

NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY COUNCIL

23RD JANUARY 2007

Response to the invitation in the Local Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities” to submit a proposal for the future organisation of Local Government in North Yorkshire.

Purpose of Report

1. To enable the County Council to decide on its response to the invitation to submit a proposal for the future organisation of Local Government in North Yorkshire.

Background

2. This report is about determining the best form of Local Government to meet the challenges and opportunities that will be faced by North Yorkshire over the next 10-15 years. The decision to be made is strategic and for the long term. The Government has indicated that the status quo in two tier area, is not an option.
3. Some of the challenges and opportunities arise from national and global trends. HM Treasury's papers for the Comprehensive Spending Review highlight:-
 - Demographic and socio-economic change, with rapid increases in the old age dependency ratio on the horizon and rising consumer expectations of public services.
 - The intensification of cross-border economic competition, with new opportunities for growth.
 - The rapid pace of innovation and technological diffusion, which will continue to transform the way people live and open up new ways of delivering public services.
 - Continued global uncertainty with ongoing threats of international terrorism and the continued imperative to tackle global poverty.
 - Increasing pressure on our natural resources and global climate, requiring action by governments, businesses and individuals to maintain prosperity and improve environmental care

(Reference: Releasing the resources to meet the challenges ahead , HM Treasury July 2006)

4. These issues apply to North Yorkshire as much as to any other area of the country and require local action. Added to these are North Yorkshire's particular challenges, which are:-
 - Providing good access and advice to isolated communities.
 - Affordable housing.
 - Tackling the needs of disadvantaged young people.
 - Demographic change including the increasing social care needs of an ageing population and the outward migration of young, well educated people.
 - Addressing the pockets of socio-economic deprivation, most notably in Scarborough and Selby.
 - The County's economy has too high a proportion of jobs in seasonal and low waged sectors.
 - Responding to the increasing numbers of extreme weather events, especially flooding.
 - Fear of crime
 - The increasing costs of waste disposal (and recycling) and adult social care.
5. The major cost pressures on the County's public services will be even more of a challenge in the context of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR 2007). The Chancellor's pre-budget statement implies that spending on public services other than education and health is not likely to be increased in real terms up to 2010.
6. The pre-budget statement also announced increased pressure on local government to achieve efficiency savings of at least 3% annually with greater emphasis on "cashable" savings.
7. The Local Government White Paper presents a number of key challenges to local government across England. It devolves powers from central to local government, and from local authorities to community groups, parish councils, citizens and local partnerships. The White Paper promises that these devolved powers will be matched by:-
 - A more streamlined performance regime, with a substantial reduction in the number of central government targets needing to be met by local government.

- A requirement for future local authority structures to operate as a seamless single means of delivering local services.
8. The key headings and issues in the White Paper that need to be considered are:-
- Responsive services and empowered communities. Proposals in this section are aimed at supporting local government to deliver more responsive services, extend choice and control, give individuals and community groups a real say over services and strengthen the role citizens and communities play in shaping the places where they live.
 - Effective, accountable and responsive local government. Proposals in this section aim to encourage prosperous and cohesive communities able to respond successfully to the demands of the modern world and meet the rising expectations of citizens. In order to achieve this, localities (especially local parish level) are seen to need effective democratic governance with strong, accountable, responsive leadership.
 - Strong cities, strategic regions. Proposals in this section are aimed at supporting towns, cities and other places to drive regional and national economic growth.
 - Local Government as strategic leader and place-shaper. Proposals in this section place a strong emphasis on the leadership of local government in shaping places and community strategies and are aimed at creating the conditions in which partnership working is more likely to succeed.
 - A new performance framework in which Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) will be replaced by Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). Proposals in this section focus on ways in which customers and citizens can better drive improvement, strengthening customers' and citizens' roles in monitoring performance and inspection, clarifying responsibilities to respond and report to citizens incorporating user views into inspection activities.
 - Efficiency - transforming local services. This section sets out the imperative for the ambitious efficiency gains that will need to be achieved over the next few years as part of Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR 2007). The text talks about a "more radical and ambitious value for money programme, with effective and direct challenge for poorly performing or coasting services".
 - Building unified cohesive communities. This section confirms the crucial importance of community cohesion in the planning and delivery of services and shows how councils will need to structure support for cohesion.
9. The White Paper suggests that Councils in two tier areas will be at a disadvantage in responding to this programme of change. The accompanying "Invitation to Councils in England" states:

“The Government...has concluded that local government in two-tier areas faces additional challenges that can make it harder to achieve that strong leadership and clear accountability which communities need. There are risks of confusion, duplication and inefficiency between tiers, and particular challenges of capacity for small districts. It recognises that many local authorities are already working to improve the quality of services in two tier areas, building strong and sustained partnerships between councils in a county area, but the Government considers there is the potential to go further.

In short, the Government believes that the status quo is not an option in two-tier areas if Councils are to achieve the outcomes for place shaping and service delivery that communities expect, and deliver substantial efficiency improvements.”

10. The invitation document invites:-

- i) Local authorities in shire areas to make proposals for unitary local government; and
- ii) Partnerships of a county council and all the district councils in the county area to pioneer as pathfinders new models of two-tier working.

11. The White Paper expects continuing two-tier areas to achieve:-

- Unified service delivery models, with service users having no need to understand whether the county, district or other service provider is responsible.
- Stronger leadership for place shaping.
- Shared back office functions and integrated service delivery mechanisms.

12. The criteria with which any proposal for unitary structures must conform are:-

- i) The change to the future unitary local government structures must be:
 - Affordable ie that the change itself both represents value for money and can be met from councils’ existing resource envelope; and
 - Supported by a broad cross section of partners and stakeholders; and
- ii) Those future unitary local government structures must:
 - Provide strong, effective and accountable strategic leadership;
 - Deliver genuine opportunities for neighbourhood flexibility and empowerment; and
 - Deliver value for money and equity on public services

The situation in North Yorkshire

13. The County Council and the District Councils have held discussions at Leader and Chief Executive level to explore the possible options. There is agreement to continue to develop enhanced two-tier working in the specific areas of public access, waste and transport.
14. However, there is no agreement among District Councils on the radical and innovative enhanced two-tier arrangements that would enable a pathfinder proposal to go forward.
15. It is understood that the East Riding of Yorkshire Council is preparing a proposal for Selby District Council to become part of the East Riding of Yorkshire Council area.
16. The options that are open to the County Council are to put forward a proposal for a new unitary council for North Yorkshire or to continue to develop enhanced two-tier working but not as a pathfinder.

Draft proposal for a unitary council for North Yorkshire

17. A draft proposal for a unitary council has been prepared and is attached to this report. If the County Council decides to support such a proposal this would form the basis of the County Council's submission. For this reason it has been drafted to make the case for such a change and to demonstrate how it would meet the criteria set out by the Government.
18. The proposal presents the case for a new North Yorkshire Council which would be a new start, creating one new voice focused on improving the lives of all the people of North Yorkshire. In summary the key points of the proposal are as follows:-
 - A vision for local government in North Yorkshire with the creation of a single unitary council with citizens at the heart of all it does. It would engage with local people, listen and respond. It would work with partners in local communities and strategically to deliver local access to high quality, cost effective services.
 - The single unitary council would be a new council replacing the County Council and the seven District Councils. The new council would ensure that the citizen has both influence over and access to excellent local services. The new council would be connected to all of the communities of North Yorkshire.
 - Initially the new ward boundaries would be based on the present County Council divisions with two councillors in each. This would mean a move

from 353 district and county councillors to 144 unitary councillors. During the lifetime of the first council a boundary review would look to establish smaller single councillor wards.

- The new council would have a single, high profile leader elected by all elected councillors. The leader would be responsible for selecting up to nine councillors to form the new council's cabinet. Cabinet members would have geographical responsibilities for parts of the new council's area as well as service portfolios.
- With one unitary council there would be a phased move over five years to residents across the county paying the same level of council tax. The greater efficiency of the new council would save £48 million in the first 5 years after paying for transitional costs.
- The new council would work with partners to build on the strong and effective partnerships that already exist. Some of the current complexities would be removed and simplified.
- Access to the new council would be provided through a network of 34 Customer Service Centres, a telephone contact centre accessible from across the county by a single number, and a single website.
- The new unitary council would achieve recurring annual cost savings of £14 million, compared with the current structure. The savings would be used to cover one-off reorganisation costs of £13.5 million and to invest in improved front-line services, more devolution to local neighbourhoods and communities, and supporting council tax equalisation across the county.

Timetable and Process

19. The timetable from the submission of proposals is as follows:-

25 January 2007 - submission of bids for new unitary councils to Central Government

End of March 2007 - Announcement on preferred bids

March - June 2007 - 12 week consultation period with stakeholders on preferred bids

End of July 2007 - Final decision on successful bids

May 2008 - Elections to new unitary councils

By April 2009 - New unitary councils up and running.

20. The Government has stated that it intends to subject new unitary structures and two-tier pathfinders to independent long term evaluation over a period of

up to six years and that this will help inform the development of two-tier arrangements across those areas that have not adopted unitary structures.

Recommendation

21. The County Council is recommended to:-
 - a. Approve the submission of a proposal for a single unitary council for North Yorkshire to the Government;
 - b. Approve the draft document attached to this report and the principles and proposals set out in it as the basis of that submission; and
 - c. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive to modify, complete and finalise the text and submit the document to meet the Government deadline of 25th January 2007.

John Marsden,
Chief Executive.

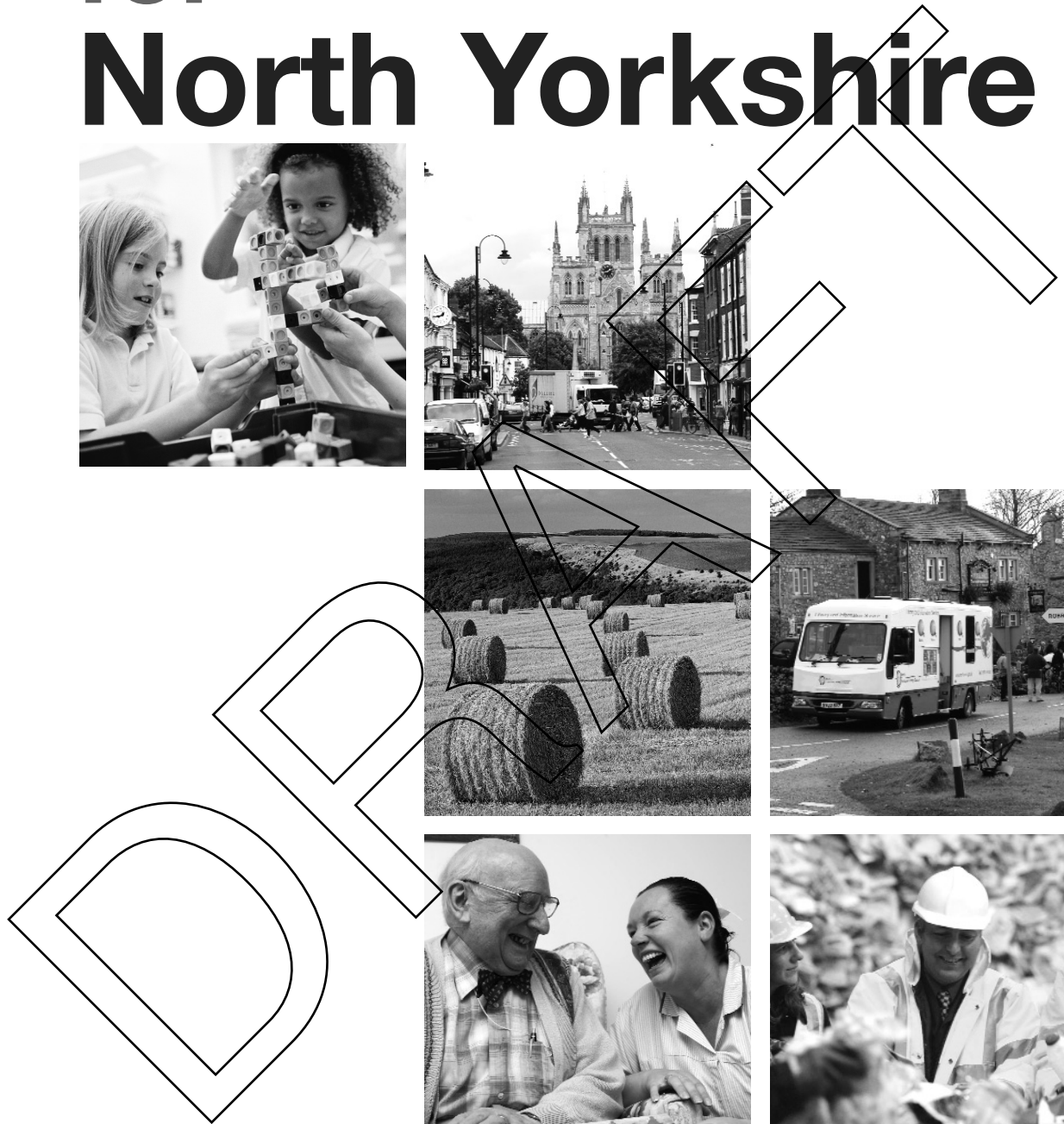
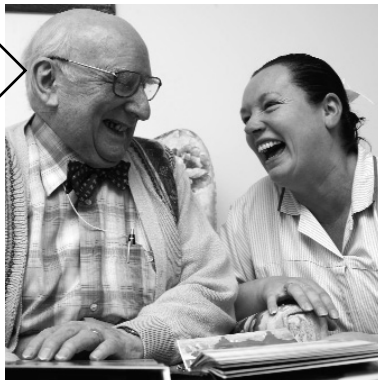
12th January 2007.

Background Documents

Strong and Prosperous Communities: The Local Government White Paper, DCLG, October 2006

Invitations to Councils in England, DCLG, October 2006.

A New Council for North Yorkshire



Foreword

People of North Yorkshire have always been hard working, resilient and self sufficient. Local Government touches the lives of all of the residents in North Yorkshire and must be value for money and reflect the priorities and aspirations of the people it serves.

The challenges of the future mean that we cannot stand still. It is therefore important that we seize this golden opportunity that now arises to harness all of the skills and resources across Local Government to do an even more effective job, to provide an even stronger voice for the people of North Yorkshire and to shape our services around the local communities that we serve.

We believe this proposal will make a real difference to the people of North Yorkshire and create a council ready for the challenges of the future.

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Executive Summary

“A new North Yorkshire Council . . . a new start, one new voice focused on improving the lives of all the people of North Yorkshire”

Vision

Our vision for local government in North Yorkshire is the creation of a single unitary council with citizens at the heart of all it does. It will engage with local people, listen and respond. It will work with partners in local communities and strategically to deliver local access to high quality, cost effective services.

Why change?

Creating a single unitary council to replace the County Council and the seven District Councils in North Yorkshire will deliver:

- High quality services across both urban and sparse rural areas
- Best possible value for money for council tax payers
- Clear accountability for all services
- Engagement with neighbourhoods and communities
- Strong community leadership
- A powerful voice speaking up for our communities nationally and regionally

The new council will also:

- Enhance the role and influence of parish and town councils and voluntary and community groups
- Improve and simplify partnership working to deliver more joined up services
- Improve strategic capacity
- Streamline service delivery so that it can do more and yet cost less
- Reduce bureaucracy with fewer senior officers and councillors

The new council will ensure that the citizen has both influence over and access to excellent local services. The new council will be connected to all of the communities of North Yorkshire.

Background

All councils in North Yorkshire, both at district and county level are working hard to provide good services for the people they serve. However, the present structure of local government restricts the outcomes that can be achieved due to confusion, duplication and the inefficiency of working across the two tiers of district and county councils. Despite all the effort that has gone into making current arrangements work as well as they can the benefits have been at the margins and could be much greater.

A new council will address the key weaknesses in the current structure which are:

- Inherent complexity in providing services across a wide and sparsely populated area that has three tiers of councils - county, district and parish.
- Split responsibilities causing unnecessary duplication, inefficiency and additional cost.
- Too many voices speaking for North Yorkshire weakening the county's influence at regional and national level.
- Partnership working is complicated and bureaucratic and uses up valuable resources that could go into services.
- Given the service pressures and the need to limit public spending the current structure is costly and unsustainable.

The new unitary council proposal

Councillors

Initially the new ward boundaries will be based on the present County Council divisions with two councillors in each. This means a move from 355 district and county councillors to 144 unitary councillors. This will:

- Be clearer and simpler with councillors able to represent their constituents in respect of all council services
- Make councillors more visible and accountable
- Give councillors a higher profile and more powers to act as champions for their area and resolve issues
- Ensure there are sufficient councillors with the time to fulfil the necessary council roles and engage with local people and organisations

During the lifetime of the first council a boundary review would look to establish smaller single councillor wards.

Council leadership

The new council will have a single, high profile leader elected by a ballot of all elected councillors. The leader will be responsible for selecting up to nine councillors to form the new council's cabinet. Cabinet members will have geographical responsibilities for parts of the new council's area as well as service portfolios. This will deliver:

- Clear and accountable leadership
- A single leader and cabinet replacing a multiplicity of leaders and governance arrangements
- One strong voice on the regional and national stage
- Clear roles and accountability for cabinet members who act as champions for their areas and respond to local issues

Council tax

With one unitary council there will be a phased move over five years to residents across the county paying the same level of council tax. The greater efficiency of the new council will save £48 million in the first 5 years (after paying for transitional costs, and taking account of the phasing of savings coming on stream).

Partnerships

The new council will work with partners to build on the strong and effective partnerships that already exist. Some of the current complexities will be removed and simplified:

- The North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership (NYSP) will bring together all major public sector partners including the voluntary and community sector and representatives from community forums and parish councils
- It will develop and own the Sustainable Community Strategy
- There is already a structure of thematic partnerships in place at a county level to take forward delivery of the strategy through the Local Area Agreement
- Partners at a county level will ensure local delivery of the strategy through individual agencies, community forums and neighbourhood management teams

More local, more accessible

The new council will devolve decision making to communities and bring together partners to engage with people in neighbourhoods. This will be done by:

- Empowering parish and town councils to act on behalf of their communities
- Linking up key public service providers in neighbourhood management teams at ward level
- Establishing around 25 community forums with membership from parishes and community groups to determine local service priorities and with a budget to spend on local community projects
- Community forums developing Local Community Charters setting out local service priorities and standards for the council and public sector partners
- Community forums acting as the vehicle for local partnerships to help sustain and develop services
- Nine area committees with delegated responsibility for licensing, local planning and local services
- Area scrutiny committees comprised of councillors from the unitary council and parish councils able to hold to account the unitary council and other public service providers. Issues can be referred for scrutiny by the community forums.
- The North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership will determine strategic policy with regard to the Local Community Charters developed by the community forums.

Access to the new council will be provided through:

- A network of 34 Customer Service Centres based on existing County Council and District Council one stop shops, library and information centres and community offices. These would also host regular surgery sessions for people to meet with and discuss issues with councillors.
- A telephone contact centre accessible from across the county by a single number.

- A single website, providing information and transactional services across all service areas. Web pages would be available for parishes, with contact details for the neighbourhood management teams, and the work of community forums and area committees.

Transitional arrangements

The priorities in developing appropriate transitional arrangements will be to maintain service delivery, promote efficiencies, and to reinforce the concept of a new council taking its own decisions. In the 11 months between new council elections in May 2008 and April 2009 the new council will operate in shadow mode to enable senior staff appointments to be made by the new council and effect the smoothest possible transition.

A Joint Change Board will be established, comprising representatives from each council, with officers identified to support its work. It will operate in the lead up to the shadow council and during the shadow council period.

Mapping out a path for the new council to assume full responsibility will enable all existing councils and staff to work towards a smooth transition. The shadow council will be able to determine the council's structure and start recruitment processes. This in turn will allow staff to understand what opportunities will exist within the new council.

Affordability

The new unitary council will achieve recurring annual cost savings of £14 million, compared with the current structure. The savings will be used to cover one-off reorganisation costs of £13.5 million and to invest in improved front-line services, more devolution to local neighbourhoods and communities, and supporting council tax equalisation across the county.

Timetable

25 January 2007	Submission of bids for new unitary councils to Central Government
End of March 2007	Announcement on preferred bids
March – June 2007	12 week consultation period with stakeholders on preferred bids
End of July 2007	Final decision on successful bids
May 2008	Elections to new unitary councils
By April 2009	New unitary councils up and running

Introduction

- 1.1 A new council, a new start, one new voice focused on improving the lives of all of the people of North Yorkshire. This is the key message of this proposal for a unitary council for North Yorkshire.
- 1.2 The proposal is for the creation of a single unitary council based on the boundaries of the present North Yorkshire County Council. This will provide clarity of service provider, rationalising the current three tiers of local government, parish, district and county, by amalgamating the current county and district levels.
- 1.3 A new unitary council will ensure that:
 - all local communities are involved, engaged and listened to;
 - parish and town councils are the key building blocks for local democracy within the county;
 - clarity and accountability is brought to the local level with front line councillors playing leading roles in their wards, with the ability to make a real difference through devolved budgets;
 - the excellent practice that exists in parts of local government in North Yorkshire is spread evenly across all parts and all services;
 - cost efficiencies are achieved at every level;
 - the size of the new council becomes its strength - able to deliver high quality services equitably to both urban and sparse rural areas;
 - a strong and powerful voice is provided for our communities at both the national and regional level;
 - council tax payers receive the best value possible for their money.
- 1.4 All councils in North Yorkshire, both at district and county level are working hard to provide good services for the people they serve. Across the piece there are good hard working, elected members and officers. However, the present structure of local government restricts the outcomes that can be achieved due to confusion, duplication and the inefficiency of working across the two tiers of district and county councils.
- 1.5 Partnership working and co-ordination is taking place between individual districts and between districts and the County Council. Enormous effort and resource is spent on this and generally relationships are good. Given all the effort that has been made to enhance two tier working, the benefits, though important, have been at the margins.
- 1.6 Discussions between the seven District Councils and the County Council have taken place following the White Paper and it has not been

possible to agree a “Pathfinder” approach to bring the districts and County Council closer together. Consequently it is our view that a step change needs to be taken. The good relations and competence that exists across North Yorkshire should be built upon and eight councils replaced by one strong unitary council for the benefit of all of the citizens of North Yorkshire.

1.7 The following sections of this submission document set out the challenges facing North Yorkshire and the advantages a new unitary council will have in meeting and responding to those challenges. It will show how the approach is :

- To reduce the overall size of local government with fewer senior officers, fewer but more empowered elected members, more involved local people, collectively delivering better outcomes – where less really does mean more.
- To lower council tax levels for the majority and strengthen services.
- To provide a council that will be larger and stronger than the eight it replaces but with an enhanced role for parish councils and effective neighbourhood arrangements - bigger will mean more local.
- To improve strategic capacity - the new unitary council will be able to do more, through streamlined service delivery and yet cost less. The best from each of the current eight councils’ services will form the platform for the new council, from the highly performing Hambleton Leisure Centres to the Children and Young People’s Service within the County Council.
- To ensure that North Yorkshire has a stronger unified single voice speaking up for its coastal, rural and urban communities, arguing for greater investment, purposefully working alongside our neighbouring councils whether at regional or city region level. Partnerships within North Yorkshire will be stronger and more focused, helping to deliver more effectively across all of the public sector.

1.8 This submission for the formation of a new council has been based on five fundamental principles:

- influence and empowerment for local communities;
- open access to services;
- efficient, cost effective and improved service delivery;
- open accountability;
- effective leadership both locally and strategically.

1.9 In short, at the heart of this submission are citizens and a council that will deliver for them.

SECTION 2

The Nature of North Yorkshire and its Challenges

The Nature of North Yorkshire

- 2.1. North Yorkshire is the country's most beautiful and varied County with stunning countryside and coast and rich heritage:
- two of England's nine national parks in the Yorkshire Dales and the North Yorkshire Moors
 - the Heritage Coast
 - three areas of outstanding natural beauty
 - 244 sites of special scientific interest
 - over 12,000 listed buildings and many thousands more monuments and archaeological sites, including Fountains Abbey, a world heritage site.
 - thriving, attractive market towns and isolated rural upland.
 - a population which places a high value on independence, determination, resourcefulness and a strong sense of community.
- 2.2. This wonderful environmental setting brings with it real challenges, however, arising partly from the geography, partly from the sparsity of the population and partly from the nature of the rural economy.

