



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

Consultation on proposals for locally-led  
reorganisation of Local Government in  
Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset

Summary of consultation responses



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Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF  
Telephone: 030 3444 0000

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# Introduction

1. This document provides a summary of the 13,020 responses received to the Government's consultation on eight locally led proposals for future unitary local government in Cumbria, North Yorkshire, and Somerset. The Government announced to Parliament in July 2021 that the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government had decided to implement, subject to Parliamentary approval, three of those proposals. These are:
  - a proposal for two unitary councils covering the whole of the area of the administrative county of Cumbria: one unitary council in the west comprising the current districts of Allerdale, Carlisle and Copeland; and one in the east comprising the current districts of Barrow, Eden, and South Lakeland;
  - a proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the area of the administrative county of North Yorkshire; and
  - a proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the area of the administrative county of Somerset.

More details of the Secretary of State's decisions are at Annex A.

2. On 9 October 2020 the Secretary of State invited the councils in all three areas, including associated existing unitary councils, to submit locally led proposals for unitary local government. These invitations started the legislative process for restructuring local government in the three areas, which is set out in the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the 2007 Act).
3. The Secretary of State received eight proposals by the specified deadline of 9 December 2020: four from councils in Cumbria, two from councils in North Yorkshire and two from councils in Somerset. These proposals were as shown below:

## Cumbria

- **Allerdale Borough Council and Copeland Borough Council** submitted a joint proposal for two unitary councils covering the whole of the area of the administrative county of Cumbria: one unitary council in the west comprising the current districts of Allerdale, Carlisle and Copeland; and one in the east comprising the current districts of Barrow, Eden and South Lakeland (the East West proposal).
- **Barrow Borough Council and South Lakeland District Council** submitted a joint proposal for two unitary councils covering the whole of the area of the administrative county of Cumbria and the administrative district area of Lancaster City within Lancashire County: one unitary council ("The Bay") comprising the current districts of Barrow, Lancaster City (in Lancashire) and South Lakeland; and one comprising the current districts of Allerdale, Carlisle, Copeland and Eden districts in "North Cumbria" (the Bay proposal).
- **Carlisle City Council and Eden District Council** submitted a joint proposal for two unitary councils covering the whole of the area of the administrative county of Cumbria: one unitary council in the north comprising the current districts of

Allerdale, Carlisle and Eden; and one in the south comprising the current districts of Barrow, Copeland and South Lakeland (the North South proposal).

- **Cumbria County Council** submitted a proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the area of the administrative county of Cumbria (the One Cumbria proposal).

#### North Yorkshire

- **Craven District Council, Harrogate Borough Council, Richmondshire District Council, Ryedale District Council, Scarborough Borough Council and Selby District Council submitted** a joint proposal for two unitary councils covering the whole of the area of the administrative county of North Yorkshire and the whole of the administrative area of the City of York; one unitary in the east comprising the current districts of Ryedale, Scarborough, Selby and the current unitary of York; and one in the west comprising the current districts of Craven, Hambleton, Harrogate and Richmondshire (the East-West proposal).
- **North Yorkshire County Council** submitted a proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the area of the administrative county of North Yorkshire with no changes to the existing City of York unitary (the Single Unitary proposal).

#### Somerset

- **Mendip District Council, Sedgemoor District Council, Somerset West and Taunton Council and South Somerset District Council** submitted a joint proposal for two unitary councils covering the whole of the area of the administrative county of Somerset; one unitary council in the west comprising the current districts of Sedgemoor and Somerset West and Taunton, and the other in the east comprising the current districts of Mendip and South Somerset.
- **Somerset County Council** submitted a proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the area of the administrative county of Somerset.

4. The 2007 Act requires that, before a proposal for local government reorganisation can be implemented, the Secretary of State must first consult any local authority that is affected by a proposal (but which has not submitted it), and any such other persons as he considers appropriate. Accordingly, on 22 February 2021 the Secretary of State launched the following consultation which closed on 19 April 2021.

## The Consultation

5. The Secretary of State consulted on all eight proposals and welcomed views from any interested persons, including residents. A full list of named bodies consulted on each proposal is at Annex B. Those responding could do so via the Department's Citizen Space web platform. Alternatively, responses could be emailed to the Department, or sent by post. The consultation sought views on the proposals and in particular on the following questions in relation to each proposal:

- 1) Is the councils' proposal likely to improve local government and service delivery across each area? Specifically, is it likely to improve council services, give greater value for money, generate savings, provide stronger strategic and local leadership, and create more sustainable structures?
- 2) Where it is proposed that services will be delivered on a different geographic footprint to currently, or through some form of joint arrangements, is this likely to improve those services? Such services may for example be children's services, waste collection and disposal, adult health and social care, planning, and transport.
- 3) Is the councils' proposal also likely to impact local public services delivered by others, such as police, fire and rescue, and health services?
- 4) Do you support the proposal from the councils?
- 5) Do the unitary councils proposed by the councils represent a credible geography?
- 6) Do you have any other comments with regards to the proposed reorganisation of local government in each area?

