Around three-quarters or more of all respondents were of the view that each of the five Council’s reasons listed in the survey were ‘very important’ or ‘fairly important’, and less than one-in-ten respondents felt that any of the reasons were ‘not at all important’ or ‘not very important’.
- 3.3. This survey provides strong evidence that York’s residents support the overall position of City of York Council and the reasoning behind it.

Our Big Conversation

- 3.4. The Council’s Our Big Conversation public consultation exercise is designed to give residents an opportunity to shape the city’s response to the big issues facing York.
- 3.5. One part of this exercise gave residents the opportunity to give their opinion of York’s place in the wider North Yorkshire region.
- 3.6. This part of the survey was completed by 248 individuals, 89% of whom were York residents. Of the remaining 11% of respondents, 4% worked in the city and 7% were neither residents nor working in the city.
- 3.7. Responses to the Big Conversation clearly state that the public do not believe that services would be improved if they were provided via a Council on a wider geographic footprint with over two thirds of residents disagreeing that service provision would be improved by such a move.

3.8. Three quarters of people were opposed to the possibility of paying more council tax to support a Council on a larger footprint.

3.9. Commentary received indicated that residents felt that the priorities of the city were better aligned to the current make-up of the Council and that there was a disconnect between the needs of York and other places in the region such as Scarborough which would not sit neatly under an expanded unitary authority.

The District's survey

3.10. The District Authorities have undertaken an online survey which asked for views on the two models proposed. We have significant concerns around the way this survey was framed and presented, such that we don't believe the results can be considered an accurate assessment of opinion. However, even considering the methodological shortcomings, the District's own survey identified a majority (54%) of York's residents were in favour of York remaining a unitary on the existing footprint alongside a new North Yorkshire unitary council.

Petition

3.11. A public petition, launched by a wide range of city partners including the council, the York Central MP and colleagues from the health, education and business sectors, argues that York is best served by a Council based on its current boundaries. The petition can be found here: www.change.org/webbackyork

3.12. The petition has already received over 1150 signatures with comments highlighting why the retention of York on its current footing is so important to the local population. This petition will continue to run through to the consultation stage of the reorganisation process.

4. Consideration of the Districts' Proposal

- 4.1. City of York Council is aware of the Districts' proposals through the information available in the public domain, via their campaign website (www.get-change-right.com/) and media releases. The following section refers to information available on this website (as at 9 December 2020) and in particular the documents referred to as:
 - 4.1.1. the Outline Proposal (https://37f1671c-9513-4fbb-87bc-9609eb64ee4f.filesusr.com/ugd/15e97a_ac2acd0b13cc4191b4641a74c12b8164.pdf); and
 - 4.1.2. the Summary Document (https://37f1671c-9513-4fbb-87bc-9609eb64ee4f.filesusr.com/ugd/15e97a_c780eaa1dbd84c679f96d474e028a339.pdf)
- 4.2. We fully support the Districts in putting forward any proposal which they consider to be beneficial to residents in the affected area. However, it is critical that decisions on the model are based on evidence and not rhetoric. It is important to note that the assertions made within their published material in respect of York (current and future) have not been ratified by City of York Council, nor, in many cases, do we consider the limited evidence provided to date supports the claims made.
- 4.3. The Chief Operating Officer of City of York Council and Chief Executive of North Yorkshire County Council have written to MHCLG officials to express concerns at the lack of compliance with the Recommended Code of Practice for Local Authority Publicity in relation to material published on the website noted above. We believe this has overstepped what could reasonably be expected in this type of situation, with the real potential to mislead the public and tarnish the current process.
- 4.4. There have been very few attempts to meaningfully consult City of York Council on the development of the model, instead proposing an option that the Districts knew City of York – an existing unitary authority – objects to.

- 4.5. We are aware that a further submission will be made by Districts on or before 9 December and we would hope that this would answer some of the questions or provide the necessary evidence required to support the assertions made so far.
- 4.6. The following areas represent the aspects for which City of York Council would recommend there is appropriate scrutiny to ensure both the required evidence has been provided and that the evidence does actually support the assertion.
- 4.7. City of York Council will provide a further analysis of the model once it has access to the full proposal detail.