Rurality

- 2.3. North Yorkshire covers 3102 square miles in area but with only 582,000 people, it has the second lowest population density in England (after Northumberland) at 72 people/Km² compared to the UK local authority mean of 1323 people/Km². The North Yorkshire population density ranges from 34 people/Km² in Ryedale to 131 people/Km² in Scarborough.
- 2.4. Only 20% of the population lives in the two main towns of Harrogate (73,670) and Scarborough (49,390). These two places are substantial towns which provide their residents and surrounding communities with a wide range of opportunities and services. There are only three other towns with more than 15,000 people living in them. Elsewhere, the remaining 70% of the population live in market towns and smaller villages in a very dispersed pattern of settlements. Importantly over 40% of the population live in settlements with fewer than 3000 residents.
- 2.5. The dispersed population presents significant challenges to service provision by the public, voluntary, and private sectors. Many people do not have easy access to settlements with a wide range of services and most settlements do not have a sufficiently large catchment population

to support a wide range of services. Poor access to services can lead to isolation and a risk of social exclusion for less advantaged people in our rural communities.

The population

- 2.6. By 2020, the population of the County is expected to be 620,600 – an increase of 7%. The most significant population growth will be in the 65+ age group, this will grow by between 30% in Scarborough district and 50% in Selby district. Conversely the population aged under 19 is forecast to decline, as is the number of people aged 35 – 49 years.
- 2.7. This increase in the numbers of older people will create substantial additional pressures on social and health care services across the County. This pressure could be increased further by the projected decline in 35 – 49 age group and the long hours work culture in North Yorkshire impacting on the provision of unpaid care.
- 2.8. There is a relatively small proportion of adults in their twenties in the population, compared to the English average. This reflects a trend towards smaller families particularly in the more affluent social groups and the loss of well educated younger adults to higher paid employment opportunities elsewhere.
- 2.9. The 2001 Census of Population showed that just under 98% of the County's population were white British with 1.1% in black and minority ethnic groups (BME) – much lower than the national average of 9.1%. As a consequence people in these groups can feel especially isolated. More recent migration from Eastern Europe has brought new ethnic minorities to our communities whose needs must be considered and addressed.
- 2.10. Socio-economic indicators for North Yorkshire are generally very positive. People are generally healthy, in work and well housed and young people generally do very well at school. There are communities which suffer disadvantage, however, principally on the Coast and in Selby. In these communities inequality expresses itself in poor health, higher unemployment, higher crime and lower educational attainment. Also, in our rural communities, disadvantaged individuals can suffer isolation in relatively comfortable communities and in circumstances where their needs are difficult to meet.

The economy

- 2.11. North Yorkshire's economy has higher proportions of jobs in agriculture and in tourism than nationally and smaller proportions of jobs in the business sectors commonly associated with urban centres. It provides most people with an opportunity for productive employment. 82% of people of working age in North Yorkshire are economically active, compared to 77% for the region and 78% for England. Unemployment rates are correspondingly low at 2.5% compared to the regional figure of 4.4% and the national figure of 4.8%.

- 2.12. Despite this high level of economic activity, earnings of residents in the County are only around the regional average. This is because of the structure of the local economy with traditionally low wage sectors and sectors with relatively high proportions of part-time employment (principally agriculture and tourism). People commuting to jobs outside the County earn more.
- 2.13. The tendency for the County to be attractive to higher earners working elsewhere, coupled with its attractiveness to second home owners and its desirability for self-catering holidays, pushes up the cost of houses disproportionately to the incomes of people dependent on the local economy, who often find local housing un-affordable.
- 2.14. Despite the high standard of achievement by young people in schools in the County, the skills of the workforce are only around the national average. In North Yorkshire, especially in rural communities, there are not the employment opportunities that young people are seeking commensurate to their educational attainment at the beginning of their careers. Together with the high cost of housing, it leads to the outward migration of people of working age.

Transport

- 2.15. The mid County has good road and rail links North and South, but the East/West links are slower involving predominantly two lane roads. Coastal communities, with only half a hinterland, so to speak, are especially disadvantaged by these communication limitations.
- 2.16. The sparse population makes public transport provision commercially difficult. Access to a car/van in North Yorkshire is high with 80.5% of households having access to at least one car or van (England 73.2%); multiple car/van access is also high with 35% of households having access to more than one vehicle (England 29%). Because of the limitations on public transport, car ownership is often a necessity in rural areas and the associated costs can be a contribution to hardship for families with lower incomes. Only 4.8% of the population get to work by public transport (England 14.9%).

Working in the Region

- 2.17. North Yorkshire is the only two-tier area in the Region amongst nine metropolitan and five unitary councils. Elsewhere in the Country, the balance between two-tier and unitary areas is much more equal. In the section on Leadership we explain how this weakens the capacity of local government in North Yorkshire to promote the County's interests as effectively as might be. Establishing a single clear voice for the County, unaffected by exceptions or reservations on the part of one or other of the eight councils, can be difficult and time consuming.
- 2.18. It is especially important that these issues do not undermine the County's participation in City Regions. A unitary authority would not have to wrestle with the different views of District Councils who view

the merit of aligning development with cities such as Leeds differently. The unitary council would be able to promote the interests of the communities within the Leeds and Teesside City Region effectively while also being able to safeguard and promote the interests of more isolated rural and coastal areas.

The public sector

2.19. Local government in the County comprises the County Council and seven District Councils:

- Craven DC
- Hambleton DC
- Harrogate BC
- Richmondshire DC
- Ryedale DC
- Scarborough BC
- Selby DC

2.20. This range of local authorities creates a multiplicity of local strategic partnerships, community safety partnerships and community strategies. Other public sector agencies must work with this complex pattern, for example, the two National Parks, North Yorkshire Police, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, the Probation Service and the Primary Care Trust. This complexity clouds accountability and is expensive to work with. It also occasionally frustrates constructive developments. In North Yorkshire the Home Office recommendation that crime and disorder reduction partnerships should merge to the police basic command unit level proved impossible to implement. Partners' different views of the merits of the proposal could not be reconciled and an alternative approach to strengthen capacity in this field is being attempted. The discussions which led to this resolution were difficult and time consuming and put partnership goodwill under substantial pressure.

Key issues and challenges

2.21. Whilst North Yorkshire's communities do not face the problems prevalent in some of our inner cities, some people nevertheless, face significant barriers to achieving a good quality of life. There is a good shared and in depth understanding amongst partners of the needs and issues facing the county's communities. These can be summarised as follows:

- **Providing good access and choice to isolated communities** – met through measures such as mobile libraries, community resource centres, support for broadband connectivity and support to rural bus services.
- **Affordable housing.** The County's environment makes it a popular tourist destination, and a place from which to commute to

employment in surrounding cities. The demand for holiday homes and commercial lettings also inflates house prices and together with lower incomes from local jobs this makes housing unaffordable for many.

- **Tackling the needs of disadvantaged young people**, further improving outcomes for children supported through social care and developing multi-agency integrated services across the whole of the County to improve responsiveness to national priorities such as obesity.
- **Demographic change including the increasing social care needs of an ageing population and the outward migration of young, well educated people.** These are met through:(i) developing Extra Care housing; local initiatives to meet needs in partnership in very rural areas such as the Esk Moors project; the successful Partnerships for Older People Projects (POPPS), which provides home care and community support for older people, bid for £3m to reduce hospital admissions and provide flexible care on discharge and (ii) the development of recruitment portals to a range of job opportunities and various initiatives to support business development.
- **Addressing the pockets of socio- economic deprivation.** Although in comparison with some areas of England there is little deprivation, there are pockets, most notably in Scarborough and Selby. In these localities, people often experience disadvantage on several fronts – higher rates of unemployment, poorer health, less favourable educational attainment and higher rates of crime
- **The County’s economy** has too high a proportion of jobs in seasonal and low waged sectors. Agriculture needs to diversify, the tourism sector needs to go for higher added value and sectors employing more highly skilled, better paid, workers and with stronger growth prospects – in business services and the knowledge economy, for example – are under-represented.
- **Responding to the increasing number of extreme weather events** – especially flooding. Met through excellent civil contingency planning, comprehensive winter maintenance and snow clearing to keep people on the move.
- **Dealing with crime and disorder** – while rates of crime in the County are generally low, this is not the case everywhere and people fear it nonetheless. Responses to crime are fragmented across eight district based and county level community safety partnerships.
- **The increasing cost of waste disposal (and recycling).** The costs of service areas such as this represents a major challenge to the whole of local government. The local government sector needs

collectively to realise every possible efficiency to cushion local tax payers from the constantly increasing service pressures and to remove inefficient service divisions such as waste collection and disposal. It is estimated that by 2017 waste disposal will cost the tax payers of the county an additional £30 million per annum.

- **The increasing cost of adult social care.** This area is again a major cost pressure for local government, by 2020 there will be 50% more people in the county aged over 65. Currently the County Council spends £101 million per annum. It is estimated that this could rise to £150 million in the next 5 years.
- **Working in the Region and City Regions,** ensuring that there is a strong voice speaking for the County's communities. Currently the complexities of establishing a consistent position between local authorities in the County weakens the response.
- **There is inherent complexity in providing services** and ensuring equitable levels of service and access to services in a large, sparsely populated area that has a three tier local authority structure. This is currently met by working closely in partnership with the seven District Councils, seven Local Strategic Partnerships and other partners involved in the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership to co-locate services, share services where possible and develop a county wide Local Area Agreement.

Summary

- 2.22. The issues and challenges highlighted in this section are shared across North Yorkshire. They affect the lives of residents on a daily basis. They are today's challenges and will be tomorrow's. A structure of local government is required that will tackle these issues in the most effective way. They are too important to accept the second best approach. The next section will highlight why a unitary council is the best approach and how the new council will operate.

SECTION 3

A NEW COUNCIL

- 3.1 North Yorkshire is blessed with many advantages. However, as described in the previous chapter it also faces many challenges. These challenges are increasingly difficult to address. The rising cost of providing council services is outstripping inflation.
- 3.2 All councils in North Yorkshire are under budgetary pressures. Yet the public, quite rightly, continues to have high expectations for the public sector to deliver good services and to care for its communities and environment.
- 3.3 In order to meet the public's expectations for effective service delivery at a reasonable cost there needs to be a step change in the provision of council services. That step change is the establishment of a single unitary council to replace the current County and seven District Councils:
- a single new council with new approaches to replace the old complexities and confusion of three tiers;
 - a new council with a new approach to empowering local communities;
 - a new council with a new approach to service delivery, providing better outcomes and real efficiencies;
 - a new council with a different public sector landscape in North Yorkshire. Two vibrant tiers replacing three. The first tier comprising stronger parish councils working closely with and supported by a stronger unitary council;
 - a new partner within the public sector to help make partnership working simpler, more focused and more effective.
- 3.4 The unitary council will be based on the existing boundaries of North Yorkshire County Council and will have regard to the existing elected member divisions of the County Council but in every other regard will be a new council.

A new council better able to tackle North Yorkshire's challenges

- 3.5 A unitary council will be better placed to tackle the challenges found across North Yorkshire, described in the previous section.

Challenges facing local government in North Yorkshire	Advantages of the new council
Providing good access and choice to isolated communities	A single unitary council will coordinate the assets and services of local government to ensure a consistently high level of accessibility through one stop shops, a single telephone centre and website and will be more effective in working on joint arrangements with other partners. The rural nature of North Yorkshire and the service costs and challenges this brings requires a single approach to local government and more joint arrangements with other service providers.
Affordable housing.	The provision of more affordable housing is one of North Yorkshires highest priorities across the whole county area. The fragmentation of local government in the County is adversely affecting the situation. The Audit Commission in a recent inspection of Affordable Housing provision in North Yorkshire highlighted performance issues and the risk of service failure by District Councils due to the lack of capacity, joint working and a strategic approach. A unitary council will overcome these issues
Tackling the needs of disadvantaged young people	Bringing together cultural, sport, health, advice and youth services will enhance access to opportunities and support and help target provision on the greatest areas of need.
Demographic change including the increasing social care needs of an ageing population and the outward migration of young, well educated people.	Increasing resources are needed to support the ageing population. The existing fragmented housing policy arrangements need to be brought together with adults services for a truly effective response in terms of specialist and affordable housing.
Addressing the pockets of socio-economic deprivation.	A large part of local government resources are deployed now strategically by the County Council to

Challenges facing local government in North Yorkshire	Advantages of the new council
	support disadvantaged people and communities. Responses to this issue will be more effective if all of local government's resources were managed in this way.
The County's economy	Better co-ordination and a stronger voice will drive forward change in the established sectors and ensure the County competes for new investment and higher paid employment more effectively. There will be strong advocacy for our coastal areas, a formidable rural champion and an effective partner in both the Leeds City Region and the Tees Valley City Region.
Responding to the increasing number of extreme weather events	The resources needed for an effective response to these challenges are in the control of a range of partners, including the County and District Councils. They will be more effectively deployed and efficiently operated if managed by a single council with greater strategic capacity.
Fear of crime	Approaches to crime and disorder are variable across the County and suffer from a fragmented approach. An example of this is domestic abuse, the standard of service available varies enormously across the County because the capacity to deliver the aims of the Countrywide strategy has not been available everywhere. Posts have been vacant, shared posts have been split into part-time posts and there has not been the strength of leadership at the local level to secure the full engagement of all the partners involved.
The increasing cost of waste disposal (and recycling).	Responsibility for waste collection is fragmented and separate from disposal. A step change in effectiveness is needed if alternative

Challenges facing local government in North Yorkshire	Advantages of the new council
	approaches are to deliver the necessary savings. A unitary authority will be much better placed to achieve this, consolidating together collection, transportation and disposal of waste.
The increasing costs of adult social care.	Tackling this issue through promoting exercise and other lifestyle changes in the adult population and by coordinating the provision of extra care housing will be more effective if not fragmented across eight authorities.
There is inherent complexity in providing services and ensuring equity of service provision within the current complex local government structure.	All aspects of local government policy and service delivery are complicated by the three-tier system. Other partners have to work with eight local authorities where one will be more effective. A single unitary council will be able to act as the convenor of all public services in North Yorkshire

3.6 A new unitary council will be better able to meet the challenges set out above by using its strategic capacity. The answer to the challenge of delivering services over a sparsely populated area is to pull together sufficient critical mass and to balance the more densely populated areas of towns and market towns with large rural areas. This is what North Yorkshire already achieves and its size and the balance of town and rural communities is its strength.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 1

Should a major flooding event occur again in the County, for example in Selby, a new Unitary Council will be able to draw on resources from across the council area to support the local community. This will allow those with local knowledge to advise professional partners and the public on specific community issues while staff from further afield could undertake more generic tasks.

The countywide emergency planning team will support the emergency services and co-ordinate the non-999 response throughout the incident and the recovery phase. The financial strength of the new council and its strategic ability will be used to ensure an earlier and more robust commitment to potentially high expenditure to help the affected local community.

Communication with the public will be focused on ensuring the local community received clear messages and knew exactly who to contact with any queries. Partnerships will be streamlined, communications will be more effective, and the already well-established relationships with key professional partners will be strengthened.

- 3.7 The creation of relatively large rural unitary councils is not new, as evidenced by the councils in Scotland, Wales and in England with the East Riding of Yorkshire. Indeed it can be argued that due to the increased costs of delivering services in rural areas and given the efficiencies that can be achieved through the rationalisation of district and county tiers there is a more pressing imperative for strong unitary councils in rural areas than in other less sparsely populated areas. This point was recognised by the Commission for Rural Communities who in its publication “Shire Local Government – Time for Change” gave the need to create critical mass for a council in order to have sufficient capacity and strength as an important reason for the Commission to call for “powerful new unitary local authorities serving the communities of shire England.”
- 3.8 There is hard evidence of the ability of a single council to deliver excellent services across North Yorkshire. This comes in the form of the County Council. This excellence depends as much on the ability to understand local needs and meet them effectively as it does on strategic capacity. The Council has recently undergone a Corporate Assessment, the inspection report from the assessment stated:
- “The Council is performing well, consistently above minimum requirements. Reliable systems, competent partnership working and inspiring leadership are delivering good outcomes for local people.”*
- “The Council has a good understanding of the challenges faced by the diverse communities that make up North Yorkshire. This informs clear ambitions and priorities to improve quality of life. Ambitions target the most vulnerable and isolated, with an emphasis on sustaining rural communities. Priorities link well to national priorities but are firmly rooted in the needs and aspirations of local people.”* Paragraphs 5 and 6 of the Executive Summary of the Corporate Assessment (December 2006).
- “The Council has risen to the challenge of delivering quality services in a sparsely populated, largely rural county. Service performance is improving year on year and achievements against national indicators are good when compared to similar councils.”* Paragraph 75 of the Corporate Assessment (December 2006)

3.9 It is true to say that the majority of local government expenditure is already managed at the county level to support local services, as shown in the table below

Table 3 Comparison of scale between the County and District Councils

Authority	Population	Total No Employees (full time and part time) 2005	Net revenue budget requirement	Net revenue budget as % of overall North Yorkshire
North Yorkshire	582,000	26136	£566.1m*	87.6%
Craven	53,600	290	£6.910m	1.1%
Hambleton	85,100	528	£8.011m	1.2%
Harrogate	146,607?	1563	£22.024m	3.4%
Richmondshire	50,700	321	£6.829m	1.1%
Ryedale	51,700	292	£7.294m	1.1%
Scarborough	107,100	1387	£19.079m	3.0%
Selby	74,732?	392	£10.106m	1.5%

*The North Yorkshire County Council revenue budget figure is inclusive of £281.0m of dedicated schools grant

3.10 In putting forward this submission we have considered what boundaries would be appropriate for a unitary council, we have concluded that any sub-division of North Yorkshire will reduce the benefits of restructuring in the following ways.

- Reduce strategic capacity and undermine the financial viability of local government across the whole county area.
- Sub divisions of the county will still be geographically large requiring the kinds of locality arrangements proposed here to ensure engagement at the local level.
- Co-terminosity with other public sector agencies i.e. PCT, Police, Fire and Rescue and Probation will be lost, to the detriment of those organisations with lost opportunities for efficiency and a need for more complex partnership arrangements.
- Overall efficiencies will be reduced with multiple sets of members, senior officers and reduced efficiencies of scale.
- The resource base of any sub-county authority will be weakened.

3.11 In addition to the above North Yorkshire has a clear identity with a distinct community of interest as a rural area between the commercial and industrial centres of West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire, Humberside and Teesside.

3.12 The new unitary council will have a new modern structure in line with the Governments recent White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities”.

Structure of the new authority

Leadership

3.13 The unitary council will have formal governance arrangements at both the whole council level and on an area basis. This is represented diagrammatically below. In addition to the area governance structure described below Section 4 sets out additional locality arrangements.

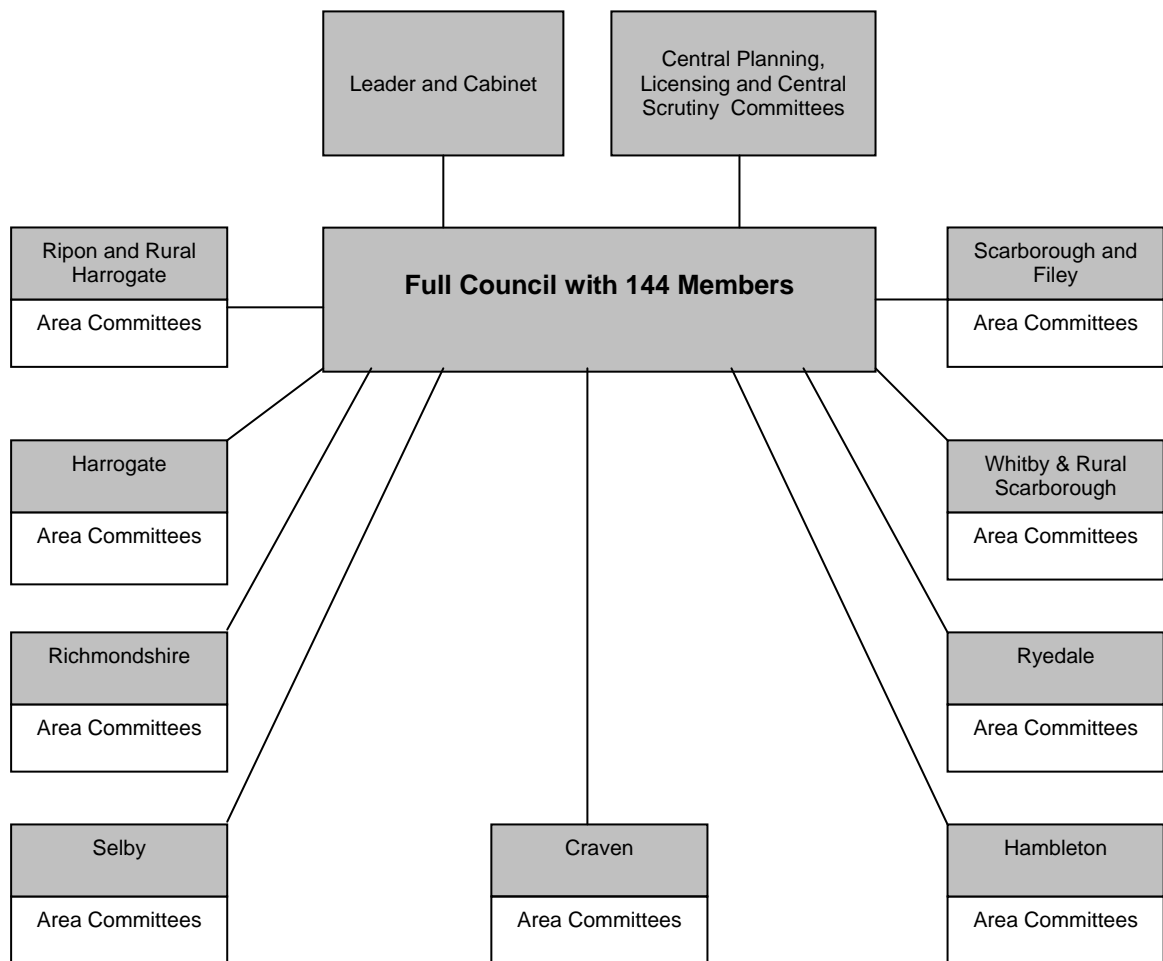


Fig 1 Formal council governance arrangements (Section 4 provides details of locality arrangements)

Area Committees would be responsible for delegated decisions in relation to local services, planning, licensing and scrutiny.

- 3.14 The new council will have a single, high profile leader elected by a ballot of all elected councillors. This is in line with the options for leadership set out in the Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities”.
- 3.15 The leader will be responsible for selecting up to nine councillors to form the new Council’s Cabinet.
- 3.16 Cabinet Members will have geographical responsibilities for parts of the new Council’s area as well as service and thematic portfolios.
- 3.17 Leadership of the new Council will be clear and accountable. A single leader and cabinet will replace the multiplicity of leaders and governance arrangements that exist at the moment. Four of the current eight councils operate a reformed committee system with the other four councils having a cabinet model.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 2

At a consultation event in Skipton the Leader of the new Unitary Council attended the local community forum. Parish Councillors and members of the public had a wide range of concerns from the lack of activities for young people, incidents of anti-social behaviour through to poor street lighting. The Council Leader was accountable for all of the issues. The Leader and Chief Executive were able to provide information and a commitment that the issues will be tackled – and the accountability for any failure to deliver was clear.