Respondents were asked to indicate reasons for their answers.

## Responses to the consultation

6. Overall, 13,020 responses were received, 3,225 in relation to Cumbria, 4,297 in relation to North Yorkshire, and 5,498 in relation to Somerset.

### *Responses to proposals for Cumbria*

7. The 3,225 responses for Cumbria were from the following respondents:

Resident living in area affected	2,362
Resident not living in area affected	26
Business organisation	21
Education organisation	5
Local Government organisation - principal council	43
Local Government organisation - parish/town council	65
Local Government organisation - other	19

Police organisation	2
Fire organisation	3
Health organisation	6
Other	98

8. Below is set out a summary of views expressed by each category of respondents on each of the 6 questions in the consultation – see paragraph 5 above.

**Question 1:** Is the councils' proposal likely to improve local government and service delivery across each area? Specifically, is it likely to improve council services, give greater value for money, generate savings, provide stronger strategic and local leadership, and create more sustainable structures?

9. Residents: 37% and 30% of residents who responded to the consultation thought that The Bay and One Cumbria respectively would improve services but there was also a high level of those who did not think they would (30% and 28% respectively). 34% of East West, and 30% of North South residents thought these proposals will not improve services. Similar views are echoed by non-local resident respondents; 38% do not think One Cumbria will improve services compared to 31% who think it will. For both who think it will. For both the East West, The Bay and the North South proposals, residents who supported them thought the proposals would provide more local organisations with better access to services whilst being more efficient than the current two-tier system. Those supporting The Bay also referenced a sense of historic identity. Those that opposed these three proposals thought they would not provide value for money and expressed concerns about the disaggregation of current services. Residents who supported the One Cumbria proposal felt it would lead to simpler structures and would be the most efficient outcome, generating savings and reducing duplication. Those that opposed it thought a single unitary would be too remote and local democracy diminished given the large area size of the county, and cited concerns about the current County Council services.

10. Business Bodies: Only The Bay and East West had the approval of business respondents, who answered yes at 43% and 38% respectively. 29% and 33% of business respondents thought that the North South and One Cumbria proposals would not improve services. Businesses considered the diverse nature of the area an issue and as such thought that smaller authorities would be better placed to respond to issues than the current County Council. Businesses felt The Bay council had good geographic, economic and strategic merits. A business stated: *“The value of a single tier authority is obvious and the financial and policy benefits it will bring by removing crossover. However, a Bay unitary goes further, connecting the important economic centres of Barrow..... and Ulverston .....to its connection routes to the rest of the UK, to two universities in Lancaster (one already called the University of Cumbria), and it allows decision-makers easy access by road and rail to the main centres, unlike travelling west and north in Cumbria.”*

11. Education: 20% (one out of five) of education respondents thought that the East West, North South and One Cumbria proposals would improve services, with no respondents saying they would make them worse. 40% believed The Bay will improve services but 20% thought they wouldn't. A written response for The Bay said: *"My view is that a unitary authority based around the Morecambe Bay provides the optimal structure to deliver council services."*
12. Principal councils: The only positive response from principal councils was to agree that the One Cumbria proposal (submitted by Cumbria County Council) is more likely to improve local government and service delivery across the area, with 58% answering yes to the county proposal. However, 47% of those self-identifying as principal councils were Cumbria County council employees.
13. Parish and Town Councils: Parish and town councils are split on their response but there is a greater preference for The Bay and One Cumbria, with 28% and 25% of town and parish councils who responded to the consultation respectively saying it would improve services. Positive responses for East West and North South from town and parish councils were only 14% and 15% respectively. As with other questions, there was a theme that One Cumbria would save more money due to scale and efficiencies. There are also thoughts on identity, with mention that Copeland and Allerdale should stay together due to physical proximity. A few town and parish councils mentioned that travel infrastructure is already established in the West. Some town and parish council respondents felt The Bay proposal would work best due to the health geography.
14. Local Government Organisation – Other: Most respondents in this category thought that the One Cumbria proposal would be more likely to improve local government and service delivery across the area. About the East West proposal, one MP stated: *"This is the only option that allows for the creation of new authorities where the communities would be largely coherent. Given that it would see the 'reunification' of the historic county of Westmorland, and most of the historic county of Cumberland, this option also stands a chance of attracting local support, reflecting as it does a deeper sense of local identity. The south-east Cumbria option draws together the county's two existing districts (Eden and South Lakeland) with the largest concentration of agriculture and tourism, alongside Barrow which of course shares a huge travel-to-work link with South Lakeland and also shares multiple NHS boundaries. Bringing Eden and South Lakeland together means that both local authorities in Cumbria which contain the Yorkshire Dales would also be united and not divided."* There was a suggestion that, due to geography differences, North South would not support improved services and would not work due to the cultural and inherent differences of ambition between South Lakeland and Copeland.
15. Police: The only proposal that the police respondents gave an opinion on was One Cumbria, where one respondent said they thought it would improve services.
16. Fire: Two out of three fire respondents thought the One Cumbria proposal would improve services, and two out of three were against the other three proposals improving services.