Key areas

Independent Assessment

- 4.8. Page 2 of the Summary Document states that “over the summer, independent experts (KPMG) were commissioned to analyse the options.” It goes on to say “The model that emerged as a clear winner, is the East & West model”.
- 4.9. From the information presented, the report produced is the result of a collaborative exercise between KPMG and the Districts, not independent from them. Page 2 of the Outline Document, which is a covering note from KPMG, states *‘I’m pleased to provide you with the report which documents the Local Government Reorganisation work that we’ve undertaken **with you** over the past two months. This work has been **developed with officers and members to provide a case for change** for York and North Yorkshire local government. This report has been prepared based on the scope and approach agreed in our contract dated 23 July 2020’*. (Our emphasis).
- 4.10. It is also clear from the methodology described in the Outline Proposal (p116) that the Districts themselves were influential in determining the shortlists of options – *“Based on the scoring and an in depth discussion between the District and Borough Councils, two options (B and F) were prioritised for more detailed analysis.”* As the scoring has not been provided, it is not clear whether the “discussions” supported the

conclusions of the analysis or influenced the shortlist of options in a different way.

- 4.11. Between the initial analysis of a long-list of options by KPMG and the emergence of a “clear winner”, the documents describe “in depth discussion” between the Districts as part of the process of defining the preferred option. We don’t consider this to be an issue, but it should be apparent that in no sense are the conclusions reached independent of the District Councils.

Description of “Best”

- 4.12. The Summary Document repeatedly refers to the East/West model as “best”. The Outline Proposal from KPMG, upon which the summary is based, does not use this comparative term. Within the Summary, there is virtually no comparison made between any different models.
- 4.13. The statements used to explain why the model is “best” only identify how the East/West model might achieve an outcome and are often benefits which could be associated with any model. They do not outline why the proposed model is superior. The only actual comparisons made are to the existing council arrangements.
- 4.14. There is, ultimately, no evidence presented as to why the East/West model is best. There is also little explanation of benefits which relate to York, given that the generic unitarisation efficiencies do not apply and aspects of changed democratic representation appear to negatively impact on York.
- 4.15. We would hope that a detailed comparative analysis is presented to support the assertion that the East/West model is “best”.

Local Plan and Housing Delivery

- 4.16. The Summary Document contains in a section headed “Challenges we can overcome...” with the following statement: “York’s inability to deliver its housing targets and an effective local plan”.
- 4.17. Districts will be aware that York’s Local Plan was submitted for inspection in May 2018. The East/West model would require this to be withdrawn and a new plan initiated across a wider geography. There is

no evidence provided as to how this would in itself facilitate an effective mechanism for an approved plan or for future housing delivery.

- 4.18. Despite repeated references to housing delivery challenges, there is no explanation as to how an East/West would increase housing supply overall. It appears to be more an argument of attribution of housing numbers rather than increasing delivery.
- 4.19. The devolution asks for York and North Yorkshire, agreed by all the Districts submitting the proposal, identifies the use of spatial development frameworks and other strategic approaches to address housing supply at a sub-regional level as part of a Mayoral Combined Authority. The York and North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership also references the ability of York and a North Yorkshire unitary council to collaborate on housing issues. We consider that these are superior mechanisms to allow housing challenges to be properly addressed at a York and North Yorkshire level.

Reserves

- 4.20. There is a statement on page 3 of the Summary Document which says that *“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.”*
- 4.21. City of York Council is already financially sustainable. We have maintained reserves and created headroom so that they are above the minimum level required.
- 4.22. York’s reserves are not the lowest of any council in the area and are shown in the table below against the reserves held by District councils.

	Total useable reserves 31.3.20 (from draft accounts)	General Fund Balance
	£m	£m
Ryedale	16,319	15,788
Hambleton	20,807	2,000
Craven	10,607	995
Harrogate	65,113	2,302
Selby	52,171	1,503

Scarborough	41,426	3,339
Richmondshire	14,171	510
York	117,796	7,569

- 4.23. Determining the appropriate levels of reserves is a professional judgement based on local circumstances and City of York has a demonstrable track record of delivering a balanced budget alongside of ensuring investment in social care and key infrastructure projects. In the face of this evidence we believe that the statement made above is misleading.