Elected Members

- 3.18 The new council will require new ward boundaries to be established. It is accepted that the Government’s timetable does not allow for a full boundary commission review of new wards prior to the establishment of the new Council. Therefore it is proposed that transitional arrangements be put in place for the lifetime of the first council to allow a full boundary review to be undertaken during this first four year period.
- 3.19 The transitional arrangements will be to base the new ward boundaries upon the present County Council divisions and to double the number of Members in each division. The new Council will therefore have 144 elected Members replacing the current 355 district and county councillors.
- 3.20 A boundary commission review will look to establish smaller single member wards and could result in a reduction of Members from 144.

3.21 The benefits of adopting this approach will be

- Clarity of representation. Council Members will represent their constituents in respect of all council services without any confusing split between county and district levels.
- Individual Members will be more visible and accountable and better able to represent their constituent's interests due to increased support that will be provided and the simplification of local leadership.
- Higher profile elected Members will be better able to act as champions for their areas, identifying and helping to resolve local concerns.
- There will be greater clarity for parish councils in terms of liaising with elected Members from a single unitary council.
- The transitional figure of 144 elected Members will ensure that there are sufficient councillors to undertake all of the required committee duties and will enable individual councillors to have sufficient time to engage with a wider range of council functions and to foster effective relationships with the public, and with private, voluntary and community organisations in their areas.
- The number of 144 councillors represents an appropriate rationalisation of elected Members from 355, with cost savings. At the same time it presents a significant opportunity for existing county and district councillors as well as aspiring new candidates to become councillors in broader, higher profile roles with the new unitary council.

3.22 The unitary council will develop the role of councillors and be able to support them to act as local democratic champions in line with the Local Government Association's People and Places Campaign and the Government's vision set out in its White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities". For example the network of 34 Customer Services Centres described in Section 4 will be available to host regular councillor surgeries, promote the profile of councillors and advertise surgery sessions as well as providing convenient support points for local councillors for the provision of information and support services. The creation of a network of community development officers, also described in Section 4, will help provide the link to parish councils, community groups and other public agencies in the locality. In addition key local council staff in an area will be regularly brought together to update councillors on local issues and to act as key contacts to help resolve local councillor and parish council concerns.

Scrutiny Arrangements

3.23 Scrutiny arrangements within a new unitary council will operate on a number of levels

- Council wide/Strategic Overview and Scrutiny

- Area Scrutiny
 - Community Forums
- 3.24 There will be a limited number of council wide Overview and Scrutiny Committees examining key strategic issues within service areas, the development and performance of the Local Area Agreement and the implementation of the Sustainable Community Strategy.
- 3.25 There will be nine Area Scrutiny Committees linked to the nine areas within which the 25 Community Forums will operate. The areas for the establishment of Area Committees and Community Forums will be subject to local consultation. Proposals are contained in Appendix 1. The Community Forums will be composed of Councillors and Parish Councillors as well as other community representatives and will be able to look into local issues and to formally refer them to the Area Scrutiny Committee.
- 3.26 Section 4 provides further details of the new Council's locality arrangements.

Committees

- 3.27 In order to discharge its obligations in relation to planning and licensing issues the new Council will need to establish appropriate committee arrangements.
- 3.28 Central committees will be established for both planning and licensing with nine area sub committees working to each of them. The sub committees will operate on an area basis shown in Appendix 1 and described in the next chapter. The sub committees will deal with local planning and licensing issues and will provide a local basis on which to understand local issues. The sub committees will sit within the respective areas that they cover and will help ensure ease of access to the public and media.
- 3.29 In all, the governance arrangements set out above, when allied to the locality work described in the next Section, provides an array of important responsibilities to engage 134 non executive councillors and will ensure both that local people are well represented and that the Executive is effectively held to account.

Service Structure

- 3.30 It will very much be for the new council to decide its own structure of directorates and service alignment. However it is envisaged that there will be at the head of the organisation a Chief Executive and five Directors, leading five major directorates delivering the range of central and direct services. This will represent a significant rationalisation from the eight Chief Executives and 22 Directors who currently lead the District Councils and County Council.

- 3.31 Combining district and county services will also enable the rationalisation of a significant number of heads of service, and other senior posts. The senior posts that remain will be substantial and attractive jobs that will attract the best candidates.
- 3.32 Details of how individual service areas will be aligned and combined within a unitary council are included in Section 7.
- 3.33 The new unitary council will provide employees with rewarding career opportunities that will in turn attract the best talent. A new unitary council will ensure that one of the key criteria for the delivery of successful services is achieved, namely the recruitment of the best staff.
- 3.34 A new council will be focused on the most effective ways of delivering services. It will not be introverted or have to continuously manage two tier “politics”. It will be able to embrace the shared services agenda with the rest of the public sector and other neighbouring councils. The present district and county split mitigates against this. The co-terminosity with other public sector providers such as police, PCT and fire will help to promote this approach. A larger, strategic council will also be a more attractive proposition for private sector partnering arrangements. So with a new council will come a new approach to service delivery, challenging the status quo to promote better more cost effective services. Allied to this will be the ability to spread the many examples of best practice that already exist in the County to all parts. Innovation and best practice will drive better services.

Summary

- 3.35 This chapter has outlined how a new unitary authority will be a truly new council. Clear and accountable leadership will complement and be held to account by dynamic governance arrangements with roles at the most local level. Councillors, with effective support, will be leaders and champions for their communities.
- 3.36 A new unitary council needs to be based on the boundaries of North Yorkshire County Council and all of its seven Districts. This enables the new council to achieve sufficient critical mass to deliver effectively for all citizens and to be better placed to meet the challenges that face the whole of the county area.
- 3.37 The next chapter will develop many of the concepts raised in this section. It will demonstrate that the bedrock upon which the whole council is built is its many and diverse local communities shaping and influencing all that it does.

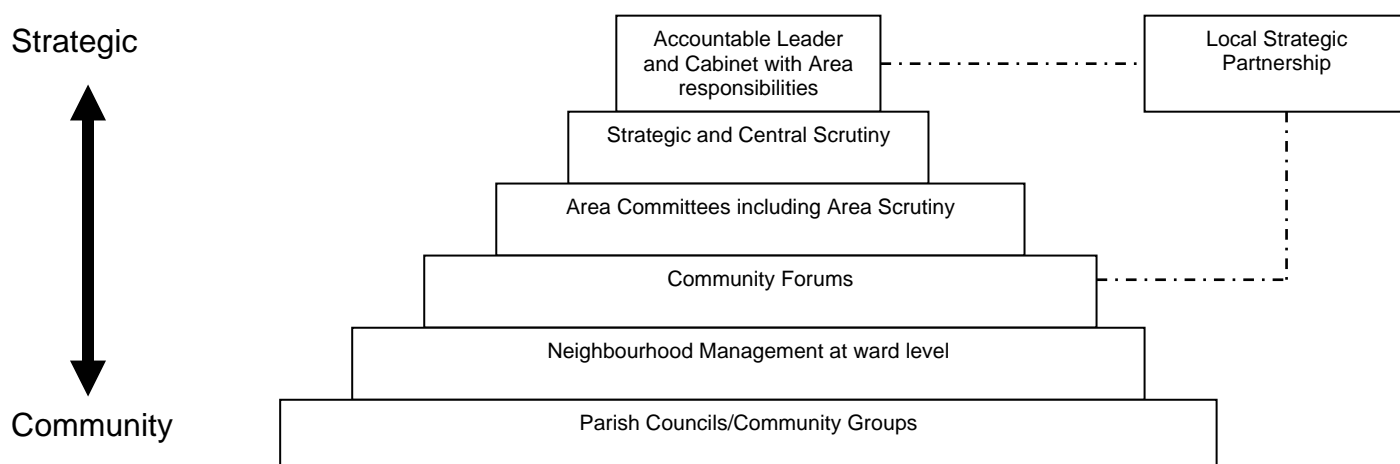
SECTION 4

More Local, More Accessible

- 4.1 This section outlines the locality and access arrangements that will be put in place by a new unitary council in North Yorkshire.
- 4.2 North Yorkshire is a large geographical area blending large rural and sparsely populated areas with key towns and villages. This submission recognises the need and importance of enabling citizens to shape their own communities, have their voices heard and to have choice about how they access services.
- 4.3 There are many different levels for local engagement. Different approaches work, and opportunities exist, at each level. Care and consideration needs to be given to understand these and to reconcile possible conflicts with larger strategic imperatives and desirable efficiencies of scale. This section will demonstrate that these issues are thoroughly understood.
- 4.4 North Yorkshire is uniquely placed to ensure that the key aim of the Governments White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities” is delivered. The Rt. Hon Ruth Kelly MP, the Secretary of State for Community and Local Government stated this to be “to give local people and local communities more influence and power to improve their lives”. In North Yorkshire this challenge will be met by the creation of a powerful new partnership between a new unitary council and the parishes of North Yorkshire.
- 4.5 Bringing together district and county councils and rationalising the present three tiers of local government into two will, through the new proposals in this section, empower and embolden parishes to work for their local communities. North Yorkshire contains a greater number of parishes than any other local authority area. Almost 9% of all of the parishes in England are in North Yorkshire. Parishes have a tradition and vibrancy that date back through the ages. They represent communities ranging from large market towns such as Ripon, to key coastal resorts like Whitby, through to small rural communities such as Gillamoor on the North Yorkshire Moors and Arkengarthdale in the North Yorkshire Dales. Parishes with local, committed, hard working people doing their best for their community.
- 4.6 The second part of this section will recognise that hand in hand with influence comes access. Access to services, access to advice and access to representation are of crucial importance to all and particularly important in a rural county.

Localism: the Big Picture

- 4.7 The locality arrangements for a unitary council will be multi tiered. There will be nine areas established for Area Committees dealing with scrutiny, local service delivery, planning and licensing. Community Forums will be established at a more local level with 25 proposed across the county area. There will be 69 ward areas within the new council therefore each community forum area will on average be comprised of two to three wards. Parish and Town Councils will be clustered within the community forum areas.
- 4.8 This locality structure is set out in the diagram below with further detailed explanation about each aspect. One of the new concepts that will be created within North Yorkshire is that of Neighbourhood Management. This is the pulling together of front line service staff with councillors, parishes and community groups to resolve issues at the local level – again more details are provided below.



- 4.9 The table below summaries the areas of responsibility for each level set out above

Level	Key Roles
Parish Council and Community Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First point of representation. • Decision taking on local issues. • Responsible for delivery of some local services. • Consulted on specific local issues. • Provide local views and concerns back to unitary council and other bodies. • Undertake local problem solving role – able to activate local community to respond to local issues.
Neighbourhood Management at Ward level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Links will be forged with key agencies and bodies working within wards. • Local Councillors will operate at the head of a family of key public service providers including Police,

Level	Key Roles
	<p>neighbourhood watch, Parish Councils, voluntary and community groups, local schools, doctor's surgeries, children's centres, highways etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligence and information shared electronically. • Meetings when needed to resolve local issues/problems.
Community Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approx 25 across the council area each forum pulling together 2/3 wards. • Membership from Parishes and Voluntary and Community Groups, chaired by local council member. • Basis for clustering Parish Councils to identify common issues. • Hold all of the public sector to account in the area i.e. unitary council, Police and Health. • Fulfil local delivery role of Local Strategic Partnership. • Consultation forum for all of public sector. • Delegated grant from unitary council to spend on local community projects (circa £50 - £100K for each forum) • Refer issues to Area Scrutiny Committees. • Forum for local concerns • Vehicles for partnership delivery of services i.e. bringing together a number of small parish councils. • Determine local service priorities • Develop and own Local Community Charter setting out local service standards and priorities for the council and other public sector partners in the area as well as the local communities within the forums area. • Act as the vehicle for local partnerships to help sustain and develop services and to generate efficiencies and enable access to services. • Act as an initial sounding board for Community Calls for Action.
Area Committees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The council area will be sub divided into nine areas for locally based formal committees of the Council. • At each area level there will be an Area Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a licensing committee and a planning

Level	Key Roles
	<p>committee.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Area Overview and Scrutiny Committees will comprise members of the unitary council and parish councils nominated by the community forums. They will hold to account the unitary council and other public sector providers for performance and service delivery within the area. Issues can be referred for Scrutiny by the community forums. They will be encouraged to hold meetings at different locations around their respective areas. • The Area Planning and Licensing Committee will operate as sub committees of central licensing and planning committees dealing with local applications and providing local views on consultations.
Strategic and Central Scrutiny	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking at strategic and central issues and policies leaving Area Overview and Scrutiny Committees to deal with local issues.
Cabinet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each member of the cabinet to have responsibility for one of the nine areas of the Council. • Cabinet Members to act as champions for their areas and to respond to Area Scrutiny issues.
Leader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The new unitary council will have a visible and accountable leader who will have ultimate responsibility and accountability for the Council's performance in each part of the Council's areas and for its leadership of and contribution to the Local Strategic Partnership.
Local Strategic Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operate at whole council level. • All major public sector partners (including voluntary and community sector and private sector) involved. • Representatives from community forums including parish councils. • Determine strategic policy with regard to Local Community Charters developed by community forums. • Local delivery through individual agencies, community forums and neighbourhood management teams. • Develop and own Sustainable

Level	Key Roles
	Community Strategy. • Delivery of the Local Area Agreement.

Parish Councils

- 4.10 Parish councils represent the first level of local government. The rationalisation of the two tiers above them will provide the opportunity for parishes to grow and flourish. The number and reach of parish councils across North Yorkshire is one of the County's strengths.
- 4.11 Within North Yorkshire there are 731 parishes with 588 parish councils or parishes with formal meetings. Parish councils provide the opportunity for local people to raise issues of concern, develop local projects and in the case of larger parish and town councils deliver important local services.
- 4.12 Parish and town councils fulfil a range of functions and have a number of powers. An indicative list of these is provided at Appendix 2. In addition those parishes that achieve Quality Parish Status will, once the Government has enacted its White Paper commitment, have the power of well being extended to them. This will give Quality Parish Councils the ability to undertake an even broader range of activities for the "well being" of residents of the Parish.
- 4.13 A new unitary council will wish to enable parishes to develop and fulfil their role as the first tier of local government. There still remain some parts of the county that are not parished or do not have an effective operating parish council.
- 4.14 A new unitary council will put in place a Parish Liaison Team to work closely with the Yorkshire Local Councils Association and its North Yorkshire branches. Additional resources will be provided to the YLCA. The parish liaison team will look to utilise the power to create new parishes in non parished areas promised in the Government's White Paper. The two significant non parished areas within North Yorkshire are the urban areas of Scarborough and Harrogate. A new unitary council will look to consult extensively with these communities about what parish arrangement they will wish to see in place. This could lead to the creation of significant town councils for Scarborough and Harrogate or smaller parish/community councils. The media will be asked to help with the consultation and in line with the Government's White Paper, whether new town or parish councils were created and of what size will be led by the wishes of local people.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 3

Parish Councils are already making significant contributions to improving facilities for the communities they represent, for example:

Green Hammerton Parish Council – Skate Park for Young People

The parish council and local playing field association decided to meet with local skateboarders to help address the problem of young people having no safe place to use their skateboards and establish a project that will aim to provide a safe and controlled environment for young people to participate in skateboarding activities.

Local support was overwhelming including support from young people. They were keen to illustrate their commitment by volunteering to participate in the care and maintenance of the park once it had been constructed.

In July 2003 the skate park was completed and has already proven to be an enormous success with skateboarders as it has become a focal point for young people not only in Green Hammerton but also by residents of the neighbouring villages of Kirk Hammerton, Nun Monkton, Whixley and Great Ouseburn.

Nidderdale Area of Outstanding National Beauty

A number of parish councils in the Nidderdale AONB have formed a partnership with the AONB to employ a parish caretaker. These are local people working to ensure that the environment of the parish is kept clean and safe for all residents, undertaking work such as clearing gutter grates, picking up litter, grass and verge cutting. Some of the parish councils have teamed up with neighbouring councils to share the cost of the caretaker between them, including Dacre, Bewley and Upper Nidderdale (incorporating Stonebeck Up, Stonebeck Down and Fountains Earth parishes) Parish Councils.

Fairburn Parish Council

Fairburn is a small but active parish council. It delivers vital street lighting, grass cutting services and maintenance of footpaths on behalf of the county and District Councils for the local community. Other initiatives include:

- Helping to introduce traffic calming measures
- Developing a village green, skate park and youth shelter from a redundant road
- Developing a heritage trail through Heritage Lottery Funding

These initiatives were identified in the village plan, based on community consultation and have been extremely popular with local residents.

The new council, with more capacity and resources including a dedicated Parish liaison team and a network of community development workers will be able to work with partners such as the Yorkshire Rural Community Council and the Yorkshire Local Councils Association to help Parishes across the County to deliver similar projects for their communities.

- 4.15 As you will expect from such a large number of very different parish councils, they vary tremendously in size, ability and effectiveness. It will be a prime responsibility of the Parish Liaison Team in partnership with the Yorkshire Local Councils Association to provide training, support, information and advice to raise the standards and performance levels of all parish councils. Parish Councils will be helped and supported through the Quality Parish Scheme. Small parishes will be encouraged to cluster together at either the

Neighbourhood Management Level (ward level) or Community Forum level for mutual support and the provision of joint services, where appropriate. Mentoring by larger parishes or town councils of smaller parishes will be encouraged.

4.16 A new unitary council will look to devolve appropriate services to town and parish councils. The main service areas will be likely to be around environmental, street scene and recreational services but with important opportunities for other local services for example;

- Maintaining footpaths
- Parks and open spaces
- Maintaining community facilities e.g. Village halls.
- Street cleaning
- Village greens
- Play and recreational facilities
- Public toilets
- Tourism Initiatives
- Bus shelters
- Allotments
- Grass cutting
- Local recycling
- Local support services for vulnerable people

There will be a presumption to devolve services along with appropriate budgets provided that

- The parish or town council wished to undertake the functions
- The parish or town council were able to effectively discharge the function
- There were not any significant adverse affects on efficiency that will have to be passed onto council tax payers.

4.17 It is recognised that civic pride is of enormous importance across North Yorkshire, particularly so for town councils. The office of Mayor is valued and well regarded and would not be disturbed by these proposals. Indeed the increased profile that will be given to Town Councils will heighten further the role of local Mayors.

4.18 Civic pride is also about more than public office, it is a state of mind and the valuing of your town or village. The collective commitment of local people to make their town and village the best place to live, work and visit. A new unitary council though the locality measures set out in this Section would see a renaissance of civic pride across North Yorkshire.

4.19 The desire to reinforce a sense of civic pride may well be a factor that would lead the communities of Scarborough and Harrogate to become parished and establish Town Councils.

Neighbourhood Management

- 4.20 In determining locality arrangements there is a level at which you should look to pull together front line service providers and local voluntary and community groups to provide a focus on a particular area. In North Yorkshire many parish councils are too small for this to be the correct level. In a new unitary council the most appropriate level will be the ward level.
- 4.21 This will enable the council Member(s) for the ward to sit at the head of a family of service providers and community bodies, including parish councils to focus on the needs of the ward.
- 4.22 Neighbourhood Management could involve the following
- police
 - neighbourhood watch groups
 - parish councils and community groups
 - head teachers from local schools
 - street cleaning and highways staff
 - local doctor's surgeries
 - businesses
 - manager from local customer service centre
 - local community development worker
 - others as appropriate
- 4.23 Members of the Neighbourhood Management Team will know each other; be part of a regular information sharing e-mail group; periodically meet together; and, combine to tackle important local problems.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 4

A member of the public attended one of the regular surgeries held by the local councillor in the new customer service centre in Boroughbridge. The Councillor was told of problems with fly tipping in the ward. They were able to inform by e-mail all the members of the ward based neighbourhood management team who were asked to keep watch for any incidents. A pattern of illegal activity was picked up and passed to the Council's Special Investigation Team who gathered evidence and took action.

- 4.24 An example of a key issue that will be jointly tackled by the Neighbourhood Management Team will be crime and anti social behaviour. Members of the wider team will combine with the Neighbourhood Police Team to jointly resolve issues or to develop preventative approaches.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 5

Elderly residents from Scarborough complain directly to their local councillor about the level of noise from a domestic house on one of the local estates. The residents have approached the councillor for help as they wish to remain anonymous due to fear of reprisals from the particular householder. The councillor is aware of the new unitary authority's specialist nuisance team. He contacts the team manager and explains the situation. Intelligence work is undertaken by the Council's specialist team and the originating residents are guaranteed their anonymity.

An operation is devised, the outcome of which is to stop the nuisance to the residents. The Council newsletter is used to send out warnings that the Council intend to initiate proactive patrols in known areas of high noise nuisance. Proactive patrols are initiated on the estate. As a result certain residents are offered advice about noise levels. The originating complainants are also provided with emergency 24hr telephone numbers of council on-call officers. Local police are contacted and made aware of the situation and arrangements put into place to obtain police assistance if necessary. One of the Council's on-call officers' mobile phone rings that Saturday evening. She contacts a team member and they attend the estate calling police backup en route. Noise readings are taken from one of the premises where the advice was offered previously. This noise reading proves excessive. Enforcement action is initiated resulting in audio equipment being seized and individuals being charged with nuisance offences resulting in formal proceedings. Substantial fines and ASBO's are imposed as a result.

The nuisance is stopped and the elderly resident's anonymity maintained. The result is published in the Council newsletter as a good proactive story but also for the deterrent effect on others.

- 4.25 The Neighbourhood Management Team and all those involved in delivering local services will be encouraged to "look out" for the neighbourhood. For example the local Head teacher or street cleaner reporting issues from anti social behaviour to fly tipping to the single council contact centre which will ensure that the issues is addressed. Technology in the shape of hand held devices could be used to report an issue that needed to be dealt with. Collective pride in an area will be created and constantly reinforced. Councillors and parish councillors will become familiar with the members of the Neighbourhood Management Team, relationships will develop and contacts more easily made.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 6

A local parish councillor in Selby has been approached by a number of local licensed taxi drivers. Their complaint is that on some Saturday evenings unlicensed taxis from the South Yorkshire area and are not only operating unlicensed in Selby but are ripping the Selby public off on fares.

The information is passed to the Council's taxi enforcement and licensing team. They piece this together with information from the Council's complaint handling system that recorded a number of calls from members of the public

complaining about high taxi charges in the area. They then engage the help of the Council's Fraud and Special Investigations team and a sting operation is set to coincide with the staging of a major event in the area. Working under cover, officers expose fraudulent trading by a number of operators. Successful prosecutions follow.

- 4.26 Groupings of wards and neighbourhood management teams will form Community Forums.

Community Forums

- 4.27 A new unitary council will pull together groupings of two and three ward areas together to form community forums. The forum areas will represent communities of interest. A map outlining possible community forum areas is included in Appendix 1. This shows North Yorkshire divided into 25 community forum areas. It is important to stress that before deciding upon the areas and number of the community forums this will be subject to public consultation. The final shape of the forum areas will be subject to the views of people living within them.
- 4.28 The membership of the forums will be drawn from local councillors and parish councillors. They will be open to the public and it is intended that they will also cover other public agencies such as the Police and Primary Care Trust. This will need to be subject to further discussion with the agencies concerned but such an approach will help those agencies discharge their obligations for community engagement and will provide the prospect of joined up open accountability envisaged in the Government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities".
- 4.29 The wide range of agencies and therefore issues that will be subject to discussion and local scrutiny will help ensure that the forums are vibrant and meaningful occasions. This will be reinforced by grant funding that will be provided by the new unitary council to the community forums for the forum to spend on important local issues. These grants will vary between £50K and £100K depending on the size of the forum. In order to help maintain the independence of the forums they will not be formal committees of the new council. This will also enable all members, council and parish council representatives, to have equal voting rights.
- 4.30 The table at paragraph 4.10 describes the key functions of the forums. One of the most important of these is to act as the local co-ordinating body and delivery arm of the Local Strategic Partnership. The forums will also pull together common issues being faced by neighbourhood management teams, provide solutions or raise issues with the appropriate agency.
- 4.31 The forums will not just provide opportunities for issues to be aired. They will be the vehicle to provide local solutions to local problems. An example of this will be providing access to key local services. Pulling

together all of the public sector in an area, funding expertise and bringing in key community bodies such as the Yorkshire Rural Community Council may well help provide a solution, working with parish councils and the local community, where previously none would be found. The forum will draw people and agencies together in a way that currently does not exist. Local opportunities and efficiencies from joint working will be achieved.