17. Health: The only proposal health respondents thought would improve services was The Bay (50%; three out of six respondents). This was mostly because past joint working has occurred between health and local authorities in the Bay, which has seen them working together more on the Morecambe health area. It was felt that, due to the coterminosity, this proposal would lead to more effective service integration.

18. Other: the majority of other respondents did not answer the yes / no question; consequently, further analysis of opinion is not possible. However, in free text responses, identity was a theme.

**Question 2:** Where it is proposed that services will be delivered on a different geographic footprint to currently, or through some form of joint arrangements is this likely to improve those services? Such services may for example be children's services, waste collection and disposal, adult health and social care, planning, and transport.

19. Residents: The Bay proposal came out as the preferred option for both resident and non-local resident respondents. For all three of The Bay, East West and the North South proposals, residents who supported these proposals stated that services delivered on a different footprint would be improved by being delivered through a more local organisation whilst also being more efficient and delivering savings. Those that opposed them expressed concerns about the disaggregation of current services creating disruption and being costly. For the One Cumbria proposal, residents who supported it thought that services delivered on different footprint would be improved via greater efficiency and simpler structures, and the single unitary maintaining an effective status quo of current County Council services. Those that opposed the proposal felt that a single unitary would be too remote leading to worse access to local services.

20. Business Bodies: Business respondents preferred the East West and The Bay proposals, with 38% and 43% respectively answering yes to this question. Businesses mention economies of scale, ease of geographical communication and being more effective and efficient as the positives for the East West proposal. Health care and alignment of services were mentioned as the main reason businesses thought services would improve with The Bay proposal. There were no supportive comments bar one for the North South, which referenced saving money and the current Cumbria County Council being challenged regarding their current, considered poor, delivery of services and how they intend to improve it.

21. Principal councils: The only proposal with an overall positive response from principal councils was the One Cumbria proposal, with 56% responding that services would be improved where delivered on a different geography to currently. However, 47% of principal council respondents had cumbria.gov.uk email addresses and the rest were public sector partners.

22. Parish and Town Councils: The majority of town and parish council respondents did not respond to this question. There were fears that the East West proposal would disrupt Cumbria-wide services, with risks of duplication of non-health services,

management structures and costs, and transitional disruption. Complications were foreseen to local governance and existing health boundaries. The proposal was held to ignore traditional transport linkages. The Bay proposal was seen to enable a better focus on local service provision in the Bay area; for example, in Ulverston. The cross-boundary AONB Development Plan was considered evidence of joint working at this geography. The proposal matched existing travel to health and education patterns. However, there were some fears of confusion over responsibilities, with thoughts that vulnerable service users would be more likely to slip through the net. Other concerns raised included separate management structures increasing costs, and transition disrupting services. The North South proposal was seen to recognise existing transport linkages. Improved waste collection was anticipated across current boundaries. However, there were concerns here too about the two management structures leading to confusion and duplication of costs, and about the creation of a larger planning area. One Cumbria was identified as the simplest and least disruptive option, with the majority of services already delivered at County level and it was considered the most likely to deliver savings. Waste collection was an identified improvement area. However, there was concern that the County Council was already poor in delivering children's and adult services and no evidence a single unitary would improve this.

23. Local Government Organisation – Other: The only proposals to receive positive scores were East West and One Cumbria, with 21% and 42% respectively. Respondents considered that the East West proposal would have equal levels of deprivation and population density that would contribute to a balanced service delivery. They felt this would not be provided by the North South proposal as there would be a huge mountain range in the middle, with the only way Copeland and South Lakeland would be connected being the Hard Knott Pass. The only support for The Bay was due to keeping Copeland and Allerdale, and Carlisle and Eden together, plus population numbers of the authorities being over the government's threshold. Again, there was a mention of the inherent differences of ambition between South Lakeland and Copeland which it was considered would cause problems in service delivery in North South. There was mention of One Cumbria being the best proposal for saving money, efficiency and promoting the county with one voice.
24. Police: The police respondents made no comment in relation to this question on the North South and The Bay proposals but made some positive comments for East West and One Cumbria.
25. Fire: Fire respondents did not give any positive comments on this question for the two unitary proposals (67% - two of three respondents - no) but one made a positive comment in relation to One Cumbria.