Children's services

- 4.24. Page 4 of the Summary Document states, in respect of City of York Council, *"the children's social care service requires improvement, but has no levels of financial reserves and is not in a position to invest significant sums in its services."*
- 4.25. York children's services have made rapid improvement in the last year, recognised by the LGA and through the peer review and carry the Ofsted rating of good. In addition York has a robust budget that is financially sustainable and protects vulnerable people. The 2020/21 budget included over £11m of growth and investment in several priority areas including frontline services, neighbourhood based working, initiatives to reduce carbon emissions, sustainable transport and social care. It is a fact that all upper tier local authorities face challenges from the Covid-19 pandemic, however we believe York (and North Yorkshire) are both in a better position than most due to their overall sound financial management in recent years.
- 4.26. The proposals for Children's social care (Outline Proposal p.39) contain a vision for these services which is a fairly standard representation of the aims of most social care services. The key argument for improvement appears to be that the legacy of high quality services in North Yorkshire would somehow continue and support improvement within York. The clear risk in this is that North Yorkshire's services would no longer exist, having been merged with York's and split into two new services on different footprints. The suggestion that through that highly disruptive process the stability and capacity necessary for improvement could be maintained appears naïve

to the complexity of the challenges within any aspect of Children's Social Care.

- 4.27. By far the more logical approach to building on the strengths of existing services is to leave them in place and to use existing effective peer support mechanisms to share best practice. Further collaboration is possible and more straightforward with two continuing services.

Lack of investment

- 4.28. Repeated reference is made to a "*Lack of investment in York compared to other similar cities*". No evidence is provided to back up this suggestion.
- 4.29. In addition to the council investment already noted above, our 5 year Capital Programme is delivering investments in the city of over £600m in a range of areas including transport, highways, schools, libraries and housing. This is evidence of capacity for investment in key local priorities.
- 4.30. A key investment source would clearly be through a devolution deal. But the East/West model is clearly not the only model which could support devolution. Indeed, the East/West model in itself would take longer to deliver devolution, with no continuing authority.
- 4.31. We, therefore, do not see the evidence base for suggesting the East/West model would increase investment in York.

Optimum size and coherent geography

- 4.32. There are multiple references made to an optimum size of unitary as 300k to 600k and York being outside that range.
- 4.33. Quite clearly, the criterion set by Government is more nuanced, reflecting the different characteristics of places which would make other sizes of authority appropriate.
- 4.34. It is also clear that the Government's criteria apply only to new unitary authorities, where an economy of scale is necessary to overcome the disruption and costs of unitarisation. Were it to be a mandatory fixed

population range and applied to all existing authorities, all but 14 of the unitary councils in England would be judged too small. We, therefore, consider this to be a misrepresentation of the Government's criteria of scale.

- 4.35. The Summary Document suggests (p.4) that *"The East & West model reflects the economic footprints that already exist in our region"*. However, the Outline Proposal (p.104) recognises that *"the region covers multiple functional economic geographies and has overlap with functional economic areas centred in other regions, particularly Leeds and the West Yorkshire Combined Authority."*
- 4.36. The Outline Proposal references the links of 4 authorities to Leeds City Region – *"Historically these districts [Selby, Harrogate and Craven], along with the City of York were part of the Leeds City Region, and will continue to have key functional economic ties with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority, and particularly Leeds."* It should be noted that York remains a non-constituent member of West Yorkshire Combined Authority and journey to work patterns continue show stronger links to Leeds than any other single destination.
- 4.37. Page 78 of the Outline Proposal states *"York will continue to be a vital economic centre within North Yorkshire regardless of the future unitary authority footprints. However, to maximise the potential of York it needs to be outward looking, and well connected to its surrounding towns and rural communities."* Indeed, York is outward looking in all directions and must stay connected to surrounding economies North, East, South and West. We see no value, but potential risk, in being grouped into an East area which fails to represent the full picture of York's economic links.
- 4.38. Overall, we consider that the case has not been made that the East footprint represents a coherent and existing functional economic geography, and that identifying such a geography risks detrimental impacts to the very important links of both York and Selby to Leeds City Region, and to Craven and Harrogate separated in the West authority. York will always play a role in multiple economic geographies and we disagree that characterising it as functioning within a previously unrecognised geography has any benefit to the city.