- 4.32 The forums will shape the provision of services in that area, for example they will be consulted about the opening hours of libraries and customer service centres, highways priorities and will act as consultees on planning and influencing the way that all services are delivered. Underpinning all of this will be the Local Community Charter that all forums will develop. This will set out the key priorities for the area and detail specific actions that both the community itself will undertake and those that other agencies will achieve. It will in effect be a local contract for the delivery of local actions. This will deliver a further recommendation contained with the Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities”.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 7

The Local Community Forum for Whitby had identified in its Local Community Charter the need to increase the coverage of neighbourhood watch groups to help reduce criminal incidents and the fear of crime. The Forum brought together the Police, the Council and representatives of the Town Council and local Parishes to develop an action plan. The Town and Parish Councils agreed to regularly monitor the scheme in their areas. The Police and Council worked together to promote the scheme and to engage local newspapers and radio stations. Neighbourhood Watch Members were encouraged to act as the eyes and ears of the new Council as well as the Police and to report incidents through the Councils single contact centre. Information was regularly fed back to Neighbourhood Watch members and the Town and Parish Councils who together with the Local Community Forum monitored progress of the initiative.

- 4.33 The forums will also provide a sounding board for Community Calls For Action to help inform them and to distinguish the genuine grievance from vexatious complaints. In any event the forums will have an important role in the new unitary council's scrutiny arrangements. Forums will constantly be scrutinising the performance of public bodies on an informal level. If they were not content with an issue they could formally refer it to one of the council's nine area overview and scrutiny committees, and these committees will be obligated to look into the issue.
- 4.34 In order to ensure that these forums were effective and that local co-ordination worked well, a network of Community Development Workers will be put in place. These Community Development Workers will be available to assist the local councillors, parishes and other agencies connect with each other and to resolve local issues. They will be responsible for ensuring that issues raised are reported back on. They

will be supported by the Parish Liaison Team previously referred too and will work in partnership with the Voluntary and Community Sector.

Area Committees

- 4.35 Community forum areas will be grouped together into nine sub areas for the new council. These areas are shown in Appendix 1. The areas maintain, in large part, the existing district areas of the county. Two additional areas have been formed by separating out the urban areas of Scarborough and Harrogate. This approach will again be subject to public consultation before implementation but will have the benefits of public recognition, maintaining local identity whilst ensuring that there is the proper focus on important urban areas and other key towns such as Whitby and Ripon which have often felt that their needs have not been properly recognised against those of their larger neighbours.
- 4.36 These nine areas will be the basis for the formal committees of the new council. Planning sub committees and licensing sub committees will operate in each area ensuring that local councillors deal with local issues. Strategic issues will remain the responsibility of the main council committees.
- 4.37 The formation of nine area committees will ensure a local focus and enable easy access for the citizen.
- 4.38 One of the committees that will operate at this level is area overview and scrutiny. These committees will draw their membership from the community forums both members of the new unitary council and parish councillors. They will scrutinise issues affecting the individual areas they represent. They will consider specific matters relating to a range of local public service providers in line with one of the key recommendations from the Governments White Paper. A strong link will be created between the area scrutiny committees and the community forums. The forums will be able to refer issues to the relevant area scrutiny committee which will have an obligation to consider them. The area scrutiny committees will work with the central scrutiny committees to hold the new unitary council to account. They will ensure that appropriate standards of service delivery are achieved in each part of the county and will provide an important edge to the Council's locality arrangements.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 8

Parish Council representatives on the Local Community Forum covering Malton raised concerns about local flood prevention measures. The community forum decided to refer the issue to the Area Scrutiny Committee for Ryedale. The Scrutiny Committee using the new duty to co-operate secured the attendance of representatives from the Environment Agency as well as council officers.

The Scrutiny Committee was able to examine the flood measures that have been put in place, the future plans of all the agencies concerned and to

identify further issues which needed to be addressed in order to allay the fears raised by local residents. The Area Scrutiny Committee put the agencies on notice that the issue will be returned to in six months time to ensure that their respective action plans took into account the concerns of local people.

Leader and Cabinet

- 4.39 The new unitary council will have a cabinet of up to 10 with the leader and up to 9 portfolio holders. Cabinet members will have responsibility for particular areas of the councils work and responsibility for one of the nine sub areas of the county.
- 4.40 Locality arrangements will be enhanced by the clear leadership and accountability that the new arrangements will provide.

Access to the New Council

- 4.41 This section has so far considered how citizens can influence the new council. Access to services is of equal importance.
- 4.42 The new council will build upon the work of the County Council and District Councils to create a network of access opportunities.
- 4.43 There will be created a network of initially 34 Customer Service Centres based upon existing County Council and District Council one stop shops, library and information centres and Community Offices. Appendix 3 contains details of where these centres will be located. These centres will become key focal points for the local communities that they service, providing information, advice and direct services. In addition the new council will look to establish partnership arrangements in a broad range of public buildings accessed by the public to improve access to services in general.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 9

A resident complains to the unitary council's contact centre about her local grocer's shop. She says the shelves and floor are dirty and that the freezers don't seem to be at the correct temperature as water drips from them constantly. She adds that goods are never priced and that different assistants charge different prices for the same goods. She was finally spurred to complain when a meat pie she bought was out of date and mouldy.

As can be expected with a poorly run business, the problems at the shop fall across enforcement boundaries being partly within the remit of trading standards and partly environmental health. The unitary council's specialist food team will combine expertise from both disciplines and so the complaints can be dealt with by means of one visit, and if appropriate, one enforcement action. This produces a more effective, efficient response for the consumer but should also be more constructive for the business.

- 4.44 The Customer Service Centres will also provide support to councillors in the area and will host regular surgery sessions for people to meet and discuss issues with councillors.
- 4.45 Complementing the Customer Service Centres will be a telephone contact centre accessible from across the county by a single number. The contact centre will enable the rationalisation of call centres that exist across the county area at the moment and will allow the citizen to access all council services. The contact centre will also support the council's new neighbourhood management arrangements, providing the connectivity between the eyes and ears of the workers at the neighbourhood level and services providers, who will be able to resolve problems raised.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 10

A resident from Stokesley wants to build an extension to their house but is unsure of the planning process. They find quickly from the telephone directory the single telephone number for the new Council and call it. They are informed about the planning process and how to make a planning application. The resident explains that they have made some sketches of the proposed extension and wish to have a face to face discussion with a Planning Officer. The adviser is able to book an appointment for the local resident to meet with a Planning Officer at the Customer Service Centre in Stokesley. Before ringing off the resident takes the opportunity to report a pot hole which has appeared on the road at the end of their drive and which is giving them cause for concern. The details are immediately recorded and passed onto the Highways department.

- 4.46 The new council will have a single website, providing information and transactional services, in one place, across all service areas. The website will support the locality arrangements detailed in this section. Web pages will be available for parish councils, contact details of the neighbourhood management teams will be provided and the work of both community forums and area committees will be profiled.

Summary

- 4.47 This section has provided details of the locality arrangements of the new council. These will ensure that the citizen has both influence and access. The new council will be connected to all of the communities of North Yorkshire
- 4.48 The removal of a tier of local government will provide space for the growth of parish councils, which has been the basis for community governance in the county for many years. The proposals contained within this section to support parishes and the locality arrangements have been costed and included in the affordability calculations within section 10.
- 4.49 The proposals in this section deliver the Governments requirements to

- establish a strong citizen focus;
- empower local citizens to influence decisions and to shape service provision;
- engage all sections of the community;
- deliver clear and accountable community governance.

4.48 All of this has been achieved in a coherent way which will provide citizens with greater confidence in local democracy and local government.

SECTION 5

Stronger partnerships

- 5.1 Partnerships in North Yorkshire are generally strong. There is a strong commitment from all councils, at both officer and member level to work together. This was recognised in the recent corporate assessment of North Yorkshire County Council which states

“Partnerships are effective with enthusiasm and commitment for delivery of shared ambitions. The council drives performance management in partnerships, emphasising involvement of service users. Efforts to improve joint working with district and borough councils are paying off.”

A further example of the effectiveness of partnership arrangements in North Yorkshire has been the development of the countywide draft Local Area Agreement. An inclusive approach has been adopted to this which has been supported by all local authorities and which has been commended by the Government Office for Yorkshire and The Humber.

- 5.2 Relationships, in the past, have not always been so good and considerable effort is expended on all sides to help make partnerships work. Eight local authorities, two national parks, an active voluntary and community sector as well as the full range of other public sector agencies makes partnership working in North Yorkshire complex and time consuming. While improvements to partnership working are possible, this is achieved by striving to overcome the challenges that the system presents and which are not present in unitary arrangements.
- 5.3 The following parts of this section will outline the partnership challenges that exist and show how the complexities can be rationalised by a new unitary council. It will be shown that some of the greatest benefits from this rationalisation will be realised by other public sector agencies who will only have one council to deal with rather than eight.

Complexity of two-tier working

- 5.4 One area of work that illustrates the current complexities of partnership working is that of Local Strategic Partnerships. There are seven district based LSP's as well as the North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership. Most of the local strategic partnerships in the County are currently undertaking a review of their structures, influenced in part by the development of the local area agreement. Characteristically, each LSP will have a thematic group looking at the needs of adults, of children and young people, at health issues, at community safety and at the

local economy. Each of these groups will draw on the support of a range of agencies – the District Council, the County Council, the Police, the PCT, Yorkshire Forward and so on. While each of these agencies responds to the needs of the community strategy for the LSP, it can be taxing to support all seven. These circumstances also lead to a fragmented approach to many issues which are shared.

- 5.5 A similar set of circumstances arises in relation to community safety. There are again seven district based Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships and a countywide Safer Communities Partnership. Although each CDRP in the County is generally now treated as a body within its LSP dealing with the community safety agenda, this arrangement does not reduce the needs of CDRPs for arrangements to manage their affairs. So once again they generally have a structure of task groups and working groups to take their business forward. Each CDRP might have a Board, an Executive, task groups looking at domestic abuse, anti-social behaviour, the night-time economy, and so on. Again, the demand for support to these arrangements which falls on a range of agencies is substantial.
- 5.6 Fragmentation is also an issue for community safety. Separate approaches have been developed to anti-social behaviour, to the Prolific and other Priority Offenders initiative, to information management, to domestic abuse and to the issues of disorder related to the night-time economy and alcohol misuse as a result. This fragmentation also undermines capacity and frustrates attempts to develop strategic approaches. Different delivery arrangements may be necessary to deal with local circumstances, especially as between rural and urban areas, but a common strategic approach implemented appropriately in each of these areas will be more effective than the fragmented situation which characterises current arrangements.
- 5.7 In parallel with these partnership structures there is a range of groups which work to try to establish common approaches to common issues across the County. There are groups which bring together planning officers in the local authorities, housing officers, benefits managers and so on. Partnership arrangements have been established to work on customer services, broadband development, waste management, web access and others. These have often proved fragile and difficult to take forward on a broad front as councils have sought to develop their own approaches.
- 5.8 Overarching all of this is the Association of North Yorkshire Councils which brings together the leaders of the local authorities in the County, together with representatives of the National Parks, City of York and the North Yorkshire Local Councils Association, to help manage relations and develop shared responses. Underpinning these arrangements is a diverse pattern of local forums generally established by District Councils for slightly different purposes for areas of various sizes, with different frequencies of meeting and meeting some of the needs other partners have for local engagement but not all.

Negotiating a standard approach will be a time consuming and difficult task.

- 5.9 The two tier system generates an overburden of governance, communication and negotiation work which, even when fully effective, is not efficient.

Partnership arrangements in a unitary structure

- 5.10 A new unitary council will replace the multiplicity of existing groups with a single LSP and CDRP supported by the multi-agency community forums described in Section 4. an arrangement that will be both truly local and strategic.

- 5.11 Parish councils, local councillors and area based officers will come together at the local level. Forging partnerships and working jointly on local problems and concerns to the community and implementing local solutions. A strategic framework and policy direction will be provided at the whole council level along with strategic interventions where opportunities for across community working can be identified.

- 5.12 The benefits of this new approach will be

- Simpler governance arrangements
- More local partnership and local problem solving
- Less partnership infrastructure – more delivery, less administration, fewer meetings.
- Greater clarity of roles and responsibilities
- More focus, fewer partners, closer relationships
- No internal competition for community leadership

Key public service partners

- 5.13 A unitary council based on the boundaries of North Yorkshire County Council and the seven districts will ensure the co-terminosity of key public sector partners. A single council, a single Police Force, a single Fire and Rescue Service and a single PCT all focused on delivering services and helping communities in North Yorkshire.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 11

A new Council will be able to put into place appropriate mechanisms to link up in the best possible way with partners. For example it maybe beneficial to put in place regular meetings between a council officer and an officer from the various Police Basic Command Units (BCU) to review crime and disorder issues within the BCU and how initiatives are progressing. An initiative put in place by the countywide Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP) to reduce for example underage drinking could be monitored in the

first instance at the BCU level. Issues and trends could be jointly identified and reported down to the Local Community Forums and also upwards to the countywide CDRP as appropriate.

- 5.14 These key public services will work together at the strategic level within a single LSP and will again combine together at the local level of Community Forums. All benefiting from clearer less burdensome partnership structures.
- 5.15 Stronger partnerships will provide the basis for more integrated working and will be a catalyst for the development of shared services and opportunities for joint efficiencies.
- 5.16 Importantly, community forums will help public sector agencies engage with Parish Councils. A single forum will help reduce the burden often placed on Parishes of separate and uncoordinated consultation.
- 5.17 North Yorkshire has a vibrant Voluntary and Community Sector. This sector combines a number of locally based, independent groups with important networking and support arrangements delivered by organisations such as the North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations and the Yorkshire Rural Community Council. The proposals put forward in this document for local and strategic partnerships will provide both the opportunity for this sector to engage strategically with the council wide LSP and provide, through the community forums, an ideal basis for their advocacy role for local communities.

National Parks

- 5.18 The County Council and National Parks work effectively together. For example, the County Council delegates to the Parks responsibilities for maintaining public rights of way. As a result of the very high priority that the Parks place on this service, standards of maintenance are high. Similarly, the County Council provides the Parks with certain specialist services.
- 5.19 The National Parks are amongst the bodies which need to be represented on local strategic partnerships. The simplification offered by a unitary structure will rationalise demands upon them. It will also provide the two parks with an opportunity to promote their interests jointly with the same single strategic partnership.
- 5.20 A new unitary council will respect the independence of the National Parks and value the focus that they bring to two of the County's most important national assets. The new council will look to utilise the space created by rationalising the District and County Councils to develop closer partnerships and to spread the good practice developed by the Parks across the rest of the county. Closer working will lead to greater opportunities for shared services and efficiencies.

- 5.21 It is recognised that National Parks will not wish their governing boards to be dominated by a single council and a new council will be prepared to work with the Parks and DEFRA to devise a balanced approach that respects the independence of the Parks and the position of elected councillors.

The private sector

- 5.22 As participants in local strategic partnerships and as advocates for a an interest group at the local level, the private sector and its representative bodies will benefit from the unitary arrangements proposed here in just the same way as the voluntary sector – clearer arrangements at the strategic level, less demand for engagement in a wide range of structures and access to effective multi-agency community forums.
- 5.23 At the same time, the sector will benefit from having the range of regulatory functions delivered by a strategic authority. While local concerns are important in regulatory work, so is consistency at the wider area level. A strategic approach to regulation, especially in relation to planning matters as they affect business investment, can balance “not in my back yard” tendencies with a view of the wider implications and benefits of key developments.

Summary

- 5.24 The two-tier system contains within it complexity; competition for community leadership; a burden of communication, governance and liaison arrangements; and a demand for participation in a needlessly large number of partnership meetings and groups, makes partnership working difficult and costly. It is possible, and partners in North Yorkshire have shown this, to overcome these limitations to some degree. But often this is as a result of significant external challenges which help internal competition to be set aside.
- 5.25 Unitary local government will set aside these difficulties and remove the in-built risks to effective partnership working that the two-tier system contains. At the same time, it will facilitate more effective engagement by partners at the local level through simpler arrangements for multi-agency community forums.

SECTION 6

Strategic leadership

- 6.1 Strategic leadership in the County is complicated by the two-tier system. Each of the local authorities in the County has an electoral mandate to represent the interests of its communities. At the local level, this means that the County Council and the District Council can each promote itself as the “strategic leader” for that community. Where the two are in agreement about an issue, this is no problem. Otherwise, leadership might be divided, and weakened. At the County level it can result in differences of view which limit the scope for the development of a robust position on an issue.
- 6.2 This difficulty is compounded by the fact that local authorities are increasingly expected to act as community leaders in the general sense, rather than limiting their role to delivering the services for which they are responsible. The Local Government White Paper re-emphasises the “place shaping” role, necessarily discharged through strong partnership working and makes no distinction between tiers of local government. Councils and councillors are sometimes in conflict between themselves as well as with other agencies. There are ways of ensuring that the interests of localities can be effectively advocated without agencies and authorities being at odds with each other, as has been demonstrated in unitary structures elsewhere for both urban and rural areas. This submission describes these in section 4 in relation to community forums and section 5 on partnerships.
- 6.3 So the two tier system weakens strategic leadership because, at the local level it introduces competition for community leadership and at the wider area level it introduces the possibility of local authorities insisting on diverse positions and inhibiting the formulation of a robust position from which the County can negotiate with other areas, regionally or nationally.
- 6.4 It is not the case that relations between partners currently are driven by disputes around leadership issues. However, this issue has confounded partnership working in the past and, given the instability of two-tier arrangements, this risk will always exist without significant change. The two-tier system contains an ever-present risk to effective leadership which needs constantly to be managed. One way of managing the risk, of course, is to compromise in order to preserve harmony or co-operation. But harmony and co-operation are only necessary because of the two-tier system, and compromise can often be at the cost of a bolder and more effective stance.

Leadership at the local level

- 6.5 Section 4 of this submission explains how locality arrangements will work within a unitary authority. These arrangements are intended to ensure effective engagement with communities so that

- their views can be made know to the new council
- the new council's position on issues or plans for their area can be discussed and explained
- members of the new authority can have a forum in which to develop positions on matters of local concern which they may seek to advocate to the new council
- other agencies have the opportunity to do the same and that cross cutting issues can be taken up effectively by multi-agency working.

6.6 Together with area scrutiny, this system of local forums will provide an ideal basis for leadership at the local level by which local councillors and members of the community themselves can pursue issues of local concern with the new council, for example, using the community call for action.

A stronger voice for North Yorkshire

6.7 The key to this is a single strong voice, in contrast to the disparate voices that local government offers now. Within the Region, the County is the only two-tier area. It is vital that a clear and consistent position for the County can be promoted. But establishing such a position within the County is sometimes difficult. This can mean either that the position taken is complex, with the character of having been designed by committee, or is weakened because those we are negotiating with can identify reservations that one or another of the local authorities may have about it. Local government in the County can appear to our regional partners as introverted and overly concerned about establishing a common position rather than empowered to get on with negotiations.

6.8 These circumstances affect our relations with other local authorities in the Regional Assembly where the Council has interests, amongst other things, in relation to land use planning, transport planning and sustainable development which will be significantly strengthened by a single voice. Another area where this issue arises is in the City Region discussions where North Yorkshire's communities are represented in the Leeds City Region by the County Council, Selby and Craven District Councils and Harrogate Borough Council. The same concerns about a common position and of competing interests weaken our position in comparison to that which will exist for a unitary council for the County as a whole.

6.9 External partners, especially regional partners, suffer from the same difficulties in developing partnership working with local government in North Yorkshire as do internal partners. The fact that there are eight local authorities representing the County, together with our partners' relative lack of experience with the system, restricts the ease with which such relationships can be established. Local government in North Yorkshire has to negotiate its position on issues rather than responding readily as is the case elsewhere.

- 6.10 Nationally, but more especially regionally, the County needs a strong advocate for its rural interests. In the past, the County Council has effectively led campaigns to secure resources for the County, through the EU Regional Development arrangements for Objective 5b and Objective 2 and using the Single Regeneration Budget for example. Developing cases to support such campaigns has depended on a sound grasp of rural issues and the capacity to present statistical and other information to persuade others of their priority.
- 6.11 Again, arriving at a position in such campaigns takes time in the two-tier system because of the negotiations that are necessary to establish it between authorities with an independent view and potentially competing interests. While the two-tier system has not prevented success in these ways, achieving it has been more complex than necessary and managing these funding arrangements is more complicated, too.
- 6.12 The unitary authority will also have greater freedom to tackle need across the County from a strategic perspective. Holding all of the resources of local government in one pot, it will be able to prioritise investment in communities to tackle disadvantage more effectively.
- 6.13 As an advocate for its disadvantaged areas, in tackling the special needs of rural communities or of the coast, in promoting tourism across the County, the unitary authority will have all of the capability of the eight authorities now, without the inter-area competition which can frustrate truly effective advocacy.

Summary

- 6.14 Strategic leadership for the County is weakened by the two-tier system. The rightful pressures of national policy on local government to develop its community leadership and place shaping role makes advocacy and leadership at the County level much more difficult than it should be. External partners especially find it difficult to work with North Yorkshire local government because of its introverted character and because it is less responsive than it could be under unitary arrangements.
- 6.15 A single new strategic authority will retain all of the capacity of local government to respond to issues locally and externally, without that capacity being undermined by the diversity of positions which the fragmented nature of local government in the County encourages.

SECTION 7

More Effective Performance: Better and More Efficient Services

A new performance framework

- 7.1 The County Council and some of the districts have a strong track record of service improvement and change management. There is a good solid foundation of performance management for a new council to build on and there is the capacity and the competence to deliver.
- 7.2 A new council will be able to deliver effective performance and cost efficient services by learning from the approaches of the best performing councils across the area. It will ensure that best practice is adopted and applied consistently. It will establish a culture of continuous improvement which will raise poor performance and build on the good and excellent. A single performance management framework rigorously applied will promote both value for money and equity.
- 7.3 Performance management needs to operate both at a strategic level and in local service delivery. Increasingly it relates to service delivery in partnerships, through the Local Area Agreement and other mechanisms. The new council's approach will emphasise the importance of listening and responding to individual service users and customers and to the needs of localities. There will be equity of access to services which will be configured to fit the local context. Resources will be used in the most efficient way to deliver effective outcomes.
- 7.4 The current variation in overall performance across the county area is wide. The County Council's BVPIs for 2005/06 show 42% in the top quartile with only 12% in the bottom quartile compared to all county councils. It is also one of the most rapidly improving county councils. However, the variation in the North Yorkshire District Councils' BVPIs for 2005/06 ranges from the best council with 45% in the top quartile to the worst with only 11% in the top quartile, and from 12% to 35% in the bottom quartile. Ryedale District Council has the best district council profile. Adoption of the focused and systematic approach to performance improvement of the best councils will lift the poorer performing areas to deliver a better service to the public in those areas. It will also provide the basis for continuing improvements across the whole county.

7.5 At a service level too there are currently significant variations between the districts. For example:

- The % of household waste recycled varies from 10.49% (Scarborough) to 18.24% (Ryedale) and the % of household waste composted varies from 4.84% (Harrogate) to 24.58% (Hambleton). This is despite the commitment to and investment of time and energy in the Joint Waste Management Strategy by the County Council and the Districts.
- Ryedale processes changes in circumstances affecting benefits entitlements in less than 5 days, which is more than six times faster than in the worst performing district in the county.
- In planning Richmondshire delivers top quartile performance on all three indicators of speed of processing planning applications, whereas four Districts are in the bottom quartile on at least two out of the three indicators.

7.6 The County Council and one District Council (Hambleton) have been judged to be performing well (3 out of 4) on Use of Resources and Value for Money. The other six Districts are only performing adequately (2 out of 4). Application of best practice will improve the efficient use of resources across the whole council area, and together with the potential in single procurement and back office functions very significant value for money gains will be delivered.

