

# North Yorkshire

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## Comment text:

Please see attached file.

## Attached Documents:

- final-lgc-response-to-lgbce-recommendations.docx

The North Yorkshire Labour Party Local Government Committee represents the 6 Constituency Labour Parties (CLPs) in the area of North Yorkshire Council.

We are responding to the LGBCE proposals in general terms. The detailed response from Thirsk & Malton CLP is made on our behalf and for Skipton & Ripon CLP, Harrogate & Knaresborough CLP, and Wetherby & Easingwold CLP.

Overall, the proposals will not, and could not, result in efficient and effective local government. This is because of LGBCE's prior decision on the size of the Council results in an average electorate of 5,818 per Councillor. This results in rural divisions covering huge areas and means that elected representatives are overburdened.

The Labour Councillors on North Yorkshire Council put forward cogent arguments for increasing the number of elected representatives. We regret and continue to oppose the LGBCE's decision to reduce the number of North Yorkshire Councillors to 89. This is destructive to local democracy and there can be no justification for North Yorkshire residents being less well represented than those of Westmorland & Furness (2,845 per Councillor) or [of](#) neighbouring County Durham (4,150 electors per Councillor).

We have previously urged the LGBCE that, unless absolutely unavoidable, Council divisions should not be split across Parliamentary constituencies. The proposals now presented produce 10 divisions that do so. This is unnecessary and unacceptable.

Of particular concern are the proposals for a Dishforth & Dalton division and a Ripon Canal & Ure division each involving 3 Parliamentary constituencies and the proposed Hillside and South Swale Villages divisions each involving 2. The detailed response from Thirsk & Malton CLP (supported by the CLPs for Skipton & Ripon, Harrogate & Knaresborough, and Wetherby & Easingwold) demonstrates that this can be readily avoided and electoral equity improved.

The straight-forward changes also put forward in the Thirsk & Malton CLP response avoids splits across Parliamentary boundaries for the proposed Helmsley & Ampleforth (incorporating a polling district from Richmond & Northallerton), Masham & Fountains division, and Lower Nidderdale divisions.

In response to the comments on this point made at the previous stage, the LGBCE says: '*...our recommendations are developed independently of parliamentary constituency boundaries, and we are not required to take them into account when creating our proposals.*' This is unsatisfactory - not being 'required' to do something is not the same as being prohibited from doing it. The arrogant tone of the comment is unworthy of a public body.

The LGBCE is able to take account of many matters. 'Effective and efficient local government' is not just about the administration of services - it encompasses the interaction of citizens and elected representatives at every level. When local issues arise as a result of national Government decisions, Councillors have a legitimate role in explaining to their constituents and encouraging them to engage with their Parliamentary representatives. Having Divisions that cover more than one Parliamentary constituency makes that more difficult.

We strongly commend the LGBCE to adopt the alternative proposals in the Thirsk & Malton CLP submission that will reduce the number of divisions split between Parliamentary constituencies from the 10 as proposed to just 3.

Overall, the proposals now put forward by the LGBCE create the strong impression that the LGBCE has done little more than arbitrate between the submissions made by North Yorkshire Council and the Liberal Democrats. It gives rise to doubt about the extent to which it has actually undertaken an independent 'review' so far.

The LGBCE's use of pseudo-judicial terms such as 'evidence' and 'we consider' is unwarranted and misleads as to the depth of research undertaken so far. Expressions of opinion from individuals, community groups and political groups are simply opinions and not 'evidence' (including from Labour Parties).

For example, the 'evidence' referred to in relation to proposals for Ripon appears to come from a statement from the Liberal Democrats: *'The city of Ripon is too large for two councillors, so we have adjusted the polling districts to ensure each of three councillors has a significant representation of the city population. We have used the river Skell as a natural boundary to avoid the Conservative working group's proposal of removing the historic Claro barracks from Ripon which are an important part of the city's heritage.'*

We fully endorse other responses from individual CLPs.