

North Yorkshire

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Comment text:

Related subject: The whole.

see attached

Attached Documents:

- lgbce-response-to-the-proposals-of-the-lgbce-for-north-yorkshire.docx

Response to the proposals of the LGBCE for North Yorkshire.

I live in the Richmond and Northallerton constituency, an area minimally affected by the proposals, nonetheless I have profound concerns about those proposals and their effect on local democracy.

The basic decision to reduce the number of Councillors, albeit only by one, is fundamentally unreasonable and unjustifiable. The chosen target number of electors per division is 5818, with no explanation for the disparity with Westmoreland and Furness, 2845 (less than 50% of this figure), nor with County Durham, 4150 per division. This wide variation alone calls the whole exercise into question.

The vast area of North Yorkshire, the circuitous transport links, and the large number of small settlements would make the smaller figure of electors per representative more appropriate. I am aware of the initial proposal put forward by the North Yorkshire Local Government Committee of the Labour Party at the beginning of the review process. The proposal to increase the number of councillors was firmly based on comparisons with other local government bodies and took full account of the particular geography of North Yorkshire, and the difficulties for councillors of adequately engaging with their electorate in small scattered settlements. These factors have not been addressed, nor, it would appear, has account been taken of the links between communities which by reason of geography and history, have established connections.

A further unsatisfactory feature of the proposal is the disregard of constituency boundaries resulting in 3 divisions being split between 3 constituencies and a further 7 being split between 2. Apart from the possible confusion this could cause for electors, these splits cause real organisational difficulties for political parties and candidates. Such splits should be a last resort and be minimised, not increased.

The proposals as they stand do the inhabitants of North Yorkshire a disservice and impose an unreasonable burden on their representatives. There will be no improvement in local democracy, indeed, the disparities with comparable neighbouring communities mean that there will be a significant democratic deficit. The councillors will be unable to give the people the level of engagement available to their neighbours and local government, given the absence of Local District Councils, will, of necessity, be remote.

I cannot support these proposals.