**Question 3:** Is the councils' proposal also likely to impact local public services delivered by others, such as police, fire and rescue, and health services?

26. Residents: The majority of all residents who answered this question thought that all the proposals would impact services delivered by others. For all four proposals, residents who supported the proposals who thought that there would be an impact

on other services thought that there would be better partnership working and reduced duplication. Residents who did not support a proposal and thought that there would be an impact referenced duplication. For all proposals, those that thought there would not be any impact on other services cited that the existing boundaries of many services are delivered over a county footprint.

27. Business Bodies: Business respondents only supported One Cumbria to not impact services but, again, the majority didn't answer. Businesses responded more to The Bay proposal, where 62% thought it would impact services, while only 5% decided it would not. 48% of East West respondents and 33% of North South respondents believed it would impact services. The majority of those that said yes to the East West proposal thought it would impact positively due to being better integrated, more efficient, and more responsive. It was the same for The Bay proposal, with a number of those answering yes feeling it would be a positive due to better communication, being more joined up, reacting more locally and having greater impact. This difference was not reflected in the responses for North South, bar one. There was only one written response about One Cumbria, which said it would save money and communications.
28. Principal councils: The yes and no percentages for North South and East West proposals from principal council respondents were very similar. However, The Bay proposal had a very clear 51% yes to 12% no that the proposal will impact public services delivered by others. The One Cumbria proposal had figures of 42% yes to 30% no. There was no one reason why The Bay was thought to impact but there were concerns about different approaches, especially as police and fire services would be split. Several people selected yes for the One Cumbria proposal as having a positive impact due to everything being in one place, there being a single point of contact and it will only improve services.
29. Parish and Town Councils: The majority of parish and town councils did not respond to this question; of those who did, the only proposal that received a majority no was One Cumbria. The East West proposal was seen to need protection for service provision during transition: '...turmoil for several years...'. Service effects were feared to be negative with a local government split disruptive to fire and rescue services. There was mention of a mismatch to health and social care boundaries and an area split from its hospitals. However, this was a split within existing overall boundaries. It was seen to align with communities and therefore improve service delivery. The Bay proposal was commended for a common footprint between health and social care, which it was considered might resolve differences between care home provision between Cumbria and Lancashire. A parish close to the County boundary foresaw improvement to their services. Two responses suggested police and fire could subsequently review their arrangements. However, there was a stronger concern at the difficulties that might be caused to police and fire, and that these services' boundaries should not change. The North South proposal was seen to simplify arrangements, with better working relationships; existing joint working was seen as indicating service enhancement under this proposal. However, it would place West Cumbria's hospital in a separate authority to Allerdale. The One Cumbria proposal may have more weight in driving service improvements and minimal impact on others' service delivery owing to existing boundaries, which: '...organised by themselves' avoid the need for cross-border restructuring, with

reduced implementation risks and costs. However, there is not a shared footprint for health and social care.

30. Local Government Organisation – Other: The majority of other local government organisation respondents did not reply to the two unitary proposals but did for the One Cumbria proposal, whereby 53% felt it would impact services delivered by others. Where people had responded to the other proposal, more respondents thought it would impact. Where respondents had answered yes it would impact, it was seen as positive due to more efficient services, streamlined partnerships and strengthened services.
31. Police: The two police respondents commented that the East West proposal would not impact services. One of the two respondents commented that the The Bay proposals would impact services.
32. Fire: Two out of three respondents thought the North South and East West proposals would impact their service delivery, and all three respondents consider the The Bay proposal would impact their services. One respondent thought the One Cumbria proposal would not impact their services.

**Question 4: Do you support the proposal from the councils?**

33. Residents: The only proposal to receive support from the majority of resident respondents was The Bay. One Cumbria still has a sizeable amount of support at 30%, even though those that oppose are in a greater number. Residents in favour of The Bay proposal referenced the historic identity and economic connectivity of the areas being proposed. Those who opposed it thought it would be less efficient, create more complex structures and cause disruption. Residents who supported One Cumbria felt it would provide a simplified, more efficient structure and reduce duplication. Residents who opposed it felt that Cumbria is too big and rural an area for a single unitary authority, which would make services too remote and diminish local democracy. Residents in favour of the East West proposal thought that the new authorities would be more accessible local organisations better able to respond to local needs and raised concerns with existing County Council services. Those who opposed it felt it would be less efficient and were concerned about the disaggregation of current services. Like the East West proposal, residents who supported the North South proposal thought it would create more accessible local authorities able to respond to local needs. Residents who opposed it stated it would be less efficient and lead to poor partnerships.
34. Business Bodies: Business bodies supported the East West and The Bay proposals, with 43% and 57% respectively. The East West proposal was specifically supported for its support of commercial activities. Respondents felt it would support the diverse nature of the economies better, in particular the advanced manufacturing base and supply chain around Sellafield. They felt it would improve communication and therefore confidence in business expansion. In relation to The Bay proposal, a business said: *“This area is already operating as a region unofficially. Many private sector companies have adopted this exact geographical area for sales, distribution, and service reasons. It is an area that has historically*