7.7 The County Council is in the process of successfully challenging itself to achieve efficiency gains through business process improvement techniques and an ambitious 'transformation' agenda. This approach will be applied across the whole of the new council. The new council will have the capacity to provide specialist support teams to individual service areas to deliver significant service improvements and efficiencies.

7.8 The recent Corporate Assessment of the County Council found that it had a rigorous and effective performance management framework. The County Council makes extensive use of benchmarking to improve costs and performance in line with the best. It drives performance management in partnerships emphasising the views of service users. The experience of customers is used to target improvements. All these approaches will be carried forward in the new council.

A new service approach

7.9 The general approach to service delivery will be flexible. It will realise the economies and performance improvement gains of unified systems which incorporate best practice. However, each service will be managed at the right level and in the best way for that particular service. If area management was appropriate, for example highways, then this will be put in place but for other services this may not be appropriate.

- 7.10 There will be a standard approach to access through the new council's local access and information points. Similarly, there will be a single standard approach to property and asset management, transport and the use made of equipment and technology including ICT. There will be opportunities for early gains from the economies inherent in rationalising and integrating those services that are currently delivered through seven or eight different organisations. A single back office and the consolidation of local access points are the obvious first steps that will be taken.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 12

An 85 year old man who previously managed well at home suffered a recent fall that has left him with mobility problems. A single referral to the Council was able to deal with an overall assessment of his needs both social care and housing with a range of options available – occupational therapy, benefits advice, structural alterations to his home, moving to more suitable accommodation and assistive technology. The availability of new Extra Care housing meant the man moved to a new apartment, which, because of its design meant he needed minimum support but with help at hand if needed, his 3 bedrooled house was released for a local family previously in overcrowded accommodation.

- 7.11 Some services, such as planning, trading standards and food safety need local access to professional expertise and this will be provided, albeit as part of a county-wide service with greater overall capacity. The strategic aspects of the services will be delivered centrally and will provide greater, co-ordination, capacity and efficiency opportunities.

UNITARY NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL DELIVERING BETTER SERVICES – EXAMPLE 13

The new Unitary Council's contact centre has received several calls from members of the public alleging food poisoning. All the details are passed to the Council's specialist food safety team. The team manager pulls together a response team involving specialist food safety and hygiene officers. Officers are despatched to seek information quickly to determine possible sources. All intelligence is fed back into the authority's intelligence gathering and analysis software. Patterns and links quickly develop and show the most likely sources of the food poisoning.

Officers are despatched to primary food producers supplying butcher meat to various butchers around the country. Links to abattoirs are identified and the source of the food poisoning identified. Officers work with the Food Standards Agency and the Meat Hygiene Service. Joint visits quickly result in an emergency prohibition order being placed on the abattoir shutting it down.

In the meantime the suspect meat and meat products are traced throughout the County. The Council's business e-mail alert system is used to warn all butchers in the area and press statements are sent out warning the public. In the meantime the enforcement team have traced all butchers in the supply chain, identifying customers from orders and invoices and for others issued press statements by way of warning and advising of recall procedures.

The originating abattoir is found to be operating unlicensed and an investigation is undertaken right through the supply line to identify all illegal activity to be reported for appropriate formal action.

The new unitary council has the capacity and specialist resources to effectively deal with the whole incident including any subsequent prosecutions.

- 7.12 All services will be influenced by local circumstances and views. The arrangements set out in Section 4 will enable this to happen. It is recognised that some services are more appropriate than others for the determination of local arrangements, such as environment and street scene issues in comparison to adult social care. However all services will be held to account locally.
- 7.13 The new council will look for opportunities to devolve services where this was appropriate, as described in Section 4. In addition a single unitary council will be better placed to embrace shared services with neighbouring councils and other public sector bodies and to involve the private sector in partnering arrangements.
- 7.14 A new council will be aware of its obligations to use its economic strength to assist the economic development of areas of the county. Frontline services will continue to operate in all parts of North Yorkshire. There will be no assumption that centralised services will be located in any one area. The location will be that which is most appropriate in terms of effective operational delivery, availability of workforce skills and best economic advantage that can be achieved. For example Scarborough will be a prime location for part of the new council's telephone contact centre operation, the skills and workforce are present and the operation will deliver much needed employment.
- 7.15 The new approach to key areas of service provision, and the benefits that can be achieved by a new unitary council are set out below. In each service the new council will be able to deliver improved performance and greater efficiency.
- 7.16 **ACCESS TO SERVICES**

Existing approach

Access to services is currently provided by each of the seven District Councils and the County Council largely separately and without a coherent strategic approach. Thus there are eight different operating methodologies leading to inconsistency, inefficiency and confusion for residents.

For example there are eight web sites, each of a different design, eight telephone contact points using different public telephone numbers, differing and largely unconnected ICT systems, different operating policies and procedures. This can lead to the situation where there are

two access points in close proximity but with staff working on different access regimes, with differing opening hours.

The citizen neither knows nor cares who delivers the service, they just want their request satisfied. The current system is almost designed to hinder this approach.

New approach

The new approach would be based on a complete rationalisation of access points, systems and philosophy. It would be designed so that no matter which access point the citizen used, their request would be satisfied.

The eight web sites would be reduced to just one, which would bring both better service access and efficiency savings.

There would be one golden number for the citizen to use when telephoning to access services. The sites where these would be handled would be reduced to two or at most three. The software, customer relationship manager (CRM) would be standardised on one system.

By rationalising the telephone contact centres, efficiencies in operation can be gained, for example, extended opening hours at no extra cost. Having fewer sites also means that the cost of resilience measures is reduced, yet resilience improved.

Personal callers would be catered for at one of 34 access points. These access points would be designed so that the vast majority of citizens in North Yorkshire lived within 10 miles of one, but would obviously be based around the key market towns within the county. These would be sited in a range of buildings including Community offices, libraries or existing district council offices. The decision as to which is most suitable would be based on the quality of customer service offered and the buildings suitability.

Performance improvement

Having a common approach to the delivery of services will mean that each citizen will be accessing services within a common framework and the level of service will be the same no matter where the citizen lived. For example, this would avoid the current situation whereby some authorities currently close over the Christmas period, whilst others do not.

As well as offering Council services, the access points would have greater value for the citizen if further public services and community facilities could be accessed. This model is already operating in some localities where there is a common reception point for enquiries about a

range of services including police, library, Citizens Advice Bureau, council tax, housing benefit, employment services and many others.

A single unitary council would be considerably better placed to forge effective partnerships for accessing services. This type of partnership approach is vital to enable services to be available in rural areas.

More efficient services

A new team would be formed that would be responsible for the delivery of all services (at the point of customer contact) throughout the new authority. In the larger settlements, there would be dedicated customer service advisors to deal with personal callers.

However, due to the rural nature of the county, efficiencies can be achieved, in some offices, by multi-tasking advisors. This could include acting as reserve telephone operators in satellite telephone contact centres, librarians, or even registrars of births, deaths and marriages.

A single unitary council would be able to build effective partnerships with the voluntary and community sector, who would have a vital role in the delivery of access to services in rural areas and help to generate efficiencies.

There would be a considerable reduction in ICT systems in use. The eight web sites would be reduced to one and consequently one system to input content. There would be one Intranet, one Geographic Information System (GIS) and one Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. As well as direct savings in annual maintenance costs of these individual systems, there would be lower ICT support costs, lower ICT hardware costs, pro rata fewer staff required to operate the systems and the current need to integrate some of these systems into a coherent operating whole would be avoided. The number of differing telephone systems would be reduced to one.

Additional efficiencies would flow from a single recruitment system for advisors that would have a single training routine. Such training would also be the foundation of ensuring common standards of service throughout the organisation.

There would be additional efficiency savings in other areas, for example there would no longer be a need for seven separate leaflets for each service.

Additional value would be added by ensuring that the access points did not develop purely as customer access points. Building on the existing concept of the library being at the hub of the community would mean that the new access points would be developed for community use as an equal priority. Parish Councils and Community Forums would have a key role in shaping these public service points and the range of facilities that they will provide.

7.17 ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Existing Approach

The County Council is the statutory body for adult social care. Partnership working currently takes place with the seven district councils, predominantly in relation to housing. The Health Service is another key partner, particularly the countywide PCT.

New Approach

The Health & Social Care White Paper “Our Health, Our Care, Our Say” introduces a new statutory duty on the Director of Adult Social Services. This duty is to undertake whole community needs analysis and oversee a long term (15 year) Strategic Commissioning approach to meet community needs particularly relating to the Well Being powers and duties of local authorities. This is supported by the duty to cooperate included in the Local Government White Paper “Strong and Prosperous Communities”.

This overarching commissioning lead fits well with unitary local government and will assist to deliver the outcomes required. There is increased focus on the prevention agenda and access to universal services. The commissioning framework requires involvement from Housing, Leisure Services, Cultural Services, Planning and Economic Development.

A new unitary council would enable a better and more comprehensive response to the new broader agenda of tackling health and social inequalities.

Performance Improvement

The performance framework for adult social care is very much geared towards unitary authorities. The tie up particularly across Social Care, Housing, and Leisure would enable significant improvement in key performance areas.

Promoting independence and “help to live at home” would particularly benefit from integrated working and joint solutions. Pursuing the social model of disability is a major national and county policy aim and improving performance in this area has proven difficult to get on the agenda of universal services lead by district authorities.

District services would also benefit from the performance management capacity and discipline which would be brought to bear from a larger organisation.

More efficient services

Duplication currently occurs in relation to strategic planning. Efficiencies are being made across Health and Social Care in this respect with joint work with the Director of Public Health. Greater efficiencies could be achieved by joint work in relation to Housing needs surveys, Environmental Health planning and Leisure strategies linked to better health targets. There is opportunity for efficiencies both in undertaking the research/planning and the resultant joined up solutions. A unitary council would have greater capacity for long term strategic planning with its partners than is currently possible because of the constraints imposed by the districts' limited resources for this work.

The countywide contact centre and network of 34 access points will provide major opportunities to extend the already excellent customer response for social care and provide efficiencies in linking services. Much officer time is currently spend liaising with many district services often with seven different routes in and varying procedures and responses for services such as housing benefit, disabled facilities grants and housing services.

Pilot schemes are currently testing the opportunity to merge roles for the benefit of customers, such as combining the role of housing officer, care assessment officer, and health staff whilst generating major efficiencies. The benefits are flowing from these pilots but with varying degrees of involvement across the district councils.

Joint back-office functions and shared premises would not only provide efficiencies in relation to overheads and support staff but would also promote efficiencies through better joint working.

Major opportunities exist in front line delivery of home care and district council warden services. Shared infrastructure would also assist in delivering home based services more efficiently. In one district council area these posts have been merged but there are issues and administrative inefficiencies in managing this across two organisations and other districts reluctant to fully engage in similar projects.

7.18 HOUSING SERVICES

Existing approach

The District/Borough Councils are the statutory housing authorities. Craven, Hambleton, Ryedale, and Scarborough have transferred their housing stocks to Housing Associations and retain strategic and commissioning functions whereas Harrogate, Richmondshire, and Selby also have housing provider functions. The County Council is involved in Sub Regional planning and is commissioning a countywide affordable housing programme using Council Tax 2nd Homes revenue.

New approach

A new unitary authority would take a much needed stronger strategic approach to housing. The strategic housing role would sit alongside community planning and whole community needs analysis. The Director of Adult and Community Services already has a duty to undertake long term planning and strategic commissioning (White Paper, "Our Health, Our Care, Our Say"). Housing is fundamental to this agenda and would be incorporated in the overall function. Housing provision would be separately managed with a locality focus, however the longer term aim is to focus on the authority being a planning and commissioning organisation. Countywide joint commissioning currently exists with the County Council leading and managing the Supporting People function which would be incorporated in the new arrangements.

Performance improvement

The Government Office and the Housing Corporation have for some time been of the opinion that performance in delivering social housing could be significantly improved in North Yorkshire and have cited the fragmented approach and poor joint working across the seven districts. There is strong support from these agencies for the County Council to exercise a strategic role. However, the current two tier system gets in the way and makes this much more difficult than it need be.

The current under-achievement on targets and non take-up of available Housing Corporation grant to produce sufficient affordable housing of the right type and tenure would be turned around. Over time this will lead to a greater volume and variety of housing being available as a result of significantly improved strategic planning and delivery. Hence the most significant improvement for the citizens of North Yorkshire will be the greater number of houses available, including more specialist housing for vulnerable groups. We would particularly want to focus on young people and victims of domestic violence.

Establishing single policies will provide consistency across neighbourhoods and eliminate current often confusing different criteria for such matters as housing priorities, eligibility and the application of homelessness rules.

Using 34 customer access points across the county will provide an excellent network of face to face calling points. The opportunity to visit any of these offices to suit the convenience of the customer (and not restricted to points within a customer's existing district council boundary) will provide greater choice and access. Greater co-ordination with Housing Associations will further aid customer contact. The council call centre will also provide an enhanced and extended hours service by telephone supported by web based contact.

Greater choice and responsiveness will be achieved by sharing current scarce resources. There will be consistency of response to similar

levels of need in communities – especially in relation to specialist services such as homelessness and people fleeing domestic violence. Joining up of the countywide Supporting People services with existing district council services and greater integration with social care in relation to home improvement agencies, disabled adaptations, occupational therapy services and welfare benefits service will give a better, less confusing unified service to the public.

More efficient services

A new unitary council would be able to achieve greater efficiency in both strategic and operational functions.

Currently in districts that have transferred their stock there is very limited capacity to deliver their strategic responsibilities and in those that retain stock there is a heavy emphasis on managing the operational housing function. A single countywide service would allow proper capacity in strategy and commissioning by combining the resources of the seven districts and the County Council providing both efficiency and better use of available resources with better outcomes in delivering housing targets. Economies of scale would be realised in a combined provider unit (especially in senior management, infrastructure, and back office functions) whilst retaining locality delivery.

A recent North Yorkshire Audit Commission seminar explored the CPA results of the districts and concluded in relation to housing that there is a need for greater synchronisation and that there are currently some fundamental weaknesses. Better use could be made of Government funds allocated from GOYH where currently allocations are not fully taken up because of the inability of the districts to deliver the required housing programmes across the County. Not only does this not make best use of available capital finance it also results in significant costs elsewhere in the system – such as homelessness and use of temporary accommodation, children in the care system, and greater use of institutional care for vulnerable adults. A combined strategic function will also ensure better use of land holdings in the public sector and better access to sites with consistent planning policies.

Management efficiencies can also be gained. Resources are currently deployed in seven districts and the County Council. Whilst collectively these are significant, individually they are insufficient both in numbers and technical expertise to do the job. A single unit would both allow greater technical expertise (leading to higher service quality and non cashable efficiency gains) and reduced numbers of managers and staff overall (cashable efficiencies).

Only three of the seven districts continue to manage housing stock – Harrogate, Selby, and Richmondshire. Harrogate has the largest stock and aborted a process to stock transfer three years ago. Selby recently lost a tenants vote to stock transfer, and Richmondshire has not

pursued a stock transfer approach. All three Councils (and particularly Harrogate and Selby) have recognised the benefits to be gained from a dedicated Housing Provider organisation. These benefits and efficiencies would be gained by operating as a single operational unit albeit initially inside the council. Existing operational back office functions would be shared and merged with current County Council functions. Local delivery would be retained with a locality management structure.

7.19 **CULTURAL SERVICES (Libraries, Museums, Archives and Arts)**

Existing approach

The existing county wide approach to the provision of the above services is mixed in that the County Council provides county wide Library and Archives Services which are both strategically managed with centralised budgets and which provide service delivery at a local level from 42 static libraries, 12 mobiles, a Schools Library Service and the County Records Office.

The County Council also provides a county wide strategic review of the development, implementation and performance monitoring of arts priorities with the development and implementation of local arts delivered in different ways through seven District/Borough Councils. This work is not co-ordinated county wide and in two districts there is no designated arts officer role.

The County Council does not directly operate a county wide Museum Service, although a small annual grant is made to the Dales Countryside Museum. Provision for this service at district level varies widely; with well developed services at Harrogate and Scarborough and three districts not providing any museum service coverage. Around 30 independent museums exist in North Yorkshire including major tourist attractions, for example the North Yorks Moors Railway Museum is supported by a Museum Development Officer in Ryedale, funded jointly by Museums, Libraries and Archives (MLA) Yorkshire.

New approach

Unitary status would offer an exciting opportunity to develop and deliver a full range of cultural opportunities to the communities across North Yorkshire through a single strategic framework or “Cultural Strategy”. This would establish sustainable co-ordinated policy across all areas of cultural service delivery which in turn would provide greater leverage and access to targeted funding by regional/national agencies; as well as a development framework for the independent and voluntary sectors, particularly in the arts and museums sectors.

34 public access points as well as the remaining public library service infrastructure and County Record Office would offer single, visible points of contact for local authority provision of cultural services. The

“one stop shop” approach would enhance and simplify access arrangements currently employed (and planned) by the County and District Councils in partnership with other service providers. This would deliver improved provision as well as efficiencies in terms of staffing/sharing of expertise and multi agency delivery. This could be further realised through the joint management of cultural and related leisure activities such as parks and open spaces as well as venues such as theatres, galleries and village halls.

Performance improvement

A single unitary council would enable the sharing of sectoral knowledge and expertise in all areas of cultural delivery. The council would work with partner organisations to one set of commonly held priorities and outcomes for local communities. This approach would realise the potential to plan, target and provide local access to a far wider range of resources to match local, regional and national targets and priorities.

Extensive local provision and leadership for services is a strength of current arrangements for Library and Archives Services and would be further enhanced by the co-ordination and support of other cultural services in a unitary council.

This would provide a county wide mechanism, for local stakeholder input into the management and development of services as well as providing a supportive framework for developing/delivering services for the independent/voluntary sectors at a local level.

It would include:

- A “bottom up” approach to area-based stakeholder/cultural planning partnerships linked into corporate arrangements, such as Community Forums
- Commissioned delivery partnerships to develop new services across a range of cultural sector providers responsive to local needs and contexts.
- Greater use of kiosk, mobile and web-enabled services.

The development of strategic partnership working will be central to the new unitary council’s approach which would speak as one voice with a clear, definable set of priorities for the delivery of cultural opportunities across North Yorkshire. A single cultural partnership with key regional agencies such as Arts Council Yorkshire, Museums, Libraries and Archives Yorkshire and Yorkshire Culture would maximise funding opportunities as well as supporting the development of partnerships in other key sectors including the Economic Development, Health, Education and Skills sectors.

Cultural services have a particular role in supporting and developing the local economy with key links to tourism and visitor opportunities.

More efficient services

There would be potential for economies of scale in strengthening and streamlining the current infrastructure in particular ICT. New contractual arrangements for cultural services would feature the following:

- Multi site/multi agency delivery.
- User led community engagement.
- Incorporate/allow partnership working with a range of voluntary/independent sector providers.

A wide range of skills and competencies for the cultural sector already exists across the county's eight councils. A single unitary council would reduce the need for duplication of line management responsibilities at a strategic and frontline level.

A single unitary approach to service delivery will allow innovation across the County whilst at the same time making most efficient and effective use of existing/limited resources. This would be achieved by using a single cultural strategy as the focus for development of policy planning both in terms of change management and monitoring of performance.

Implementation of the strategy would be achieved through strategic commissioning and partnerships with other providers including independent/community and voluntary sectors. Sharing of resources in this way will add to the coherence of cultural delivery for North Yorkshire as well as providing greater flexibility/breadth to lever additional funding. This in turn will broaden the range and scale of initiatives that would be delivered with greater speed and impact.

7.20 LEISURE SERVICES

Existing approach

Sports facilities are provided across the county in a variety of ways at present and by a range of providers - by the private sector, local communities and local authorities. Whilst most of the large scale public provisions (for example swimming pool facilities) have suffered from underinvestment in recent years, there is increasing investment by the private sector (gymnasiums) and in school sports facilities for use not only by students but by the community through extended schools. There are numerous private clubs which provide sporting facilities (cricket and football pitches, tennis courts) and tuition. Leisure facilities, usually in the form of swimming and fitness centres, are mainly provided directly by District Councils, although in Ryedale "Community Leisure" a not for profit company manages sports facilities throughout the district and "Richmondshire Leisure Trust" operates the Richmond swimming pool and the indoor/outdoor facilities at Richmond School.

Although partnership working has developed in recent years through organisations such as North Yorkshire Sports Partnership and the Schools Sports Partnerships, of which there is one in each district, there is a real need for a more strategic county wide approach to the provision of leisure services and facilities.

New approach

A unitary council would be in a position to establish a stronger partnership approach to leisure service provision, building on and developing the work of the North Yorkshire Sports Partnership. The new council would, alongside the community and other partners, commission a county wide needs, supply and demand analysis and plan to balance local needs and provision for the future to fit with the new national focus on sport. This would improve the longer term, strategic planning of leisure service provision, a weakness identified in a recent national Audit Commission study (Public Sports and Recreation Services June 2006 and Leisure Options Appraisal) and allow service provision to be tailored and where necessary developed in areas identified, through consultation, as being most in need of change and improvement across the county.

In particular a new unitary council in North Yorkshire would seek to further develop, in a sustainable manner, the opportunities provided by its beautiful countryside and coastal areas. In partnership with the National Park Authorities, trends towards more extreme sports and the opportunities afforded by a warmer climate (which extends the outdoor pursuit calendar) could be exploited.

Performance improvement

A further weakness identified in the Audit Commission study was the relatively poor performance management arrangements within the leisure sector. A unitary authority, based on the good performance management arrangements of the existing County Council and the best District Councils would provide opportunities for a streamlined and effective performance management framework.

In a unitary authority it would be simpler to measure outcomes with a predetermined set of consistently applied performance measures such as

- Participation levels
- User satisfaction
- Level of profit reinvested
- Amount of sport development work

and to use these measures to inform strategy and improve performance.

Improvements in leisure service provision would be gained not only through benefits from economies of scale but from a single marketing strategy, rationalisation of existing facilities, contracts and service levels, with a full options appraisal for longer term future provision and through more cohesive yet targeted service procurement and delivery in the shorter term.

Local access to facilities would improve in a unitary authority, through a unified, robust marketing strategy and clearer entry points. IT access would be strengthened and streamlined to provide on line services for availability checking and booking. Community access to school provisions would continue to be developed and integrated with mainstream leisure provision. Community involvement in the service and facilities planning would be strengthened and strong partnerships with the Voluntary and Community sector developed to maximise the potential of existing facilities for a range of uses.

Historically the collection and use of customer information and consultation in this service area has been poor and has not been used to inform policy and future planning. The new unitary authority would be in a good position to be able to collect customer information consistently and improve local consultation and engagement. The unitary authority would not only utilise this information to inform its future planning, but would seek to involve local communities through Community Forums in the governance and management of service provision, thus improving local shaping of services. The new council would have the ability to create major cross boundary partnership arrangements within which the public, private and voluntary sectors could work together for the benefit of the whole community.

More efficient services

Currently leisure services and facilities are managed through a variety of different mechanisms throughout the county. The right management option for a leisure service delivered by a unitary county is critical to the successful delivery of high-quality, cost-effective sports and recreation facilities. There is considerable scope for the rationalisation of service management across all leisure facilities.

The choice of how services are to be delivered in future will be made systematically, based on full option appraisal, with assessment of current provision, liabilities, needs and opportunities. There is potential within the sector to generate more growth and investment. This can be achieved through the right choice of provider and by partnership working across the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Strategic planning across a unitary council will create opportunities for rationalisation, economies of scale, the co-location of services and complementary provision of sports and recreation facilities within an area.

A new unitary council would:

- Strategically assess current and future sports needs;
- Collaborate with relevant sectors and across administrative boundaries in the planning, procurement and delivery of services;
- Appraise the options for delivering sports and recreation services systematically in an open and transparent way and test the market to ensure that the best value option is identified; and
- Improve the collection, analysis and use of performance information in order to demonstrate value for money

A unitary council would be in a position to deliver a more joined up approach to leisure service provision, through partnership working and a mixed economy approach which should deliver “best fit” for local communities and service users.

