

North Yorkshire

Personal Details:

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Organisation Name: Thirsk & Bedale Branch Labour Party (Representative of a local organisation)

Comment text:

Related subject: The proposal to reduce the number of representatives.

REVIEW OF ELECTORAL ARRANGEMENTS IN NORTH YORKSHIRE

Whilst we wholeheartedly support the LGBCE's aim to 'equalise', as far as possible/practicable, the number of electors per Division with the creation of the new boundaries we do not feel that the proposal to reduce the number of councillors to 89 is appropriate. There should be an increased number of Councillors to ensure that all the disparate parts of North Yorkshire are adequately represented in the Council's decision making.

1. The county of North Yorkshire is the third largest local authority in England by population and the largest in area. The factors influencing current and future social and economic development differ hugely across the county. There needs to be enough elected representatives to cover the wide range of characteristics arising from the location of communities as well as the differing natures of town, coastal and rural areas
2. Before the Unitary Council was created there were 315 elected representatives in total, a reduction to only 89 is not acceptable. This move is detrimental to democracy as it has become unreasonably difficult for so few Councillors to represent their communities and to assist those constituents who need their help.
3. The larger urban settlements of Harrogate and Selby are affected by the Leeds conurbation housing market and its health system whilst Scarborough, Whitby and Filey face the challenges common to coastal towns at distance from other centres of population. The nature of the

issues in remote rural villages are markedly different to those close to and with good connections to the West Yorkshire conurbations, York and Middlesborough. There should be an increased number of Councillors to ensure that all the disparate parts of North Yorkshire are adequately represented in the Council's decision making. An increased number of Councillors would enable elected representatives of a good cross section of areas to inform decision making across the full range of the Council's functions.

4. The LGBCE decision that there should be an average electorate in North Yorkshire of 5,818 is markedly at odds with its recent decision that unitary Westmorland and Furness should have an average electorate of 2,845. An average electorate of 5,818 in North Yorkshire can be achieved relatively easily in larger NY towns but would mean that rural villages and the smallest towns have to be aggregated into Divisions covering massive areas with little logic or community coherence.

5. The proposal to have 89 councillors ignores many points in the LGBCE's own statement that proposed Division patterns should '...as far as possible reflect community interests and identities and boundaries should be identifiable. The electoral arrangements should promote effective and convenient local government' It says that it: looks for a combination of factual information such as the existence of communication links, facilities and organisations along with how people use the facilities; will try to ensure that a Division is not so large that it would be difficult for a councillor to represent; will not normally accept 'doughnut' Divisions (smaller versions of the York Central and Outer constituency arrangements); will accept having variable numbers Councillors per Division (max 3).

The people of North Yorkshire need to be reassured that their geographical location does not deny them adequate representation. A move to 89 councillors does not do this. We hope that ongoing financial constraints facing local government is not a major factor in the proposal to reduce elected representation in North Yorkshire.

Draft v1

19 November '24

See information in attached file.

Attached Documents:

- review-of-electoral-arrangements-in-ny-v1.docx

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B A Southwell
Branch Secretary

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