*operated, with natural boundaries. Lancaster has much more in common with Kendal and the Furness area (sharing health and many transport links) than it does with Preston or other parts of Lancashire”.*

35. Principal councils: The only proposal receiving majority support from principal council respondents is the One Cumbria proposal by Cumbria County Council. However, just under 50% of responses of those who identified in this category were from cumbria.gov.uk email addresses. There are very few views from those who are not public sector partners. Previous remarks about the One Cumbria proposal were repeated, namely savings and the benefits of all services being in one authority.
36. Parish and Town Councils: Of those who answered, none of the proposals receive majority support from parish and town council respondents. The East West proposal was seen to map to common issues of employment, economy and transport. One peripheral parish saw no improvement to situation of: ‘...all services/investment currently stops at Whitehaven...’ Benefits were seen to be to Allerdale and Copeland and not others. Implementation was considered costly, with no taxpayer savings. The Bay proposal was seen to build on well-established connections, reflecting residence of 96% of the working population and building on the Morecambe Bay Partnership. Respondents thought it would enable a synergy around green technology to address climate change, and give a fair population distribution. Some felt the proposal reflects differences between north and south economies and maintains links between ‘...centres of gravity...’. However, The Bay proposal was also perceived to favour the south districts and be scant on the rest of Cumbria: ‘...rejected as a hinterland.’ Whilst introducing an authority from outside the County, it nevertheless retains duplication of services. The proposal lacked substance on National Parks and tourism. The North South proposal prompted a fear of increased parish workload as a result; where services are devolved, these need adequate resource support. It was unlikely to be supported in Copeland or Eden: ‘...no natural or social logic’. It was considered not to make savings, nor consider geographies, travel to work or transport infrastructure. It does not reconcile nuclear industry with tourism. However, for one parish it was considered the ‘least worst option’. The One Cumbria proposal (with an elected mayor) was seen as having the potential to promote an identity for Cumbria, with one voice, acting as a vehicle in the levelling up agenda and attracting greater funding. It was deemed the likeliest to drive savings. However, other respondents felt the area was too large and topography too challenging to efficiently deliver services to the different cultures and economies. Other concerns included the proposed regional boards being likely to lead to confusion regarding boundaries and responsibilities, and power being concentrated in Carlisle, leading to rural, isolated communities being overlooked. The nuclear industry’s workforce size would lead to dominance in employment issues. Heversham feared a more distant, less democratically connected authority, and Keswick a loss of location. Many still identify more with Cumberland, Westmorland and Lancashire, than Cumbria, and support for the single unitary varies across the County.
37. Local Government Organisation – Other: Of those that answered, the only proposal to receive support from other local government organisation respondents was One Cumbria with 63%: because it would make services easier to access and less

confusing for residents, and ensure more decisions are taken closer to communities.

38.Police: The two police respondents did not support the Bay proposal and there were mixed view in relation to the other proposals.

39.Fire: Fire respondents opposed the Bay proposal. Two out of three respondents supported the One Cumbria proposal and two of three respondents opposed the East West and North South proposals.

40.Other: There was a slightly greater answer rate for this question compared to others. The only proposal not to receive support was East West. The greatest support was for The Bay proposal (41%). The Bays proposal was supported by some respondents due to the already defined NHS boundaries and the work done locally. Common history and economic character were also deemed as important.

**Question 5:** Do the unitary councils proposed by the councils represent a credible geography?

41.Residents: Residents thought that The Bay and One Cumbria proposal were a credible geography but not the East West proposal, nor the North South. Residents who supported The Bay proposal felt that it represented a credible geography due to historic identity and having good transport and economic connectivity. Those who opposed it cited the areas being too geographically small. In relation to One Cumbria, residents in favour of the proposal felt it supported historic identity and that the population of two authorities would be too small. Residents who did not support it felt that the area of the single unitary was too big geographically and too rural for a single authority. For both the East West and North South proposals, residents who supported them thought the geography was credible due to good transport connectivity and a single unitary being too large an area. However, those who opposed them referenced the proposed areas being too geographically small.