7.21 CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE, PARENTS AND LEARNERS

Existing approach

The Children Act 2004 places a duty on the County Council to co-operate with named agencies (including District Councils) which are involved with children and young people and contribute to their well-being. In North Yorkshire, the Children and Young People’s Strategic Partnership, which includes representatives from all relevant statutory and voluntary agencies, drives the delivery of children’s services. The North Yorkshire Children and Young People’s Plan (CYPP) is the key document which informs local priorities and developments. This is the product of extensive consultation with children and young people, parents and carers.

A range of district council work relates to the five *Every Child Matters* outcomes for children and young people, including:

Be Healthy	-	leisure, housing
Stay Safe	-	community safety
Enjoy and Achieve	-	culture and leisure
Make a positive contribution	-	engagement with young people
Achieve economic well-being	-	housing, economic development

New approach

An approach based on localities is being developed to provide integrated local services for children and families, and this would readily form the basis of delivery of the children’s service for a unitary council. In each locality there will be:

- A core entitlement to all children, easily accessible within the locality

- Multi-agency teams based around Extended Schools and Children's Centres
- Use of Information Sharing, Common Assessment Framework, and Lead Professional procedures following national and local guidance

Performance improvement

A new Performance and Outcomes team is already being established and will lead on performance management for the Children and Young People's Directorate and the North Yorkshire Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership Board, including working with their partners and contractors. Locality teams with integrated service management are being set up and will respond to local issues and concerns while working towards county-wide strategies and ensuring that every child in every locality receives the same core entitlement. These arrangements would underpin service improvements in a unitary council.

A unitary council would improve outcomes for children and young people, parents and learners across all services by:

- Ensuring that the children's agenda is recognised across all service areas
- Delivering greater consistency for service users
- Extending the joint use of school and community facilities for leisure activities
- Developing stronger links between early years settings, schools and adult learning
- Extending best practice in community safety partnership working across the county
- Using the County's broadband network to provide virtual access to cultural collections
- Implementing 'Hear by Right' standards across all local authority services
- Developing stronger links between waste reduction and recycling initiatives and schools
- Greater support for young entrepreneurs and involving young people in regeneration projects
- Retaining local knowledge with the appropriate deployment / location of staff
- Providing the ability to attract and retain staff, particularly in specialist areas of children's services
- Providing sufficient capacity to provide full range of services for children and young people

More efficient services

The synergies that the unitary council for North Yorkshire would create in the services which impact on children and young people would deliver efficiencies through:

- Providing economies of scale in relation to management and administration and efficiencies of processes, eliminating duplication
- Commissioning economic and efficient children's services
- Rationalising partnership work, making more effective and efficient use of time for officers, elected representatives and other agencies, and reducing partnership fatigue
- Enhancing the ability to deliver on central government requirements where currently the County Council has the responsibility but District Councils have some role / local responsibilities
- Producing more effective strategic planning across the whole county - there would be a single strategy rather than seven, and it would be easier to translate strategic decisions into operational priorities by targeting resources

7.22 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

Existing approach

Economic development and regeneration activity is undertaken by both the County Council and the seven District Councils. While there is relatively little duplication between the current local authorities in terms of the direct delivery of services, there is duplication on areas such as the preparation of strategies and the management of resources.

Much activity is carried out at the sub-regional level with the City of York Council, where the number of North Yorkshire local authorities increases the complexities of sub-regional working and decision-making. Economic Development is characterised by a heavy emphasis on partnership working, involving on the one hand a wide range of county and sub-regional organisations, such as Business Link, Learning and Skills Council, the Yorkshire Rural Community Council and the North Yorkshire Forum for Voluntary Organisations, and on the other a large number of local community groups. The relationship with the Regional Development Agency, Yorkshire Forward, is critical in the delivery of an economic development service.

New approach

There is considerable scope to rationalise the management and delivery of an economic development service within a new unitary

council and to deliver the service in a more efficient and cost effective way.

Critical elements in delivering better services, and producing clear benefits, will be:

- An enhanced strategic approach to economic development and regeneration by the creation of a single organisation replacing the current activities of the County Council, seven District Councils and the Partnership Unit.
- This will produce a strong unitary council that will provide a stronger unified voice for North Yorkshire and show strategic leadership and vision and act as the champion for rural and other issues at regional, national and EU level.
- A unitary North Yorkshire will provide a balance to the City of York Council at sub-regional level, especially around Sub-Regional Investment Planning, tourism, business support and skills and inward investment where activity is organised at a sub-regional level.
- The central unit will determine strategy, provide a specialist role in attracting and managing external funding as Accountable Body and determine priorities for direct intervention across North Yorkshire on a thematic and spatial level.
- Local knowledge will be retained by dedicated front-line community development officers who will be supporting the local Community Forums. This will be particularly important in relation to community economic development where the employment of local community development officers provides the opportunity to build on the work of the Community Investment Prospectuses and to mainstream into core budgets a wide range of existing community workers.
- However, in certain parts of North Yorkshire, it may be necessary to provide additional support in response to particular priorities. The continuing economic development and regeneration needs of the Coastal area would be one such priority area.

Performance Improvement

Local access by North Yorkshire businesses, community groups and residents to economic development information, advice and support will be made easier through these local delivery arrangements.

There will be significant opportunities to simplify and rationalise the wide range of economic development partnerships which exist. At its simplest this would be through reducing the number of North Yorkshire local authority representatives from eight to one. However, there will be further opportunities to rationalise partnership structures as a result of this.

A key objective of a new unitary council will be to provide a uniform level of service across North Yorkshire. This would remove the current discrepancies based on the different levels of resources put in by individual District Councils, especially around the number of staff employed through core budget, the support for externally funded staff and capital investment in economic development.

More efficient services

A unitary council will provide a range of opportunities to deliver services more efficiently. This will be achieved by reducing the number of organisations and partnerships involved, consolidating currently fragmented services and by utilising new technology and developing innovative delivery methods:

- Savings will be delivered through reducing eight Economic Development Units to one, especially senior management and administrative/support services, and economies of scale achieved by replacing eight systems with one, e.g. property database. This will deliver more resources for service delivery.
- It will be easier to manage the relationship with key national and regional bodies such as DTI, DEFRA, Government Office and Yorkshire Forward through a single point of contact for North Yorkshire.
- Significantly simplified procedures will be possible around managing contracts for externally funded projects and programmes, with a unitary council fulfilling the Accountable Body role across the whole of North Yorkshire rather than the current eight local authorities.
- There will be scope to include in the remit of the unitary council current activities of the York and North Yorkshire Partnership Unit, on inward investment and tourism.
- There will be opportunities for integration of existing County Council and District Council infrastructure e.g. Tourist Information Centres, Library and Information Centres and Customer Service Centres.
- There will be opportunities for the central management of all the industrial assets of land and workshops held by the County Council and District Councils.

7.23 HIGHWAYS SERVICE (including Transport, Street Services, Street Cleaning and Parking)

Existing approach

The highways service is currently delivered by the County Council (as Highway Authority) through 12 depots based around the county plus depots in each of the two Agent Authority areas of Harrogate and Scarborough (covering the urban centres). This structure is geared to 'on the ground delivery' of the whole highways service using local

knowledge and with the depots acting as physical delivery points. The strategic management of the service is delivered from the centre at County Hall.

Currently, some functions are delivered by the District Councils from their operational bases and these fall into three main groups - transport and parking, street services and street cleaning.

New approach

It is proposed that, under a single unitary structure, all highways services would be delivered by the new unitary council with front line operational delivery through fourteen depots based around the county and strategic management being undertaken from the centre.

This platform will allow management savings across current District functions both through management of the delivery of the service and even more so through the strategic management of the function.

For example a significant function delivered by the Districts is street cleaning. This function readily aligns with existing highways services and for delivery would fit into the area structure, with the strategic management delivered from the centre. This would immediately give managerial staff savings from each District, both for strategy and delivery.

Performance improvement

Under the new arrangement, performance improvements will include:

- Eliminating ambiguity and clarifying who does what with one council responsible for all services
- 'Benefits of scale' in terms of a larger council's ability to mitigate the impact of unpredicted events.
- Increased flexibility in service delivery through access to a larger workforce, in particular HCV drivers. The use of street cleaning and waste collection drivers for winter maintenance duties will provide a more robust service and may reduce unit rates around overtime payments.

The first point of contact would be through either the contact centre or one of the 34 public access points located across the county. Information would also be accessible directly via web-based systems through the new council's website.

Under the new arrangements we will seek to develop open dialogue and engage with local communities in order to ensure a better understanding of the services we provide and the needs of the local communities. Specific features will include:

- Better information on levels of service provided by the new council in order to meet its statutory obligation as Highway Authority and the objectives of the Local Transport Plan.
- Local agreements regarding additional functions / services that could be delivered by the new council, the parish / town councils or other organisations working in partnership.
- Where scope exists, become even more responsive by engaging with local communities regarding the direction / deployment of resources to deal with specific issues such as fly tipping.
- Enabling local communities to choose their level of involvement in decisions relating to service delivery.

Service delivery has to be tailored to the function and use of the area of highway under consideration. Service levels will recognise the relative requirements that may result from local needs such as town centres on market days or villages on fete days needing an increased level of street cleaning. A uniform level of service, based on the requirements of the area will be provided across the county.

More efficient services

Existing contracts would be rationalised under the new arrangements creating the potential for a range of more efficient streamlined contracting solutions. There is an obvious procurement gain to be achieved through rationalising the seven street cleaning contracts that exist. Some of the districts deliver the service through in house DLOs and in these there may be significant management savings to be realised.

Through discussions with our partnering contractor it is estimated that there are procurement savings of between 10% and 15% simply from the efficiency of scale, given the seven fold increase available to any contractor. There are further opportunities in combining the street cleaning operation with the County Council gully emptying function to drive further contractual efficiencies.

There will be notable increased flexibility in service delivery through access to a larger workforce, in particular HCV drivers. The use of street cleaning and waste collection drivers for winter maintenance duties will provide a more robust service and may reduce unit rates around overtime payments.

Another benefit that is gained alongside the 'economies of scale' is the 'benefit of scale' in terms of a larger authority's ability to mitigate the impact of unpredicted events (flooding, for example, such as the incident that occurred in Hambleton in 2005). In smaller authorities, the effects on the overall budget are potentially more damaging than in a larger authority where unforeseen costs can be more readily absorbed given the larger budgets available.

The enforcement of on-street parking (yellow line) restrictions is the subject of decriminalised parking enforcement (DPE) in Harrogate and soon will also be in Scarborough. Under DPE the council employs parking attendants to enforce waiting restrictions with the revenue generated from fines used to finance the enforcement operation with any surplus being used for traffic management purposes. This system of enforcement is more effective than police enforcement and has benefits for the safe and efficient movement of traffic. The introduction of a unitary council would make countywide DPE a feasible proposal as higher income areas can subsidise lower income areas.

Innovative service delivery will be encouraged through a strengthening of existing partnership arrangements that will seek to make use of best practice. Information management systems will be rationalised and improved to provide clarity and consistency for service users thus empowering them to make more informed choices. The benefits enjoyed through existing shared service arrangements with our partners will be enhanced by further co-location, better use of IT systems, more effective knowledge management and improved coordination of service delivery.

7.24 **WASTE MANAGEMENT**

Existing approach

Under the existing two tier system of local government in North Yorkshire, waste collection is a district council function and responsibility for the disposal of waste rests with the County Council.

Waste disposal services are currently managed by the waste Management Unit based at County Hall, and delivered by a range of local, national and international contractors that are specialist in their areas of work. A harmonised service is available across the county, (such as common opening times at all 20 household waste recycling centres and a single point of contact).

Waste collection services are delivered by seven councils from 13 depot locations, to seven sets of policies and seven different sets of priorities. One council (Selby) has contracted the majority of its service out to the private sector, the remaining councils deliver them in-house through contract services departments.

New approach

Despite close working between the existing two tiers through the York and North Yorkshire Waste Partnership, there are considerable benefits and efficiencies that could be delivered by combining responsibility for waste management service delivery in a unitary council. These are based on

- Centralised policy and management, with local delivery to reflect local requirements
- Streamlined staffing and asset structures
- Better coordinated and harmonised collection and disposal policies
- Improved efficiency in procurement and marketing of recyclables
- Removal of requirement for additional incentives (such as SLAs) to deliver targets

In a unitary council, all waste management services would be managed from a strategic unit dealing with policy, procurement, contract management, publicity and strategic support functions. Front line services would be delivered locally, potentially making use of shared depot, fleet management and staffing arrangements with Highways North Yorkshire and other relevant parts of the new council.

Performance improvement

A single council provides a number of opportunities for improving the performance of the waste management service.

The Districts and the County Council have a good track record of partnership working on waste, and have a joint waste strategy setting out challenging but realistic targets for the next 25 years. However investment, performance and policy across the district councils is disjointed and variable. A unitary council provides the opportunity to harmonise collection policies around a single approach that supports and reflects an integrated, long term and strategic vision.

Analysis of best value performance indicators shows variable performance across the area. Some of the District Councils exceeded their statutory targets, whilst others simply achieved them. Comparison of district performance is distorted as it fails to take into account waste recycled and/or disposed of through the County Council's household waste recycling centre network. A single unitary council would ensure performance was reported in a meaningful and consistent way to enable proper comparison with other similar councils.

The performance of existing schemes in terms of public participation and capture of recyclables is also variable. A common scheme across the area would enable cost effective wide spread communication and promotion to improve public participation and overall performance towards the upper limit of what is achievable.

A common approach to refuse and recyclables collection would build on the best practice and local knowledge from within the area and ensure a standard level of service availability. Kerbside collection of a common suite of recyclable materials would be rolled out to all suitable households, driving up recycling and composting performance.

Surveys and experience indicates that residents are currently confused as to which level of local government provides waste management services. A single unitary council would improve the accountability and responsiveness of the service to residents needs by removing this confusion. Access would be through the County Council's contact centre and 34 public access points to provide further improvements in local customer contact.

A unitary approach would give opportunities to develop meaningful dialogue with service users to allow a suite of policies to be developed that will provide a high quality, equitable service. Local delivery will allow the Council to deliver services in a way that meets local needs.

The combination of a single set of policies and local service delivery will provide a more equitable service to citizens than is currently the case. Service levels will have to take into account the varying needs of service users (such as storage of bins in terraced houses/flats, assisted collections for elderly or disabled citizens) and this will all be delivered against a common, fair and consistent policy framework.

Existing partnerships with contractors of the waste management unit and waste collection authorities will be explored to find ways to drive improvements. Other links will be explored to see whether the larger structure of the unitary council can deliver further savings, such as through shared use of depot facilities and harmonised fleet management.

Currently, District Councils visit community groups to share information about their services, and the County Council often visits the same groups to give a different message. Existing partnerships with community groups will be strengthened through the rationalisation of waste services.

More efficient services

The opportunities for greater efficiency in service delivery include:

- Savings on collection costs through
 - combined procurement of vehicles
 - rationalisation of depots and vehicle maintenance arrangements in conjunction with Highways North Yorkshire
 - reduced procurement costs
- Reduced cost of transport and recyclables sorting services by combining services and removal of interface risks
- Reduced waste collection management costs and overheads through rationalisation of management structures and consolidation of waste strategy, policy and client functions into a single structure

- Better optimisation of disposal and collection combined costs, by an analysis of source and delivery point not complicated by internal boundaries, vehicle numbers or payments made for tipping outside district boundaries (tipping away payments)
- Savings on capital costs of bins, boxes and other waste containers through economies of scale
- Improved control and management of commercial waste collections, and ensure charges reflect costs
- Reduced administration through removal of requirement to pay inter-authority recycling credits
- Improved performance management through provision of more timely information.
- Improved governance and accountability as decision making on future waste strategy and policy is taken centrally
- Promotion of common and joined-up messages on waste management across the county integrating collection and disposal objectives.

Existing contracts would be analysed to ensure that they contribute to service delivery into the future. Opportunities will be taken to rationalise existing arrangements where possible to improve efficiency. The current operation of collection systems in-house will be reviewed to ensure it is the best way to deliver services.

Strategic management will be delivered by a central unit dealing with policy, procurement, contract management, publicity and strategic support functions. Local services will be delivered locally, with operational improvements and efficiencies being delivered by the sharing of resources with other partners and through economies of scale.

The proposed waste management service for a single unitary council would be based on collection of mixed dry recyclable waste and refuse from each household on alternate weeks. Mixed materials would be sorted at central recycling plant, and materials sold to markets for recycling or reprocessing. This approach has been shown to be the most efficient way to achieve high levels of recycling across North Yorkshire but is sensitive to the extent to which it is applied. It is unlikely that the existing District Councils will all adopt this methodology due to local factors and conflicting objectives. A single unitary council enables the adoption of the most efficient system to be determined by having regard to the long term cost across the County area. Green waste would be collected from all suitable households on a fortnightly basis

The variety of different ICT, waste collection, quality management and performance monitoring systems used by the two tiers of local government is immense. The interaction between these systems is, at times, difficult. A single unitary would give the opportunity to develop a single system used by all. This would contribute to improved service

delivery through improved performance monitoring allowing better targeting of service improvement.

7.25 PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Existing approach

The planning and development services in North Yorkshire, including heritage services, building regulation and countryside management, are currently delivered by the County Council, seven District Councils and two National Park Authorities. The National Park Authorities are planning authorities in their own right and are excluded from the review process.

New approach

A single unitary authority provides the opportunity to devolve decision-making and the ability to address local issues to an area level supported by a central service that focuses on regional and strategic issues and provides specialist support services. Such an approach will enhance community involvement across North Yorkshire with the opportunity to address local issues at the local level and provide local access to the planning service. At the same time a central planning service will provide a policy framework for local decision-making and an effective input to regional and sub-regional planning issues.

In assessing how individual planning functions can be delivered within a unitary North Yorkshire, the approach has been to allocate functions to the area level wherever this is realistic.

Functions have been allocated to the centre where the work:

- Has a statutory basis which requires an authority-wide approach;
- Has strategic or authority-wide significance;
- Requires specialist resources/skills which could not reasonably be provided below authority level.

There are a number of planning functions which need to be undertaken at a central level to secure consistency of approach and the most efficient use of staff and financial resources and to comply with statutory requirements. These relate mainly, but not exclusively, to;

- Regional and sub-regional planning issues;
- Planning policy formulation involving the preparation and adoption of the Local Development Framework;
- Specialist support services, possibly supplemented by officers out-posted to the areas;
- Strategic and minerals and waste development control matters.

All other development control and building regulation matters would be handled at the area level. There would, however, need to be a mechanism for specific matters to be referred to the centre for decision, for example where an area committee may be minded to grant permission for development which represented a departure from corporate council policy. The area committees would also be responsible for local aspects of planning policy, for example Area Action Plans, and would be expected to provide an input to those matters handled by the centre.

A key element in this approach will be the opportunity to develop new, and to build on existing, partnership arrangements with local communities and organisations. These will provide the opportunity to engage with local communities in meeting local needs, to build on community strategies and develop joint initiatives at both the local and strategic level.

Performance improvement

The new arrangements would deliver improvements in line with the public's and the Government's expectations of the planning system:

- Clear integration between planning policy at the regional and local levels, the community strategies and the decision-making process;
- A focus on customers' needs and effective community involvement/ participation in the planning process;
- An effective and well-managed system able to deliver quality outcomes coupled with greater speed of decision-making;
- A consistent planning framework across the whole County to support the delivery of the affordable housing programme;
- A planning framework that is up to date, relevant and forms an effective basis for decision-making; and
- Consistency, transparency and probity in decision-making.

More efficient services

In respect of the total planning and development service, only a relatively small proportion of the work of the new authority would be directly undertaken by the centre. The large majority of the workload would be administered and delivered locally through area offices and a committee structure which could, for example, consist of:

- A county planning committee dealing with the functions outlined above;
- A central scrutiny committee to ensure consistency of approach and decision-making across the whole authority;
- Nine area sub-committees responsible for discharging the majority of the authority's planning functions and serviced by area offices;

- Information and advice centres in each market town through a network of customer services centres.

The establishment of a single unitary authority would provide the opportunity to deliver an integrated planning service which is able to make the most efficient use of staff resources. In particular a single unitary authority would have greater capacity to develop and deploy the range of professional, technical and specialist skills necessary to provide an effective planning and development service, delivered by one, rather than eight, management and administrative support structures.

Maximum use would be made of ICT to ensure the efficient operation of the planning service and to co-ordinate the work of the central and area teams.

7.26 PUBLIC PROTECTION AND REGULATORY SERVICES

Existing approach

The Public Protection and Regulatory Services functions carried out by the County Council include: animal health and welfare; food safety and standards; animal feeding stuffs and fertilisers; fraud, special investigations and proceeds of crime investigations; the sale of alcohol, tobacco and other age restricted products to children; weights and measures; consumer and community support and education; community safety including the safety of sports grounds, and the storage of petroleum and explosives; licensing and the safety of consumer goods.

These functions are delivered under a single strategic framework on a county-wide basis from a single service point backed by two operational offices.

The Public Protection and Regulatory Service functions carried out by the district councils include; health and safety of retail premises; food hygiene and safety; environmental protection (including pollution, contaminated land, air quality, nuisance control); pest control/dog control; licensing and crematoria.

These functions are currently delivered from the seven District Council premises, in line with seven differing strategic priorities and policies.

New approach

A new unitary council will enable:

- A single streamlined management structure operating centrally resulting in uniformity of delivery countywide in line with one overall strategic plan.

- Smarter working by creating multi-skilled teams carrying out multi-disciplined visits;
- Shared resources across the county allowing greater flexibility to respond to demand;
- Shared specialisms enhancing the council's ability to tackle complex and demanding investigations;
- Rationalisation of contracts, support services, property, fleet and specialist equipment.

Performance improvement

The key performance indicator for both trading standards and environmental health is BV 166. Currently only the County Council and one of the District Councils achieve the required level of 100%. By the implementation of the current county council procedures and policies it is envisaged that 100% will be achieved for these indicators.

Better public access will be provided via a single telephone contact centre that will deal with the full range of local authority enquiries. The contact centre will be supplemented by an enhanced unitary council website, whilst maintaining local access through 34 public access points.

Under the new arrangements input from the Community Forums will inform service planning thus allowing greater account to be taken of the needs and views of the service users to shape the local service. Economies of scale achieved by the new authority will allow for the flexible movement of resources to respond appropriately to the needs of the citizen.

In relation to Public Protection and Regulatory Services the existing partners of the county and district councils are one and the same, for instance the Food Standards Agency, the Health and Safety Executive, the Department for the Environment, Food & Rural Affairs, and the Police. The new council will present a strong single voice providing a clear statement of the needs of North Yorkshire residents in dealings with partners.

More efficient services

Existing contracts would be rationalised under the new arrangements creating the potential for a range of more efficient streamlined contracting solutions.

Strategic management would be undertaken from the centre, with operational delivery being supported by local access points. Opportunities exist for efficiencies both at an operational and at a strategic level through a rationalisation of the existing management structures.

There are a number of government agendas that are directed at regulatory services, notably the new Local Better Regulation Office, whose purpose is to reduce the burdens on business in relation to trading standards and environmental health. The provision of a single authority covering these two disciplines would accord with this agenda. In addition the new authority would be better placed to embrace the principles outlined in the Hampton report for reducing burdens on business. This would be achieved by the new structure outlined above, via multi-disciplinary teams undertaking work on a risk basis.

The new authority will be better placed to utilise the National Intelligence Model for intelligence gathering which will direct resources and assist in service planning.

Information management systems will be rationalised and improved to provide clarity and consistency for service users. A single database would be used as a means of data capture. The system currently used by the County Council is compatible with those used by the districts.

7.27 REVENUES AND BENEFITS SERVICE

Existing approach

Each of the seven District Councils delivers Revenues and Benefits Services, although each district may have different delivery approaches. The service is the responsibility of differing directorates within each District, with a range of civic and local offices providing access to the service.

The Revenue Services produce around 250,000 annual Council Tax bills, while a similar number of new or adjusted bills are issued during the year. There are approximately 25,000 Business Rates annual bills produced and again a similar number of new and adjusted bills are issued throughout the year. The benefit caseload is approximately 37,300, being split between Council Tax and Housing Benefit, which also includes both private and public housing benefit.