Minimise disruption

- 4.39. The criteria set out in the Districts' proposal includes the requirement that *"Local government reorganisation should... minimise disruption to services, ensuring that the current workforce and locality structure is maintained as far as possible across the future unitary footprints"*.
- 4.40. It is self-evident that of the two models on the table, the East/West model is significantly more disruptive in every aspect. Uniquely, it requires:
- 4.40.1. Abolition of 9 existing councils, representing the discontinuation of all existing organisations and footprints of service delivery
 - 4.40.2. The merger of all District, County and Unitary functions and structures
 - 4.40.3. The formation of 2 new councils on new footprints
 - 4.40.4. The division of previous upper tier functions into 2 new geographies.
- 4.41. Whilst reference is made to maintaining partnership working arrangements to minimise service disruption, the reality is that there would be no continuing organisations with which partners could continue to work. New relationships would have to be established (both formally and culturally) in every area.
- 4.42. Given the nature of the changes proposed, it is hard to conceive of a model which results in a greater level of disruption. Of course, all parties would do everything in their powers to support continuity of service, but given that minimising disruption is one of the criteria set by the Districts themselves, we question how the East/West model can be considered to be the best solution in response.

Council Tax

- 4.43. One of the more difficult aspects of implementation in any model which draws York into it would be the harmonisation of Council Tax. York residents pay significantly less than the neighbouring authorities, for a number of reasons which includes lower cost of service delivery in a more urban setting and the greater efficiency of a unitary authority, the

benefits of which have already been achieved. This means that if council tax is harmonised at the higher rates, York's residents would pay more, but if they were harmonised at the lower (York) rates, there would be a reduction in income for the new authority.

- 4.44. Page 57 of the Outline Proposal suggests that if Council Tax was harmonised at the current York rates, this would result in only a 1% reduction in income for the new authority. We have been unable to recreate this figure, with our estimates suggesting this is nearer to 5.6% - a significant sum of over £14m per annum. Clearly there are a number of assumptions which must be included in such calculations and without seeing the working it is impossible to validate.
- 4.45. We believe it is unlikely that a figure of 1% could be arrived at without some differential application of Council Tax increases across the authorities in the intermediary years between the baseline and implementation/harmonisation. We would suggest this is an area which is of direct importance to York residents and requires significant clarification in the East/West business case.

Democratic Representation

- 4.46. The sections related to democratic representation fail to recognise that York is already a unitary authority and appropriately represented. Many of the benefits stated, such as simplification of structures, do not apply.
- 4.47. For York, a key factor is the number of councillors. The Outline Proposal (p.62) describes how an East council based on the same ratio as York currently works would require 104 elected members. If the number was agreed to be less than this, York would see a dilution of democratic representation. If that number was agreed, York residents would see their 47 councillors outnumbered by 57 other representatives. The Outline Proposal itself states (p. 63) that a very large authority could result in "a higher number of Councillors to represent the electorate, which leads to Councillors struggling to have their voice heard amongst many".
- 4.48. We consider this a significant risk for York's democratic representation and certainly of no benefit to its residents. A proposal which, at best, provides no democratic benefit or, at worst, weakens democratic

representation for 40% of its population does not appear to support the requirement to improve local government in the area.

Conclusion

4.49. We fully recognise that what we have seen to date is only the outline case for the East/West model. However, we believe there are significant gaps in the evidence to convince that it meets the Government's requirements in respect of York at this time, specifically:

4.49.1. A credible geography – the evidence does not support that the East footprint better represents York's economic links, with the potential for it to detract from existing relationships. It is not a geography currently recognised nor one which has been shown to be superior to any other.

4.49.2. Better local government – there are significant risks to democratic representation in York. It achieves lower levels of savings than the North Yorkshire Unitary proposal and fails to recognise that the generic efficiencies of unitarisation have already been achieved for York. York residents are likely to have to pay more, or there would be a funding reduction for the new authority. The level of disruption is higher than any other option, which at this time is entirely unwelcome.

4.49.3. Local support – from both the districts' survey and our own, York residents and stakeholders are opposed to it.

5. The York and North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership Agreement

- 5.1. In the representation submitted on 9 November (and within North Yorkshire's proposal) reference was made to a York and North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership Agreement. This partnership would build upon existing strong collaboration between City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council to ensure wherever appropriate, joint working can be considered to achieve economies of scale, share strengths and best practice, providing consistency across the sub-region. At the same time, the two independent and distinct authorities retain their sovereignty with decisions taken by each council.
- 5.2. This very much represents the "best of both worlds", allowing for innovation and efficiency in service delivery, without the unnecessary disruption caused by restructuring all aspects of local government in the sub-region.
- 5.3. City of York Full Council agreed that, given the significance of this partnership, it would be considered by the Corporate and Customer Services Scrutiny Management Committee prior to submission to Government. That consideration took place and the committee resolved to write to the Minister in support of the agreement. That letter read as follows:

Dear Minister,

At its meeting on 18 November 2020, City of York Council's Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee discussed the Strategic Partnership Agreement between City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council, a copy of which is provided as an annex to this letter. Our committee, which includes Liberal Democrat, Labour and Conservative members, unanimously resolved that the Chair and Vice Chair should write to you to express the committee's broad support for the Agreement in the context of the wider submission of documents supporting City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council's proposals for Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation.