42.Business Bodies: Business respondents felt that the East West and The Bay proposals had the most credible geographies at 38% and 48% respectively. They did not think that the North South or One Cumbria proposals had credible geographies (24% and 29%). Support for the East West proposal was largely due to it restoring Cumberland and Westmorland, and alignment to geographic and transport routes. The Bay received support due to geographic factors, as South Cumbria looks south. Respondents felt travel to Carlisle took long and that the proposal is already an established region for health and areas already work together to enhance the local economy. It is a functional economic area as 96% of residents work in the area.

43.Principal councils: The only proposal that principal councils thought represented a credible geography was One Cumbria (60%); however, the same caveat of those who have self-identified applies. One Cumbria was also the only proposal that received many comments; these were mostly about all services being delivered from one authority.

44. Parish and Town Councils: The majority of parish and town council respondents did not respond to any proposal. For those that did, the North South and East West proposals have very similar figures for those thinking they were or were not a credible geography. 35% of respondents believed The Bay to be a credible geography, while 28% believed One Cumbria to be so. The East West proposal was seen as the most similar in economic and social geography and to have historic ties. It was favoured by hospital locations. It recognises differences between an 'industrial west' and 'tourist east' and had a good population balance. It follows infrastructure and travel to work patterns. However it was also felt that Eden looks north: this would be alien to Eden. Similarly, Heversham is oriented south. The proposal would need local offices for Armathwaite, distant from Barrow and would '...create an area of run down towns and neglected countryside'. The proposal did not take account of road and rail links and cultural differences and was divisive to the Cumbria economy as a whole. The Bay area follows natural divides and has '...clear geographic unity as it is separated by mountains from the rest of Cumbria'. The majority of residents work within the area and it reflects existing transport links. Connectivity to the rest of Cumbria is vulnerable to bad weather. However it was perceived as 'nostalgic' to times when natural barriers had greater influence; improvements to infrastructure and IT make these meaningless. The proposal was considered not to benefit Cumbria as a whole. North South '...reflect[s] natural and historic alignments most accurately', with a recognition that Eden orients towards Carlisle. It reflects road network. There was support from several for a north-south arrangement in principle. However others saw 'No logic'; 'Populations do not share a common social or economic geography' and there is a lack of cultural connections. The proposal only makes sense for the northern authority; remote from the South West of the County. One Cumbria had history on its side and existing transport points to retention of the existing County boundary. The National Park will be within a single authority. However, the county was considered to be too large and diverse. A single unitary would be huge and '...an incredible geography.' Existence of districts has hitherto beneficially mitigated effects of north of the County looking to the North East and Scotland, the south to Lancashire and Greater Manchester.
45. Local Government Organisation – Other: The majority of other local government respondents only responded to the One Cumbria proposal, which saw 58% respond positively to it being a credible geography. Of the two unitary proposals, a minority responded; the only one that received a positive majority for credible geography was the East West proposal with 26%.
46. Police: Police respondents did not respond to this question for the North South or East West proposals. One respondent thought One Cumbria had a credible geography and one respondent thought The Bay did not have a credible geography
47. Fire: Fire respondents were split on the East West proposal. Two out of three respondents thought that both The Bay and North South proposals did not present a credible geography and two of three thought that the One Cumbria proposal was a credible geography.

**Question 6:** Do you have any other comments with regards to the proposed reorganisation of local government in each area?

- 48.Residents: Resident respondents used this opportunity to reinforce their answers to previous questions and their support for their preferred proposal. Some residents expressed their concerns about undertaking local government reorganisation at this time, and some stated their preference for the status quo to remain.
- 49.Business Bodies: No common theme emerged from this sector, but the East West proposal was described as able to focus more consistently and support commercial activities in the region. The Bay proposal was seen as an opportunity: “The economies of towns like Barrow and Ulverston (who will soon see Glaxo close its factory) are both high-skilled and fragile. Connecting these centres to the research excellence of Lancaster University and to common businesses in the Lancaster region will help present a dynamic economic offer.” Recent joint working by the councils concerned was observed to add credibility to the proposal.
- 50.Education: Education sector respondents had little to say on the East West proposal; there was a concern that the Bay proposal was not sensibly named; North South was considered by one to be unifying for councils; One Cumbria by another to unify services.
- 51.Principal councils: Comments were predominantly supportive of One Cumbria: e.g. “Cumbria requires a one council approach - A disjointed multi local authority approach is not an efficient way to reorganise for a strong Cumbria.” One respondent however considered there was: “Not enough information to make a decision”
- 52.Parishes and Town Councils: The following were the principle comments made by the parish and town councils. It was suggested that the roles of parish councils and the Lake District National Park Authority were unclear in the East West proposal. It was also suggested that this proposals favoured Allerdale and Copeland over other parts of the area. Comments highlighted significant differences between needs of coastal industrial, and inland agriculture and hospitality; populations would be smaller; value won't be delivered; and insufficient evidence of financial gains. There was a need to fit with NHS boundaries. However, East West's similarity to former Cumberland made sense. The Bay was considered already a functional economic area, with a shared cultural heritage. Geography and fit with health boundaries were in its favour and it builds on and fits well with existing partnerships, e.g. Bay Prosperity and Resilience Strategy signals future collaboration on economy. ‘...a natural progression.’ One parish saw potential for Lancaster improving other districts' services and perceived strong local support. However the proposal did not properly consider arrangements for the rest of Cumbria. Cross county boundary issues would make this prohibitively difficult to implement. North South was contrasted favourably with the Bay proposal for those at the opposite periphery to Lancaster. In principle, any two unitary model will not deliver savings. However, it cuts across existing interests and affinities. For One Cumbria, ‘The mountainous interior...is a hinderance to communications... need improvement to digital services in rural area...’ Local hubs would be required. Beneficially, the proposal includes greater support and empowerment for parishes. Only the County proposal sets out



