



Beverley Parish Council

Cllr. Geoffrey Linehan • Overdale • Panorama Walk • Pateley Bridge • HG3 5NX

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Letter sent by the Chair of the Parish Council to the following North Yorkshire MPs and councillors plus the minister, PM in waiting, Leader of the Opposition and Harrogate officers:

Gordon Brown
David Cameron
Ruth Kelly
William Hague
David Curry
Anne McIntosh
Robert Goodwill
John Greenway
Phil Willis
Mike Gardner
Mick Walsh
John Fort
Les Ellington
Lynne Mee



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Unity Structures Consultation Team
 Zone 5/E8
 Eland House
 Bressenden Place
 London
 SW1E 5DU

24 May 2007

Dear Sir or Madam

Re: Single Unitary Council for North Yorkshire

Bewerley Parish Council unanimously rejects a single unitary council for North Yorkshire for the following reasons:

1. Scrapping Harrogate Council would remove a local link for local problems and issues. Northallerton is remote and would have little sense of what mattered locally to those in the Harrogate District. Harrogate residents want local links.
2. Harrogate is a rich area and Harrogate money would be collected by Northallerton and go into a general pot to be spent on other parts of North Yorkshire. The residents of Harrogate District would be subsidising others from outside the district. They do not want to do this.
3. Parish councils may not wish to take on powers devolved from a unitary council (which have not even been explained). We feel that devolved powers would be more onerous and time consuming, requiring full time councillors and clerks. Local people would not necessarily have time to commit at that level and might prefer to decline the additional powers. Should a parish accept devolved powers, there would also be added costs implications and, if no extra monies were available, as we believe is the Government's position, our parish precepts would have to rise to meet the



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shortfall. As a result, we think that in most cases, the powers would revert to the unitary council, resulting in a fundamentally undemocratic remoteness from people and issues, and killing the current good links and responsiveness that the district councils offer and do so well.

4. When our county councillor first voiced this idea of a unitary council, we were told that the parish councils would be consulted. However, this did not happen. This is undemocratic and is an attempt to impose a new system without consultation.
5. You may recall the Government's attempt to bring regional government to the north-east with a referendum. The referendum result soundly defeated the idea. We feel that the current attempt to impose a unitary council is regional government by the back door with no intention of holding a referendum because government suspects it would be defeated as it was in the north-east. We feel manipulated, abused and ignored.
6. We are alarmed at the timescale for change. It appears to be driven by an unseemly haste. Again, we think this is indicative of an attempt to impose an unwanted unitary council, hurried through to avoid democratic consultation and undoubted opposition. This is wrong in itself but it will also result in a badly thought out and chaotic outcome with resulting poorer services and community links. Intelligent and honest observation reveals that company mergers and mergers between civil service departments for example, take much longer in the planning and still there are all the problems associated with change. Well planned change takes years to settle down. This proposed change cannot be well planned in a year. North Yorkshire is the size of a small country and both it and its people deserve more respect.
7. As Chairman, I attended a presentation by North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) at Grassington Town Hall, which was led by Mr Richard Flinton, Assistant Chief Executive of NYCC. I asked whether



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the costs of redundancy had been fully taken into account for Harrogate Council's officers who declined to relocate or for other employees who were no longer thought to be required. Mr Flinton's answer was unsatisfactory.

8. We believe that central government would not fund any shortfall in NYCC's calculations. Independent findings suggest that there could be a shortfall of in excess of £20 million. This would have to be paid for by rate payers, or services would need to be cut.
9. We believe that the existing structure could be improved if NYCC and the district councils worked together to eradicate duplication and establish better communication links with each other. We see no good reason to change the present structures in a revolutionary way, as for the most part, they work very well. The current district based system working with NYCC only needs tweaking to evolve into something better. We do not need or want a drastic, costly structural reorganisation that gives no added value.
10. Having spoken to fellow parish councillors and parishioners across the North Yorkshire region, I have found no-one in favour of a unitary council. The proposal for a unitary council is a hostile takeover bid, with the Government and NYCC in league to depose the democratic structures of the district councils without reference to the voting residents. In a PLC, similar moves would be seen as an outrage and not in the interest of shareholders. Why then is it deemed acceptable in the current case?

Yours faithfully

Geoffrey Linehan

For and on behalf of Beverley Parish Council

Cllr. Geoffrey Linehan

Chairman Beverley parish Council