By way of background, the Agreement has been developed for submission to Government as part of a broader package including a case for City of York remaining a unitary council on its

existing footprint, and the council's devolution 'asks' which seek to support discussions on a devolution settlement. The Agreement, which has already been approved by North Yorkshire County Council, was approved by City of York's Full Council on 29 October 2020, with the proviso that it should be considered by Scrutiny in advance of its submission to Government. This consideration by Scrutiny took place on 18 November 2020.

The committee noted that the Agreement recognises that there is already a history of collaboration between North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council and that both councils see devolution and the associated reform of local government as an opportunity to build upon this collaboration. Committee Members also noted the identification within the Agreement of areas where further collaboration between the councils might be possible as well as the ambition that the Agreement could complement joint working at Mayoral Combined Authority level. The Committee felt such collaboration should complement the overarching aim of delivering better services and outcomes for residents whilst building on the council's ethical approach in areas such as delivering social value through procurement.

In conclusion, the Committee wishes to express our broad support for the Strategic Partnership Agreement between City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council and a commitment to collaborate in future, should it be in the interests of the residents of each council area.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Jonny Crawshaw – Chair, City of York Council Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee

Cllr Stephen Fenton – Vice Chair, City of York Council Customer and Corporate Services Scrutiny Management Committee

- 5.4. The York and North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership Agreement is, therefore, included within this report, below.

York and North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership

Background

North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) are submitting a proposal to Government to create a new Unitary Council for the County of North Yorkshire. City of York Council (CYC) are submitting a proposal to Government to maintain the existing Unitary Council for the City of York and does not support inclusion within any proposed model by the District Councils of North Yorkshire. Both councils are fully supportive of a devolution deal for the York and North Yorkshire economy and the creation of a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA). ***There is joint agreement between both councils that this is best achieved by establishing a new unitary council for North Yorkshire and the City of York Council retaining its existing footprint***

alongside a commitment to broaden the scope of collaboration to leverage the strengths of both councils.

There is already a good history of collaboration between North Yorkshire County Council and the City of York Council and both councils see devolution and the associated reform of local government as an opportunity to build upon this collaboration. Both recognise that the city of York plays a key role in the economic make-up of the North Yorkshire hinterland but also that there are clear differences between York and the County of North Yorkshire.

The City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council as part of its submission for local government reform, proposes the creation of a York and North Yorkshire strategic partnership that will complement the joint work at MCA level. A strategic partnership provides the opportunity to bring both councils together to build upon this collaboration at greater scale; to embrace the diversity; and to avoid the unnecessary costs and dis-benefits of disruption of changes to York.

Strategic Partnership Principles

The following are suggested principles that would underpin the partnership:-

- We will remain sovereign bodies respectful of the strengths that both partners bring to the partnership, to the MCA and to the wider economic and social makeup of the York and North Yorkshire sub-region.
- We will utilise the specific strengths of each authority to support the other, through a range of collaborative approaches, from sharing of services through to acting as a critical friend.
- For those aspects of previous District responsibility, CYC will support transition arrangements for the new NY unitary, giving consideration to sharing of services where there is benefit in doing so.
- We will consider any potential efficiencies as part of forming new partnership working arrangements.
- We will use the future MCA as a vehicle for delivery of shared models of working where they relate to the priorities of the MCA. Other areas of governance will build upon other joint arrangements and will be proportionate.
- We will work jointly as part of the approach to recovery from the Covid pandemic creating a stronger and more effective response.
- We will come together as equals regardless of population, land mass and GVA output.
- Collaboration will not be limited to York and North Yorkshire. We will collaborate more broadly where this makes sense.

- We will be agile in our approach to collaboration. Success will be judged in the medium to long term and not solely on individual ventures.