implications and future role for parish councils. However, the sheer size of the county makes centralised service delivery and organisation of hub(s) challenging. Removing district councils increases the focus on parishes at the local level: they will need resource and capacity.

53. Local Government Organisation – Other: There was support for change in principle among other local government organisations, with inefficiency, duplication, bureaucracy and a diffusion of accountability across authorities cited. However dangers were perceived in moving to smaller unitaries, with concerns for capacity of smaller departments delivering services for vulnerable people and for flexibility of delivery as a whole in smaller workforces. Two respondents were disappointed that Lancashire was not included in this round.

54. Other: The remaining, uncategorised respondents offered diverse views. For one, there was scepticism that results of any proposal might be delivered and a stronger position sought on environmental considerations, with the Bay strongest in this regard. Third sector organisations were feared to be at threat of any unitarisation as funding from councils becomes rationalised. There was a specific concern about the fate of archiving services in any two unitary option, which would have the effect of splitting those archives and delivering a poorer public service. Copeland’s position as “UK centre of excellence for nuclear energy [...] pivotal in the government’s ten-point plan for a green industrial revolution” was emphasised, though not in context of a preferred proposal. A separate comment, however described South Lakeland and Eden as posing “a real threat to the nuclear industry in Cumbria and to other largescale economy-boosting projects.”; and that therefore Copeland, Allerdale and Carlisle should form a unitary. A comment in favour of two unitaries did not identify a specific proposal and saw some services as nevertheless needing strategic delivery across the County, such as by an authority with an elected Mayor.

## *Responses to proposals for North Yorkshire*

55. The 4,297 responses for North Yorkshire were from the following respondents:

Resident living in area affected	3,606
Resident not living in area affected	150
Business organisation	65
Education organisation	12
Local Government organisation - principal council	240
Local Government organisation - parish/town council	72
Local Government organisation - other	31
Police organisation	1
Fire organisation	1
Health organisation	19
Other	100

56. Below is set out a summary of views expressed by each category of respondents on each of the 6 questions in the consultation – see paragraph 5 above.

**Question 1:** Is the councils' proposal likely to improve local government and service delivery across each area? Specifically, is it likely to improve council services, give greater value for money, generate savings, provide stronger strategic and local leadership, and create more sustainable structures?

57. Residents: The majority of residents living in the area agree that the County proposal is likely to improve local government and service delivery, with 52% answering yes to this question. However, only 27% of residents living in the area agree that the East-West proposal would improve local government and service delivery. Those respondents in this category who thought that the single unitary proposal would improve local government and service delivery generally cited reasons such as: generate savings, greater value for money, more efficient and sustainable, the strength of the existing council services, maintains an effective status quo, and reduces duplication. Those respondents in this category who thought that the East-West proposal would improve local government and service delivery generally cited reasons such as: more local organisation, better access to services, more local democracy, generate savings, and better value for money.
58. Business Bodies: 48% of business organisations thought that the single unitary proposal would be likely to improve local government and service delivery, with only 28% of business organisations believing that the East-West proposal would improve local government and service delivery. Those respondents in this category who thought that the single unitary proposal would improve local government and service delivery generally cited reasons such as: clearer communication of service and delivery, economies of scale, identity, 'clout' when bidding for national funds, more accountable, minimal disruption, one strategic vision, and stronger leadership. Those respondents in this category who thought that the East-West proposal would improve local government and service delivery generally cited reasons such as: local support and local knowledge, savings and efficiencies, balanced population, local accountability, rational division of resource, and population.
59. Principal councils: Apart from the councils themselves, the respondents in this category were primarily employees or councillors of North Yorkshire councils. 79% of these respondents thought the Single Unitary proposal would be likely to improve local government and service delivery across the area, whilst only 18% thought the East-West proposal would. Those respondents supporting the Single Unitary option cited reasons such as: savings and value for money, efficiency, the county council's excellent existing service delivery, stronger strategic and local leadership, reduce duplication, integrated and streamlined working, and easier for the public. Those respondents supporting the East-West option cited reasons such as: more localised services, less duplication, and savings.
60. Parishes and Town Councils: Parish and town councils are fairly equally split on their response to this question – with 39% answering yes for the East-West proposal and 31% answering yes to the Single Unity proposal. Those parish and