New approach

Service delivery in the single unitary council would be through:

- Local access via the 34 Customer Service Centres.
- A centralised back office.
- A central call centre with Customer Relations Management facilities for all services provided.
- A single council website providing information and transactional services.

Performance improvement

The delivery of the Revenues and Benefits Service provides opportunities for both efficiency and performance improvements. The areas of performance improvements include:

- Develop consistent Revenues Service Standards by building on the practices of the best councils.
- Achieving top quartile performance in all indicators for the Revenues and Benefits Service – processes and procedures will be reviewed to ensure best practice and robust performance management will be put in place.
- Ensure that the website incorporates best practice and maximises the potential for transactional services.
- The potential to provide an improved out of hours service – in the light of possible progress on CRM/technology.
- Achieving the Local Area Agreement targets through stronger partnership working to increase benefits take-up.
- County wide take-up campaigns – the capability of using better advertising techniques with posters and press releases/adverts to encourage direct debit and benefit take-up, which will also have the benefit of increasing Council Tax collection levels.
- Realise the full potential for partnership working – identify the current councils' partners and possible additions to ensure continuity and consistency in service delivery.
- Business Continuity Planning – ensure there are disaster recovery procedures, which are part of the performance standards.
- A unified approach to Benefit Fraud Inspectorate Performance Standards – meeting performance standards' gaps.

More efficient services

The goal is to collect money faster, more efficiently and at a lower cost, whilst providing excellent customer service and value for money. The aim will be to release resources to fund the front line services that meet the public's highest priorities by improving the efficiency of service delivery. The areas for efficiency gains include:

- A single management structure and one back office.
- Dealing with the differing unit costs and productivity levels between the existing councils – adopting the practices of the best.
- Standardisation of processes and documentation – standard processes will be identified and adopted to ensure best practice.
- Standardisation of Revenues and Benefit systems – the opportunity to rationalise the systems and IT currently used to only one system.

- Joining up with the Adults Social Care Benefits and Assessment function and stronger partnership working with voluntary and community sector providers of benefits advice.
- Procurement – including bailiffs, printing of leaflets, cash collection, external training and consideration of bankruptcy/liquidation proceedings, warrant serving, prosecutions and transcription of interviews.

Maximising the Benefit Subsidy Claim – ensure processes and procedures are in place to achieve this.

7.28 CORPORATE SERVICES

Existing approach

Currently all councils in North Yorkshire, both the County Council and the seven Districts, provide a full range of corporate services in order to support the effective operation of their individual organisations.

These services include Finance, Human Resources and Training, Legal, Democratic and Electoral Services, Information Technology and Property Functions

The services are largely provided by in-house, directly employed, teams although there are examples of outsourcing and there are examples of innovative partnership arrangements, for example the Audit Partnership provides audit services to Ryedale, Selby and Scarborough Districts. In terms of collaborative working, North Yorkshire County Council provides a payroll service to Richmondshire and Selby Districts and will be providing a service to Scarborough in the future.

Performance in these areas is principally assessed through Corporate Assessment and the Use of Resources assessment, and our analysis indicates that there are plenty of examples of good practice across North Yorkshire which can be used as learning opportunities, but that also there is some mixed performance. All the models that have been deployed in previous LGR cycles have identified corporate and democratic services as being a key area in yielding significant efficiency savings when moving to unitary status. Our analysis shows that this would be the case with a single unitary council for North Yorkshire.

New approach

The prime objective in defining the new working arrangements will be to move to one unified approach as soon as is practicable. The key to introducing changes to working arrangements will be the migration of key IT applications and ensuring that these are configured to support unified working. There are no compelling reasons why significant

efficiency savings should not be capable of being realised by the commencement of year two of the operation of a new unitary council.

Performance improvement

While corporate services would deliver significant efficiency gains in a new council, there are also some significant and important performance improvements that can be delivered:

- **ICT** – Building upon the WAN infrastructure and standard desktop configurations within North Yorkshire County Council, there is the scope to offer a consistent, high quality, ICT service to all staff operating within a unitary council. It is recognised that this may need some initial investment and there may be some additional ongoing costs to be incurred in supporting the provision of the optimal kit for all staff. There will also be benefits from using “best of breed” applications from amongst the County and Districts, and exporting knowledge about how best to capitalise upon the use of these applications. There is also the scope to offer a more resilient service and a service better equipped to deal with disaster recovery scenarios.
- **Performance management** - there is considerable scope to apply high quality standards and ensure that all areas of the new unitary authority benefit from robust performance management procedures and processes. This would enable us to quickly identify any areas causing concern and to lever up performance.
- **Value for money** – Incorporating best practice from the existing councils into a robust value for money strategy will ensure that cost effective services are delivered across all areas of the new unitary council.
- **Workforce planning and flexibility** - The potential offered by having a larger body of staff working within one unitary council, together with good workforce planning and professional development opportunities, will enable our workforce to meet the needs of North Yorkshire residents now and in the future in terms of the skills they need and where, how and when staff work.

More efficient services

There is significant duplication of key processes across Districts and also some overlap between the functions undertaken by the Districts and by the County Council. Detailed evaluation of both the existing structures within the County Council and the Districts, as far as has been possible, and comparing these models to the structures currently

operational in unitary authorities indicates that there is significant scope to achieve efficiency savings.

Some of these savings are integral to the cost of being in business for the existing authorities, such as all councils currently incur external audit fees which we estimate would be approximately £300k lower for a unitary council in North Yorkshire than the existing payments across eight councils. We estimate that approximately £1m will be readily saved when the new organisation comes into existence from a combination of fees, subscriptions and similar payments across the piece.

Further significant savings will be realised by rationalising the number of posts required to undertake Finance, ICT and Personnel functions across the organisation. Critical in this analysis is the assumption of a move to one unified approach for the delivery of these services.

These savings are estimated to be in the region of £3.2m. More detail is provided in Section 9 on Efficiency and the associated appendices.

SECTION 8

Robust Transitional Arrangements

- 8.1 The priorities in developing appropriate transitional arrangements will be to maintain service delivery; promote efficiencies; and, to reinforce the concept of a new council taking its own decisions.
- 8.2 The Government's timetable envisages new council elections in May 2008 with the new unitary council taking full responsibility by April 2009. This submission will utilise this full eleven month period to operate the new council in a shadow mode to enable new appointments to be made by the new council to senior posts and effect the smoothest possible transition. The new council assuming full responsibility in April 2009 from all of the successor councils will enable all councils to have proper financial planning and accountability and will allow the new council to establish its own budget.
- 8.3 Great play has been made in this submission of the establishment of a new council for North Yorkshire. The most appropriate way to deliver this from the very start is to allow new elections and for a new cohort of members to be responsible for the appointment of a new senior management team.
- 8.4 It is recognised that the creation of a new council is a considerable undertaking. The maximum available time will be utilised for the task and robust plans developed. Work will start from the moment the government announces its intention to create a new unitary council for North Yorkshire. This is expected to be in July 2007.
- 8.5 The first act will be to create a Joint Member Change Board, comprising representatives from each council, with officers identified to support it in its work. There are a number of specific tasks which need to be undertaken in the lead up to the establishment of the shadow council; during the period that the shadow council exists; and, also within the first phase of the new council. The main tasks are identified in the table below.

Tasks to be undertaken pre shadow council
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Develop shadow management arrangements.• Develop project management arrangements and project plan.• Establish early communication strategy and implement.• Draft initial recruitment strategy and senior officer roles and responsibilities.• Review existing technology and produce draft technology strategy.• Review property and other assets and produce draft asset

strategy.

- Establish agreements with all councils for long term contractual decisions, sale of assets and use of reserves.
- Develop initial financial models.
- Audit and review all significant contracts.
- Review and benchmark the performance of all services across all councils.
- Identify transformation opportunities including shared services.
- Prepare for shadow elections.

Tasks to be undertaken by the shadow council

- Implement political and management arrangements for shadow council.
- Recruit Chief Executive.
- Establish vision, values and culture of new council.
- Review and implement communication strategy.
- Determine the structure of the new council, timetable officer appointments, agree employee terms and conditions and recruitment policies (including re-deployment), recruit senior posts and prepare staff transfer orders.
- Determine service delivery strategy for day one to ensure no service disruption.
- Agree strategy for customer access, frontline services, back office services and support systems.
- Review, revise and initiate service transformation plan.
- Review and refine IT plan, determine key systems strategy including integration.
- Review, revise and begin to implement asset strategy.
- Prepare budgets for new council.
- Develop performance management framework, including key performance targets.
- Undertake thorough risk assessment and prepare contingency plans.
- Develop policy framework.

Initial tasks for new council

- Complete implementation of new structures (political and management).
- Implement service structures and locality arrangements.
- Implement staff transfers and recruit to vacancies.
- Establish key milestones for new authority, review and revise project plan against these.
- Monitor and track transitional costs and efficiency realisation.
- Implement communications strategy to ensure new corporate culture is embedded and that locality structures access arrangements are understood by citizens and wider stakeholders.
- Ensure services operate effectively from day 1.
- Monitor service performance.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Progress transformation objectives i.e. services, property, systems.• Monitor risks and update contingency arrangements.• Review and evaluate performance/effectiveness of all structures. |
|--|

- 8.6 Mapping out a path for the new council to assume full responsibility will enable all existing councils and staff to work towards a smooth transition. Existing councils will be expected to clear all significant spending and contracting decisions with the shadow council. The shadow council will be able to determine the council's structure and start recruitment processes. This in turn will allow staff to understand what opportunities will exist within the new council.
- 8.7 The realisation of efficiencies often has a considerable lead in time as new and more efficient arrangements are designed and put in place. The shadow period will allow this design work to happen and will also inevitably lead to staff vacancies within existing councils which can be utilised to deliver immediate efficiencies in the new more streamlined council.
- 8.8 It is fully recognised that a key aspect of the transition will be to communicate effectively to staff of all councils from the moment of the Government's announcement onwards. Staff will be concerned about their individual position and will require regular clear information. A significant part of the work of the shadow authority will relate to staff issues. Some Senior appointments will be made and it is envisaged that the majority of staff will be automatically transferred to the new council under statutory Transfer Orders. An appropriate ring fenced appointments process will be established.
- 8.9 Good communication will be a vital part of the change. Not least to ensure that service performance levels are maintained in this transitional period. Regular dialogue between existing councils and the shadow council will help achieve this as well as constant performance management through this period.
- 8.10 Lessons from previous reorganisations demonstrate that the key to a successful transition is effective project management. A rigorous approach to this allied to detailed performance management and review will be applied to every stage of the transition.
- 8.11 Considerable effort will be expended on establishing, a new culture for a new council. Emphasis will be placed on a unified sense of purpose, locality working, new opportunities for service delivery, new relationships with partners, fresher processes and new ways of doing business. Building a transformed council around the customer and using this opportunity of change to streamline and remove costs.

- 8.12 Residents and key stakeholders will be informed of changes. Service improvements and opportunities to shape the process of change will be promoted to deliver a step change in the perception of local government. Change managed positively will help restore the confidence of the public and build a stronger connection between them and their council.
- 8.13 As has been stated in the introduction the County Council has good working relations with its District Council colleagues. The County Council will look to work with all District Councils to refine the proposals contained within this submission and to develop working arrangements further to enable the change to a new council to be successful.
- 8.14 There is no reason to believe that creating a new council will lead to service disruptions. Deloitte undertook an analysis of recent reorganisations of local government, in a report entitled "Pushing the Boundaries" (2006), they stated "During the last reorganisation, despite widely reported concerns about the need to ensure a "seamless transition", there were in fact few reported problems. In most cases evidence from inspectorate reports suggests that there was a smooth transition for service users."
- 8.15 It is recognised by this submission that the key challenge to establishing a new council is to protect frontline service provision whilst at the same time delivering a transformed authority with a new corporate culture and with harmonised and improving services. The approach within this submission will help achieve this aim.

Summary

- 8.16 Change can be challenging and enormous care needs to be taken in terms of service users, staff and partners. The timescale set out by the Government is helpful and the proposals contained in this section to utilise a shadow period will help ensure that the transition is not only as smooth as possible but leads to a transformed council.

SECTION 9

EFFICIENCY

Introduction

- 9.1 A critical test of the merits of the unitary proposal will be the scope to identify efficiency savings for the benefit of North Yorkshire council tax paying residents and/or to enhance and improve the quality of services to residents.
- 9.2 This recognises the importance assigned by residents to value for money in the delivery of council services.
- 9.3 This section explores the scope to achieve efficiency savings, and describes some of the issues associated with realising those savings in the short to medium term.

Starting Position

- 9.4 The hypothesis that has been tested is that existing arrangements in North Yorkshire create inherent inefficiencies because of the duplication of management and support arrangements across services provided in the seven District Councils and a duplication of some corporate functions across District Councils and the County Council.
- 9.5 In addition, within the existing eight councils there are several models of excellent practice which if either replicated or developed across a larger unitary council will generate scope for enhanced service performance and/or efficiencies.
- 9.6 As an indicator of the efficiency potential, in the area of Corporate Services North Yorkshire County Council currently incurs £8.68 per head of population on central services, corporate and democratic core – this equates to less than 1% of the Authority's total expenditure. In the seven districts, the equivalent expenditure ranges from £35.87 per head of population to £65.63 – and the equivalent percentages are between 26% and 44%, of total expenditure for District Councils.

Savings Analysis

- 9.7 A model has been developed to evaluate the scope to generate efficiency savings in the new unitary authority.
- 9.8 The model has been informed by data provided by colleagues in District Councils regarding the existing cost of delivering services, and benchmark data available through sources such as the Audit Commission, and our understanding of service organisation models in existing unitary authorities. This developmental process is not a full

substitute for having a detailed understanding of all existing operational issues and challenges, and consequently a number of the savings estimates in relation to the unified provision of District services err on the side of caution. It is anticipated that the detailed project implementation process will identify additional savings in these areas.

9.9 The generic areas, where we have sought to identify savings include:

- (i) **Management related costs £2.7m:** These savings relate to the savings in senior management (and directly related support costs) that would accrue in moving from eight authorities to one – the most visible example would be in the reduction in the number of Chief Executives.
- (ii) **Central and Corporate Services £3.4m:** There are a range of Central and Corporate Services currently provided in both the County Council and individually in each of the seven District Councils. These include Finance, Legal & Democratic Services, HR and Training, Property and Asset Management functions and ICT. It is considered that significant savings can be made in the delivery of these services, recognising on the one hand the significant duplication of roles, but on the other hand ensuring that effective support mechanisms would be in place for the unitary council services.
- (iii) **Integrated Service Functions £8.5m:** The model assumes that the management of all the functions currently provided within District Councils would move to a unified service delivery model. The efficiency benefits of centralising back office processes would be realised, without any deterioration in the direct customer access currently offered across North Yorkshire. In the case of these services, where there are already close relationships between County and District functions, for example waste collection in Districts and waste disposal in the County Council, there is potentially greater scope for savings from streamlining services and partnership working arrangements (with all the associated benefits of clarifying accountability lines for residents).
- (iv) **Organisational Related Costs and Overheads £0.4m:** Certain specific costs are associated with the eight existing authorities for being in business – for example, external audit fees. Whilst the costs incurred by one council will be higher than any of the eight individual authorities at present, there will still be significant savings.

In addition, the combined effect of the changes at (i), (ii) and (iii) will be a reduction in the number of staff employed – this in turn should lead to savings in accommodation costs, IT costs and other support costs.

The savings in this area are more modest, because the cost implications of the community engagement proposals have been factored in to the model under this heading.

9.10 The phasing of these savings being realised has been carefully mapped against the individual area of activity. The full £14m per annum will be realised by the second year of operation of the new council. These implications are considered within the Affordability section.

9.11 The summary position in terms of the efficiency savings potential is as follows:

	£ms
Management related costs	£2.7m
Central and Corporate Services	£3.4m
Integrated Service Functions	£8.5m
Organisational Related Costs	£0.4m
TOTAL	£14.0m

9.12 Further savings may potentially be realisable in relation to

- major procurement exercises
- adopting flexible working practice based upon the use of new technologies with associated rationalisation of office accommodation
- reviewing the scope to streamline back-office processes through e-government and Customer Relationship Management software
- efficiencies from merging related front-line services (for example, nursing and social care staff) such savings would be additional to the figures quoted in this report.

9.13 There will also be savings from reviewing the variations in cost effectiveness between Districts in relation to caseload based services and front line delivery. For example, the costs published by the Audit Commission for 2005-06 demonstrate a variation in the cost of Council Tax Collection from £7.45 per head in Craven to £11.93 per head in Selby. At this juncture, it was considered these variations needed more detailed analysis, but the unitary authority will have additional scope to generate savings by moving all performance to that of the most cost effective.

9.14 In addition, all the efficiency savings described in this section are cashable savings – there will be additional non-cashable savings as professional staff and managers will need to invest less time in partnership working arrangements.

Relationship to Affordability

- 9.15 It is recognised that there will be significant transitional costs incurred in creating a unitary council in North Yorkshire, and the approach that has been adopted is to ensure
- these costs are properly identified, and are not under-estimated.
 - the transition process is managed in such a way as to minimise the costs
 - the costs are financed over a finite period
- 9.16 Overall, these proposals represent excellent value for money to the residents of North Yorkshire and efficiency savings of approximately £14m per annum will equate to a reduction of approximately £62 per Council tax payer.

SECTION 10

AFFORDABILITY

Affordability Challenges

- 10.1 The analysis in Section 8 has demonstrated that there is significant scope to realise efficiency savings (prudently estimated at £14 million per annum) – which must be healthy in the longer term for the benefit of taxpayers and/or reinvestment in priority services.
- 10.2 The two specific considerations we need to make are:
- (i) Given that some investment will be necessary in transitional costs - is the change affordable in the short-term?
 - (ii) given a starting position of divergence in council tax rates between Districts in North Yorkshire, how will we manage the equalisation of council tax and what will the impact be for individual residents across the unitary authority?

Council Tax Issues

- 10.3 The current regime is that the seven District Councils in North Yorkshire set their own individual council tax rates, which are then combined with the precepts for the County Council, police and fire authorities, and individual parish council precepts (which can vary significantly).
- 10.4 Within this document our analysis focuses on council tax levels for Band D properties – the actual level of council tax paid by residents depends upon the Banding of their property value.
- 10.5 In terms of the starting position, the level of council tax in North Yorkshire is currently £899.47 for a Band D property – this represents the 3rd lowest level of council tax amongst the twenty Shire Counties with identical responsibilities.
- 10.6 The District Council tax figures (exclusive of parish precepts) vary from £76.59 in Hambleton to £194.36 in Harrogate. Hambleton's council tax is the third lowest amongst District Councils nationally, and significantly is approximately £60 lower than the next lowest district figure (Craven).
- 10.7 This divergence in council tax is challenging in terms of constructing a model, whereby a unified rate of council tax can be set for all North Yorkshire residents. Whilst the analysis will demonstrate that the level of efficiency savings can yield council tax reductions for residents in six of the seven existing districts, it will not be possible to develop a unified council tax without increasing council tax rates in the Hambleton area.

10.8 Proposals that will be outlined in this section involve an increase in council tax of 6% per annum for Hambleton Residents for Years 1 – 5 of the unitary authority – until such time as an equalised council tax rate exists across all of the unitary authority. The planning assumption in Hambleton’s published Medium Term Financial Strategy is that council tax will increase by 5% per annum for the same period – ie the proposals in this paper only amount to an additional 1% per annum for each of the 5 years. However, the published Hambleton Medium Term Financial Strategy is also dependent upon the identification of significant levels of ongoing savings and additional income generation (specifically the introduction of car parking charges). No equivalent savings or charges are required to support the proposals in this paper.

Financial Analysis

10.9 The analysis in Section 9 of this report has identified £14 million per annum of efficiency savings. In terms of affordability these savings need to be analysed alongside;

- transitional costs:
- loss of Government grant funding

10.10 In developing our models, we have recognised the direction provided in the Department of Communities Local Government “Invitation to Bid” document and consider that these principles are both appropriate and important. In particular:

- (i) that reserves will not be reduced as a means of funding transitional costs
- (ii) that there should be a maximum transitional period of 5 years
- (iii) no increases in council tax should be specifically geared to fund transitional costs

10.11 The assessment of transitional costs is that they will total £13.5 million, and will be incurred over a period running from Year 0 (2008-09) to Year 3 (2011-12). Costs include items such as redundancy and early pension costs, early recruitment to the Management Team of the new unitary authority, and the necessary project work to pave the way for unified service delivery. The model has carefully analysed the relationship between the efficiency savings and the timing of transitional costs, and the new unitary authority would be committed to ensuring that the extent of transitional costs are minimised.

10.12 In relation to Revenue Support Grant funding, the assumptions adopted have been that the RSG for the new unitary authority would involve adding the grant settlements of the existing eight authorities, but with the loss of the “fixed element” of RSG currently received by each district. The modelling has also assumed the continuation of the

existing “damping” regime so that the estimate of lost RSG funding is £3.6 million.

10.13 Combining these financial elements produces the following analysis:

	5 years £ms	10 years £ms
Efficiency Savings	61.6	131.6m
Less: Transitional Costs	13.5	13.5
Net Efficiency Savings	48.1	117.1
Less: Loss of Government Grant	18.2	36.5
Available to North Yorkshire residents and deployed as:	29.9	80.6
Council Tax reductions (*1)	20.7	55.2
Available to deploy (*2)	9.2	26.4

Notes

- *1 This figure is the aggregate level of reduced council tax bills to North Yorkshire residents – the differential impact upon residents is explored in paragraph 10.13 onwards.
- *2 An initial assessment has been made of the resources that would be deployed to reduce council tax levels. This has been set at a level of £10.5 million. This means that the new unitary authority would have discretion over whether to deploy the available resources for additional investment in front-line services and/or to secure further reductions in council tax.

10.14 In terms of a long-term payback calculation – on a crude level,

$\frac{\text{transitional costs} = \underline{\underline{£13.5m}}}{\text{annual savings} = \underline{\underline{£14m}}} = 0.96 \text{ years}$
--

A more detailed model analyses the phasing of transitional costs, the projected timeline for efficiency savings coming on-stream and considers a range of short-term financing strategies involving a combination of temporary deployment of resources and balances, capitalisation of expenditure in accordance with prudential borrowing guidelines, and a modest estimate of capital receipts. Under these scenarios, it is anticipated that the authority will have paid back all transitional costs and have available resources in Year 3.

Council Tax Equalisation

- 10.15 It is acknowledged that whilst the previous section has identified a very significant level of efficiency savings, residents will still rightly be very interested in their actual council tax bill and the value for money offered by the unitary authority.
- 10.16 For planning purposes, it has been assumed that £10.5 million of the efficiency savings will be deployed to reduce the average North Yorkshire council tax rate. This would enable the “equalised” council tax rate to be set at a rate below the level in six of the existing district councils as demonstrated below.

District	County Council Band D	District Council Band D	Current Aggregate Band D	Proposed Band D	Cost / (Saving) to Taxpayer
Craven	£899.47	£136.18	£1,035.65	£1,026	(£9.65)
Hambleton	£899.47	£76.59	£976.06	£1,026	£49.94
Harrogate	£899.47	£194.36	£1,093.83	£1,026	(£67.93)
Richmondshire	£899.47	£171.46	£1,070.93	£1,026	(£44.83)
Ryedale	£899.47	£160.95	£1,060.42	£1,026	(£34.42)
Scarborough	£899.47	£185.77	£1,085.24	£1,026	(£59.24)
Selby	£899.47	£139.26	£1,038.73	£1,026	(£12.73)

The table illustrates that 496,900 out of North Yorkshire’s 582,000 residents will experience a reduction in their council tax bill.

