

York and North Yorkshire Strategic Partnership

Background

North Yorkshire County Council (NYCC) are submitting a proposal to Government to create a new Unitary Council for the County of North Yorkshire. City of York Council (CYC) are submitting a proposal to Government to maintain the existing Unitary Council for the City of York and does not support inclusion within any proposed model by the District Councils of North Yorkshire. Both councils are fully supportive of a devolution deal for the York and North Yorkshire economy and the creation of a Mayoral Combined Authority (MCA). ***There is joint agreement between both councils that this is best achieved by establishing a new unitary council for North Yorkshire and the City of York Council retaining its existing footprint alongside a commitment to broaden the scope of collaboration to leverage the strengths of both councils.***

There is already a good history of collaboration between North Yorkshire County Council and the City of York Council and both councils see devolution and the associated reform of local government as an opportunity to build upon this collaboration. Both recognise that the city of York plays a key role in the economic make-up of the North Yorkshire hinterland but also that there are clear differences between York and the County of North Yorkshire.

The City of York Council and North Yorkshire County Council as part of its submission for local government reform, proposes the creation of a York and North Yorkshire strategic partnership that will complement the joint work at MCA level. A strategic partnership provides the opportunity to bring both councils together to build upon this collaboration at greater scale; to embrace the diversity; and to avoid the unnecessary costs and dis-benefits of disruption of changes to York.

Strategic Partnership Principles

The following are suggested principles that would underpin the partnership:-

- We will remain sovereign bodies respectful of the strengths that both partners bring to the partnership, to the MCA and to the wider economic and social makeup of the York and North Yorkshire sub-region.
- We will utilise the specific strengths of each authority to support the other, through a range of collaborative approaches, from sharing of services through to acting as a critical friend.
- For those aspects of previous District responsibility, CYC will support transition arrangements for the new NY unitary, giving consideration to sharing of services where there is benefit in doing so.

- We will consider any potential efficiencies as part of forming new partnership working arrangements.
- We will use the future MCA as a vehicle for delivery of shared models of working where they relate to the priorities of the MCA. Other areas of governance will build upon other joint arrangements and will be proportionate.
- We will work jointly as part of the approach to recovery from the Covid pandemic creating a stronger and more effective response.
- We will come together as equals regardless of population, land mass and GVA output.
- Collaboration will not be limited to York and North Yorkshire. We will collaborate more broadly where this makes sense.
- We will be agile in our approach to collaboration. Success will be judged in the medium to long term and not solely on individual ventures.

Benefits of this approach

- Delivers benefits of greater scale whilst minimising disruption
- Enhances efficiency and helps to further reduce costs
- Enhances sustainability of both councils
- Allows for sharing of specialisms and leading practice
- Reinforces collaboration at the MCA
- Respects differences and political sovereignty
- Provides framework to enrich planning and strategy (diversity of thinking)
- Provides flexibility to support the delivery of services at the most appropriate scale.

Areas of existing collaboration

There are already a range of collaborative areas that involve the current North Yorkshire County Council and the City of York Council including –

- Shared Health & Safety Service
- Shared use of some HR support & HR advisory support for schools
- Joint founding shareholders in Veritau - internal audit & fraud management
- Joint shareholders in Yorwaste (waste management company) and partners in the public private partnership of the Allerton Park Waste Recovery Plant
- Shared management arrangements for adult education services
- Shared Emergency Duty Team for out of hours social care response
- Coroners service – shared arrangements
- Various other shared specialist services (e.g. Trading Standards, bridges)

In addition, both have a shared commitment to work within the Humber Coast and Vale Integrated Care System as part of the York and North Yorkshire System Leadership Executive.

The areas above demonstrate a maturity of relationship and a sound base upon which to build additional shared ventures for mutual benefit, notwithstanding the recognition that there are real differences and it will not always be appropriate to have deeper collaboration.

Areas of immediate identification for collaboration include the following

The following areas are recognised as areas of further more immediate opportunity:-

Responding to Emergencies & Covid – recent emergencies, notably Covid and flooding, have seen both councils work closely together in the same Local Resilience Forum. This has identified further opportunities to collaborate on emergency planning, flood management, and public health support resilience of services and the ability to work collectively during an emergency as part of the York & North Yorkshire LRF, particularly with just two councils rather than the current nine and the complexity of responsibilities this brings.

Strategic Planning & Housing – working as two councils alongside a mayoral combined authority will increase the ability to have a clearer shared strategic plan to inform priorities and development. As part of this, we will be able to explore housing opportunities both at strategic planning and delivery level, considering council housing and wider housing delivery to meet the shared requirements across boundaries.

Working in a New Health & Care System – as strong players and partners within the Humber Coast and Vale Integrated Care System, and as part of the York and North Yorkshire System Leadership Executive, there would be enhanced scope to explore joint opportunities with health partners at both local and sub-regional level. This could include the development of health population data, strategic approaches to the Better Care Fund, managing the risk of the care market and managing Continuing Health Care pressures. Further medium to long term transformational opportunities could also be built upon this new springboard for greater integration and collaboration across the health and care systems, linking into the development of the emerging Integrated Care Partnership on a York and North Yorkshire footprint.

Harmonisation of council tax collection, revenues and benefits – CYC could use its skills, capacity, experience and scale to support the new North Yorkshire unitary council in harmonising these services, working alongside those district council staff specialists.

Children's Services – further opportunities exist for working together to ensure shared best practice and resilience in children's services, acting as critical friends and building upon the strengths of this area in the sub-region.

Adult Services & Public Health – with many 'anchor' NHS and health partners in the region, there will be further opportunities to strengthen partnership arrangements to support consistent, community focussed health and care services.

Environment and Climate Change – the shared transport infrastructure and economy of York and North Yorkshire means that both councils will operate more effectively working together, alongside York and North Yorkshire LEP. This will include sharing best practice when addressing carbon reduction and in the joint efforts to become the first carbon negative region.

Waste Management – both NYCC and CYC already have joint stakes in Yorwaste and a waste treatment plant so collaboration starts from a very high base. Opportunities are therefore enhanced to consider options to improve the waste service across York and North Yorkshire.

Working with the market – both councils share many of their supply chains and benefit could be derived from shared commissioning, brokerage and market interventions, particularly in social care.

Legal Services – CYC and NYCC already share some resources in this area and, therefore, there will be the opportunity to build on this existing work to increase the resilience and retention of specialist resources.

Back Office – a range of back office functions could be shared where it is efficient to do so, building on existing collaboration. Increased use of digital connectivity makes this even more realisable.

Property – further opportunities exist to share and rationalise office buildings and depots across York and North Yorkshire, again building upon enhanced digital connectivity.

Budget and Finance – with the increased financial challenges posed by the pandemic, further efficiencies will be sought through the new partnership arrangements and devolution to support CYC and NYCC in the delivery of key services to local residents, businesses and communities.