Benefits of this approach

- Delivers benefits of greater scale whilst minimising disruption
- Enhances efficiency and helps to further reduce costs
- Enhances sustainability of both councils
- Allows for sharing of specialisms and leading practice
- Reinforces collaboration at the MCA
- Respects differences and political sovereignty
- Provides framework to enrich planning and strategy (diversity of thinking)
- Provides flexibility to support the delivery of services at the most appropriate scale.

Areas of existing collaboration

There are already a range of collaborative areas that involve the current North Yorkshire County Council and the City of York Council including –

- Shared Health & Safety Service
- Shared use of some HR support & HR advisory support for schools
- Joint founding shareholders in Veritau - internal audit & fraud management
- Joint shareholders in Yorwaste (waste management company) and partners in the public private partnership of the Allerton Park Waste Recovery Plant
- Shared management arrangements for adult education services
- Shared Emergency Duty Team for out of hours social care response
- Coroners service – shared arrangements
- Various other shared specialist services (e.g. Trading Standards, bridges)

In addition, both have a shared commitment to work within the Humber Coast and Vale Integrated Care System as part of the York and North Yorkshire System Leadership Executive.

The areas above demonstrate a maturity of relationship and a sound base upon which to build additional shared ventures for mutual benefit, notwithstanding the recognition that there are real differences and it will not always be appropriate to have deeper collaboration.

Areas of immediate identification for collaboration include the following

The following areas are recognised as areas of further more immediate opportunity:-

Responding to Emergencies & Covid – recent emergencies, notably Covid and flooding, have seen both councils work closely together in the same Local Resilience Forum. This has identified further opportunities to collaborate on emergency planning, flood management, and public health support resilience of services and the ability to work collectively during an emergency as part of the York & North Yorkshire

LRF, particularly with just two councils rather than the current nine and the complexity of responsibilities this brings.

Strategic Planning & Housing – working as two councils alongside a mayoral combined authority will increase the ability to have a clearer shared strategic plan to inform priorities and development. As part of this, we will be able to explore housing opportunities both at strategic planning and delivery level, considering council housing and wider housing delivery to meet the shared requirements across boundaries.

Working in a New Health & Care System – as strong players and partners within the Humber Coast and Vale Integrated Care System, and as part of the York and North Yorkshire System Leadership Executive, there would be enhanced scope to explore joint opportunities with health partners at both local and sub-regional level. This could include the development of health population data, strategic approaches to the Better Care Fund, managing the risk of the care market and managing Continuing Health Care pressures. Further medium to long term transformational opportunities could also be built upon this new springboard for greater integration and collaboration across the health and care systems, linking into the development of the emerging Integrated Care Partnership on a York and North Yorkshire footprint.

Harmonisation of council tax collection, revenues and benefits – CYC could use its skills, capacity, experience and scale to support the new North Yorkshire unitary council in harmonising these services, working alongside those district council staff specialists.

Children's Services – further opportunities exist for working together to ensure shared best practice and resilience in children's services, acting as critical friends and building upon the strengths of this area in the sub-region.

Adult Services & Public Health – with many 'anchor' NHS and health partners in the region, there will be further opportunities to strengthen partnership arrangements to support consistent, community focussed health and care services.

Environment and Climate Change – the shared transport infrastructure and economy of York and North Yorkshire means that both councils will operate more effectively working together, alongside York and North Yorkshire LEP. This will include sharing best practice when addressing carbon reduction and in the joint efforts to become the first carbon negative region.

Waste Management – both NYCC and CYC already have joint stakes in Yorwaste and a waste treatment plant so collaboration starts from a very high base. Opportunities are therefore enhanced to consider options to improve the waste service across York and North Yorkshire.

Working with the market – both councils share many of their supply chains and benefit could be derived from shared commissioning, brokerage and market interventions, particularly in social care.

Legal Services – CYC and NYCC already share some resources in this area and, therefore, there will be the opportunity to build on this existing work to increase the resilience and retention of specialist resources.

Back Office – a range of back office functions could be shared where it is efficient to do so, building on existing collaboration. Increased use of digital connectivity makes this even more realisable.

Property – further opportunities exist to share and rationalise office buildings and depots across York and North Yorkshire, again building upon enhanced digital connectivity.

Budget and Finance – with the increased financial challenges posed by the pandemic, further efficiencies will be sought through the new partnership arrangements and devolution to support CYC and NYCC in the delivery of key services to local residents, businesses and communities.

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