- 10.17 It needs to be emphasised that all the figures discussed in this section assume no increases from a price base of 2006-07. In reality, council tax bills do increase annually, reflecting cost pressures and increased demand for services. The Governments capping regime permits council tax increases of a maximum of 5% and the planning assumption in the County Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy is that this will continue to be the case – reflecting particular pressures on waste and the growing elderly population. For this reason, we have included Appendix 4 to try to provide clarity on the likely experience of an individual resident over the next five years.
- 10.18 The resultant council tax level of £1,026 will fall below the median level of unitary authorities. However, given that it is based upon a combination of North Yorkshire County Councils’ tax requirement (3rd lowest out of 20 comparable County Councils) and offers significant

efficiency savings as described in Section 9, it offers excellent value for money to the residents of North Yorkshire.

- 10.19 In the case of Hambleton residents, it is acknowledged that the council tax will over the course of five years, need to increase by an additional 5.12%. However, this figure needs to be viewed in the context of the existing Hambleton financing strategy which requires significant service reductions and increased charges to ensure the council does not break the Government's capping criteria.
- 10.20 The approach adopted in considering options for council tax equalisation has been to aim to:
- (i) not create undue turbulence in charges for individual taxpayers
 - (ii) ensure the overall MTFs for the new unitary authority remains sustainable
 - (iii) pass the benefits of efficiency savings to taxpayers at the earliest opportunity.
- 10.21 The device to manage this equation in the short-term will be a gradual shift in council tax levels. Models are detailed in Appendix 5, which describe how this will impact upon tax payers in individual districts.
- 10.22 The preferred model from within Appendix 5 sets out a process of equalising Council Tax through five equal steps (i.e. a reduction of £13.55 per annum for Harrogate Band D residents).
- 10.23 In all of the above analysis, the assumption has been made that the Council Tax capping regime will remain as currently prescribed, and that the cap will only apply at the whole authority level.

Financial Summary

- 10.24 The financial case for change to a single unitary council is compelling. Efficiency savings of £14 million recurring year on year, based upon prudent financial assumptions, massively offset projected one off costs of £13.5 million. The benefits of this will be utilised directly to keep council tax low and to fund crucial service investments.

SECTION 11

CONCLUSION

11.0 This document has set out the business case for establishing a single unitary council for North Yorkshire. Each of the proceeding sections demonstrates the advantages in terms of:

- Neighbourhood flexibility and empowerment.
- Strong, effective and accountable strategic leadership.
- Value for money and equity on public services.
- Affordability, with a clear demonstration that the change represents value for money and can be met from the Councils' existing resource envelope.

11.1 The above points represent four of the five criteria set out by the government for unitary proposals. The business case set out in this document demonstrates that these criteria have all been fully achieved. The remaining criterion is that of support for the proposals from a broad cross section of partners and stakeholders. It is noted that the Government intends to carry out its own consultation to determine this issue. We are confident that these proposals will carry this broad support and will work in the coming weeks to explain them to partners and stakeholders.

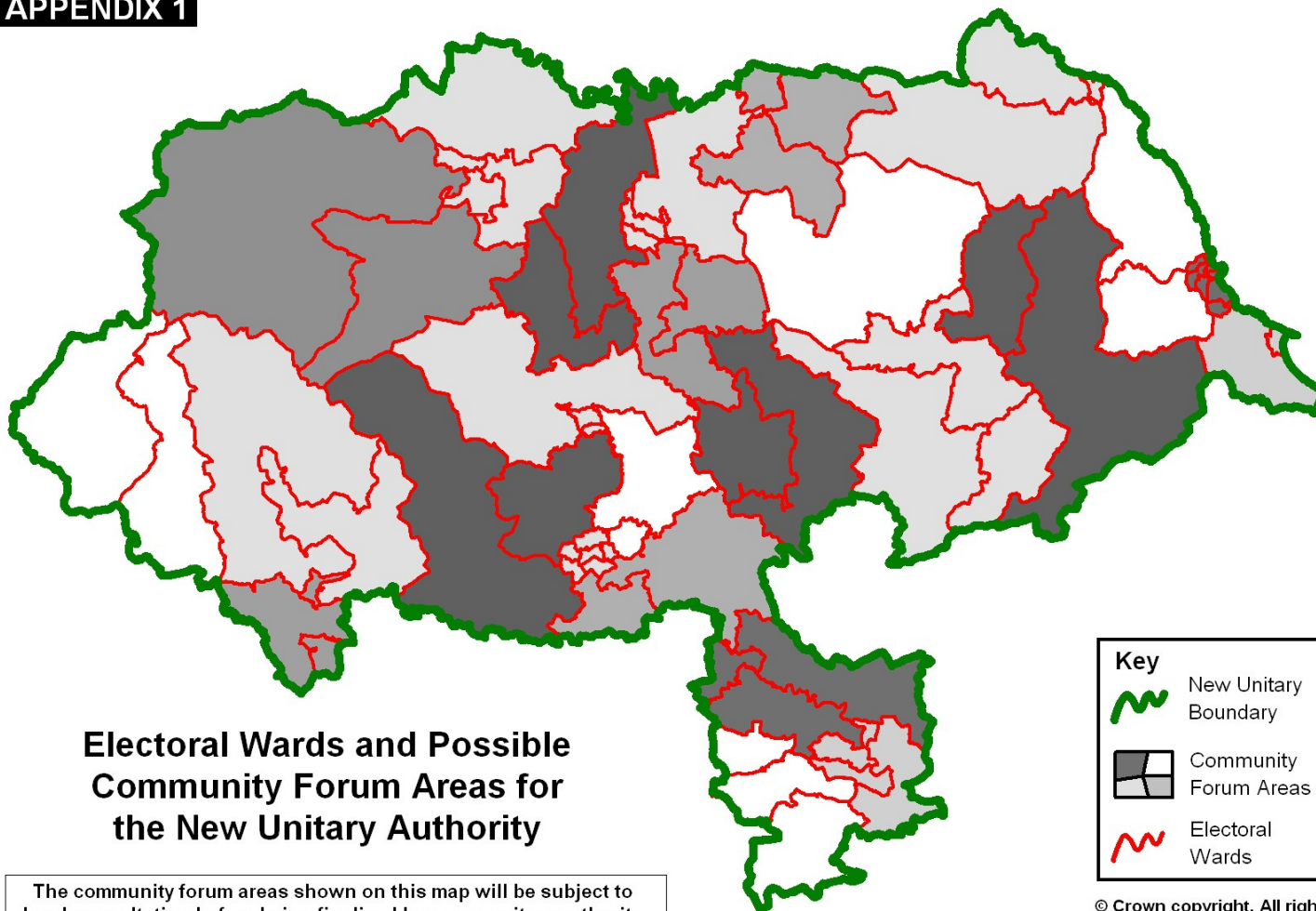
11.2 The business case that has been set out goes beyond demonstrating that the Government's criteria have been met. It explains why the change to a single unitary council is right for North Yorkshire. Right in terms of the key challenges that North Yorkshire faces, in dealing with key regeneration issues; the challenge of rural service delivery; increasing costs of delivering key services such as Adult Social Care and Waste Management; and increasing the provision of affordable housing across the county. North Yorkshire needs more strategic leadership, greater efficiencies from the public sector and more coherent locality arrangements across the county in order to deal with all of these challenges and the many others that exist. This document provides a framework setting out how a new unitary authority will be established to meet these challenges. It is recognised that the approaches that have been set out can be refined and developed further and there is a strong desire and willingness to engage with all partners in North Yorkshire to do this.

11.3 North Yorkshire is blessed with many strong partnerships and a range of high performing organisations. The foundations for change are strong and the prize is significant. Better outcomes, better services and stronger leadership for the people and businesses of North Yorkshire.

Index of Appendices

Appendix 1	Map of electoral wards and possible community forum areas for the new unitary authority
	Map of possible area committee boundaries for the new unitary council
Appendix 2	Summary of powers of parish councils
Appendix 3	Location of customer service centres across North Yorkshire
Appendix 4	Council tax bill for individual residents
Appendix 5	Council Tax




APPENDIX 1



**Electoral Wards and Possible
Community Forum Areas for
the New Unitary Authority**

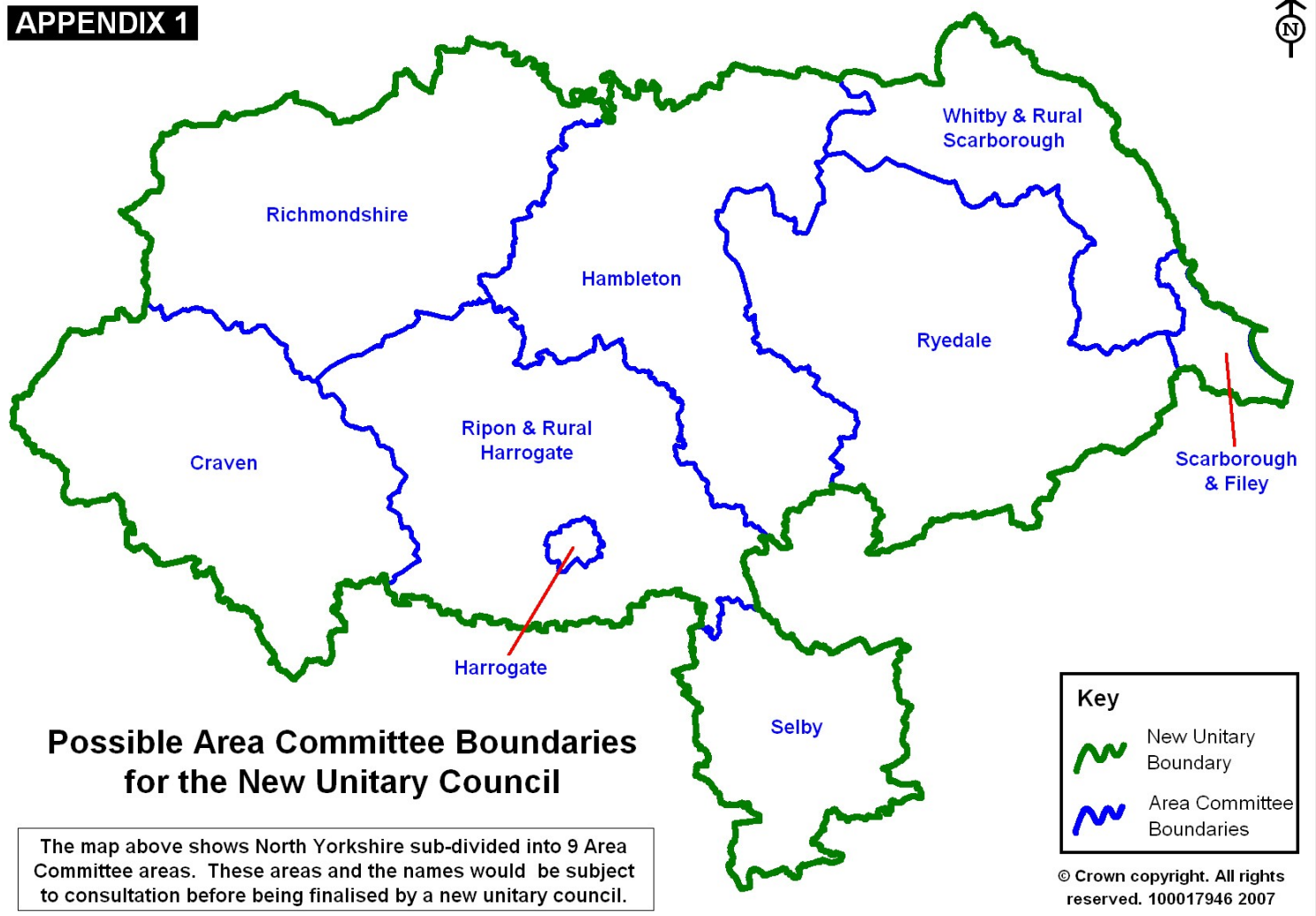
The community forum areas shown on this map will be subject to local consultation before being finalised by a new unitary authority

Key

-  New Unitary Boundary
-  Community Forum Areas
-  Electoral Wards

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APPENDIX 1

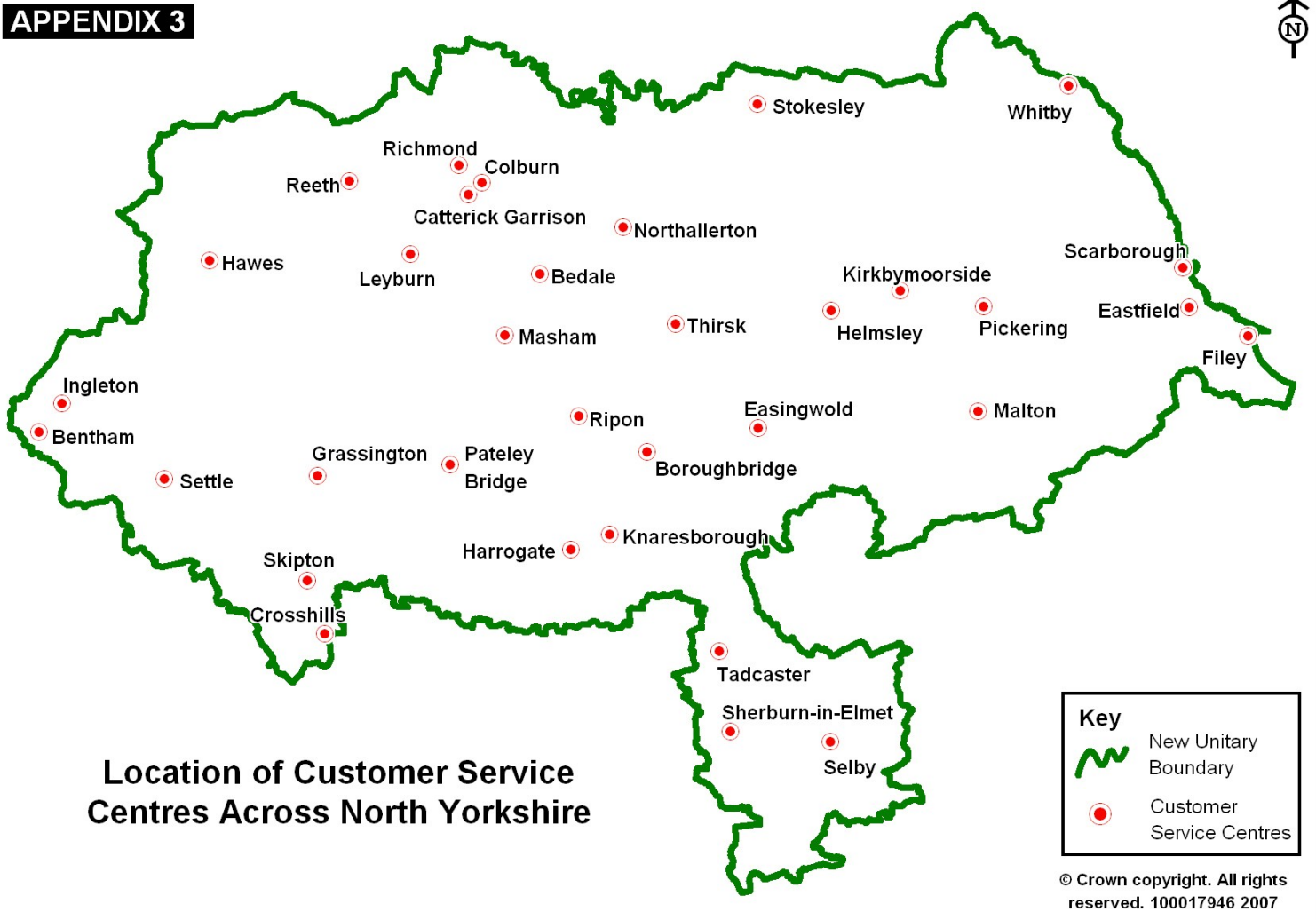


Appendix 2 - Summary of Powers of Parish Councils

<i>Subject</i>	<i>Further Detail</i>
Allotments	Power to provide allotment gardens and duty to do so if demanded by local electors
Appointment of Officers	Power to appoint officers to discharge any function of the parish council as directed by it, nearly always a parish clerk and sometimes a neighbourhood manager, linesmen, village sweeper and other workers
Bathing Places and Wash Houses	Power to provide swimming baths, public bathing places and wash houses (including laundrettes)
Burial Grounds, Cemeteries and Crematoria	Power to provide such grounds or facilities
Bus Stops and Shelters	Power to provide bus stops and shelters
Bye Laws	Power to enact bye laws regarding pleasure grounds, cycle parks, baths and wash houses, open spaces and mortuaries.
Charities	Power to act as trustee of any parochial charities serving the parish and duty to receive the accounts of such charities.
Clocks	Power to provide public clocks
Closed churchyards	Power to maintain closed churchyards
Commons	Power to regulate and maintain commons
Community Facilities	Power to provide such facilities for the use of local individuals, community groups and societies
Conference Facilities	Power to provide such facilities
Crime Prevention	Power to take steps to prevent crime, such as installing CCTV, requiring and paying for additional policing of the parish, installing burglar alarms and strong locks, and assisting neighbourhood watch schemes
Delivery of Local Authority Services	Right to act as an agent for the local district or borough, county or unitary authority and deliver nearly any services or amenities that would otherwise be provided for the parish by that local authority
Drainage	Power to deal with ponds and ditches
Education	Power to appoint representation to the governing body of any primary school serving the parish
Entertainment and the Arts	Power to provide entertainments and support the arts
Free Resource	Power to spend a limited amount of money as set by the Secretary of State on anything the parish council deems to be of benefit for the parish or its inhabitants
Gifts	Power to accept gifts on behalf of the parish
Highways	Power to maintain public footpaths, light roads and public places, provide litter bins, provide parking for vehicles, to acquire rights of way, provide

	traffic signs and other notices, and to give or withhold consent as to the stopping up or diversion of any public highway
Investments	Power to participate in schemes of collective investment
Land	Power to compulsory purchase land in certain circumstances and to establish new rights of way
Litter	Power to provide litter bins and similar facilities
Lotteries	Power to provide a lottery within the parish
National Parks	Right to have representation appointed onto the authority of any National Park the parish falls under
Open Spaces	Power to acquire land
Parish Property and Documents	Duty to manage and hold any property and public documents on behalf of the parish
Planning Applications	Right to be notified and consulted regarding any planning applications affecting the parish
Public Building and Village Halls	Power to provide such buildings for public use
Public Conveniences	Power to provide such facilities
Recreation	Power to acquire land for recreation purposes and to provide sports and leisure facilities
School Governors	Power to appoint a Primary School Governor
Telecommunication Facilities	Power to require and pay a telephone company to provide additional public telephones
Tourism	Power to take steps to encourage local tourism
Town Declaration	Power to declare the parish to be a town, in which case the parish council becomes known as a town council, the chair and vice chair become the town mayor and deputy town mayor, and the parish clerk becomes the town clerk
Transport	Power to provide car sharing schemes, community mini buses and other transport for the benefit of the parish
Village Greens	Power to provide and duty to protect
War Memorials	Power to maintain war memorials
Water Supply	Power to utilise any clean source to provide facilities for obtaining water, such as an parish pump

APPENDIX 3



APPENDIX 4

COUNCIL TAX BILL FOR INDIVIDUAL RESIDENTS

It is important to avoid confusion regarding the forecast Council Tax bills under a unitary scenario.

In particular, there is a desire to avoid ambiguity regarding the fact that we anticipate residents will face higher Council Tax bills in the future, but that our proposals will reduce the scale of that increase for all but Hambleton residents.

North Yorkshire County Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) is predicated upon the cost and service pressures (in particular, Waste and a growth in the elderly population) requiring the Authority to increase Council Tax by 5% per annum for the foreseeable future to avoid the need for significant service reductions. Given the County Council expenditure forms 87% of Council expenditure in North Yorkshire, it has been assumed that this level of cost pressure will apply across the new unitary authority.

The analysis in this note focuses upon a Scarborough resident currently paying Council Tax, for a property assessed as Band D.

In 2006/07, the combined North Yorkshire County Council and Scarborough bill would be £1,085.24.

The following table sets out the projected level of Council Tax for future years.

	NYCC	Scarborough	Potential charge for unitary council assuming 5% increase per annum	Charge for unitary council with discount element	Discount Element
2006/07 assume 5% increase per annum ↓	£899.47	£185.77		£1,085.24	
2009/10 Year 1			£1,256.30	£1,244.42	£11.88
2010/11 Year 2			£1,319.12	£1,295.35	£23.77
2011/12 Year 3			£1,385.08	£1,349.43	£35.65
2012/13 Year 4			£1,454.33	£1,406.79	£47.54
2013.14 Year 5			£1,527.05	£1,467.63	£59.42

So in Year 5 of the Unitary authority, the benefit to the resident paying Band D Council Tax in Scarborough is £59.42 (ie £1527.05 less £1467.63).

COUNCIL TAX

Introduction

1. This Appendix describes the manner in which the efficiency savings of £14 million identified in Section 9 could be applied to ensure that over a short and finite period the unitary authority could implement a single council tax rate.

Key Assumptions

2. The model assumes a five-year period for migration to an “equalised tax”, ie divergence between tax rates will be a feature for first five years of the new unitary authority
3. The model assumes that Department of Communities and Local Government council tax capping policy will apply at overall authority level rather than to individual residents / districts, ie it will set a ceiling for the increase in aggregate council tax yield.
4. The model assumes that there is no “headroom” for the unitary authority to meet spending / inflationary pressures at a rate significantly below a 5% increase in tax yield – because this would equate to realising additional efficiency savings.
5. Under all scenarios, the council tax rate for Hambleton residents will need to increase by more than 5%, at some stage during Years 1 to 5.
6. There are two different approaches that can be adopted to equalisation (ie moving to a council tax rate of £1,026 for all residents in Year 5 of the unitary authority):
 - (a) Three equal real term reductions – Model A
 - (b) Adopting a “Lowering ceiling” – Model B

Model A

7. The approach in model A has been to move towards the Year 5 equalised council tax in 3 even steps. For each district – the size of the steps will vary dependent upon the divergence between existing council tax and the equalised council tax.
8. The results are set out in table 1 attached.
9. This model has the benefit that the level of change in council tax is held constant over the five year period and consequently no residents experience significant increases/reductions in any one year.

Model B

10. The approach in model B is to set a ceiling for each year so that council tax reductions are initially focussed on those districts with the highest existing level of council tax.
11. The results of this model are set out in Table 2 attached.
12. This model has the benefit that it could be argued it is more equitable to target reductions initially at those taxpayers furthest away from the “equalised” tax rate.

Outcomes

13. Both models offer deliverable proposals to equalising council tax in that:
 - (a) the increases in council tax in Hambleton will amount to 6% for the five years, as opposed to 5% under the capping criteria
 - (b) real term reductions in council tax for 6 district areas
 - (c) they comply with our interpretation of Department of Communities and Local Government guidance on “capping” criteria

TABLE 2

	Craven	Hambleton	Harrogate	Richmondshire	Ryedale	Scarborough	Selby
Starting Council Tax	£1035.65	£976.06	£1093.83	£1070.93	£1060.42	£1085.24	£1038.73
Year 1 - real terms %	0	+1.03%	-1.91%	0	0	-1.04%	0
- Council Tax	£1035.65	£986.07	£1074.00	£1070.93	£1060.42	£1074.00	£1038.73
Year 2 - real terms %	0	+1.01%	-1.37%	-1.11%	-0.13%	-1.37%	0
- Council Tax	£1035.65	£996.08	£1059.00	£1059.00	£1059.00	£1059.00	£1038.73
Year 3 - real terms %	0	+1.00%	-1.10%	-1.10%	-1.10%	-1.10%	0
- Council Tax	£1035.65	£1006.09	£1047.00	£1047.00	£1047.00	£1047.00	£1038.73
Year 4 - real terms %	-0.06%	+0.99%	-1.10%	-1.10%	-1.10	-1.10	-0.36
- Council Tax	£1035.00	£1016.10	£1035.00	£1035.00	£1035.00	£1035.00	£1035.00
Year 5 - real terms %	-0.82%	+0.99%	-0.82%	-0.82%	-0.82%	-0.82%	-0.82%
- Council Tax	£1026.00	£1026.11	£1026.00	£1026.00	£1026.00	£1026.00	£1026.00