town councils who thought that the East-West proposal would be likely to improve local government and service delivery cited reasons such as: more localised services – small enough to remain in touch with local issues and better local accountability. Those parish and town councils who thought that the Single Unitary proposal would be likely to improve local government and service delivery cited reasons such as: greater savings and value for money, the existing expertise of the county council, and a reduction in duplication.

61. Local Government Organisation – Other (including councillors): 77% of respondents in this category also thought that the single unitary proposal is more likely to improve local government and service delivery across the area, whilst only 26% thought the East-West proposal would. Those respondents in this category who thought that the single unitary proposal would improve local government and service delivery generally cited reasons such as: savings, keeping in place existing strong county services, reducing confusion, and stronger strategic leadership. Those respondents in this category who thought that the East-West proposal would improve local government and service delivery generally cited reasons such as: the size and geographical area looks better, and that York council's services would run on a greater area.

62. Public Service Partners: A large proportion of health organisations think that the single unitary proposal will improve local government and service delivery, with 63% answering yes to the County proposal. Conversely, none of the health organisations thought that the East-West proposal would improve local government and service delivery. The overwhelming majority of educational organisations agreed that the single unitary proposal is likely to improve local government and service delivery, with 75% answering yes to this question. Conversely, only 8% of educational organisations agreed that the East-West proposal would be likely to improve local government and service delivery. Police and fire organisations thought that both proposals would improve local government and service delivery.

63. Other: 52% of 'other' respondents think that the County proposal is likely to improve local government and service delivery, whereas only 23% think this about the East-West model. Those respondents in this category who thought that the single unitary proposal would improve local government and service delivery generally cited reasons such as: reducing duplication, savings and efficiencies, excellent existing services, economies of scale, and consistency of service. Those respondents in this category who thought that the East-West proposal would improve local government and service delivery generally cited reasons such as: North Yorkshire is too large an area to have a single body, spreading good practice on children's services to York, and more local knowledge.

**Question 2:** Where it is proposed that services will be delivered on a different geographic footprint to currently, or through some form of joint arrangements is this likely to improve those services? Such services may for example be children's services, waste collection and disposal, adult health and social care, planning, and transport.

64. Residents: 47% of residents living in affected areas think the single unitary proposal is more likely to improve services where they are delivered over a different

geographic footprint, whereas only 25% of these residents think this is the case for the East-West model.

65. Business Bodies: Business organisations are also fairly equally split, with 38% thinking that services delivered on a different geographical footprint will be improved with the single unitary model and 29% with the East-West model.
66. Principal councils: Overall, the majority of respondents think that the single unitary proposal will be more likely to improve services than the East-West proposal – 69% of respondents think that where services are delivered over a different geographic footprint they will be improved, whereas only 20% of respondents thought that this would be the case with the East-West proposal.
67. Parishes and Town Councils: The responses from parish and town councils were fairly equal with similar numbers across both proposals thinking that services would be improved across a different geographic footprint (33% for the East-West proposal, and 29% for the County proposal).
68. Local Government Organisation – Other (including councillors): The vast majority of respondents in this category (71%) think that where services are delivered across a different geographic footprint they will be improved under the single unitary proposal but not the East-West proposal.
69. Public Service Partners: The general response from public sector partners is to agree that the single unitary proposal is likely to improve services where they are delivered over a different geographic footprint but that this isn't the case for the East-West proposal.
70. Other: 44% of 'other' respondents think that the single unitary proposal is likely to improve local government and service delivery, whereas only 21% think this about the East-West model.

The reasons cited in the comments for all respondents were similar to those in question 1.

**Question 3:** Is the councils' proposal also likely to impact local public services delivered by others, such as police, fire and rescue, and health services?

71. Residents: Those respondents that thought the East-West model would impact local public services cited reasons such as: poorer partnerships and boundary alignment, and creates duplication. Those respondents that thought that the single unitary model would impact local public services cited reasons such as: better partnership and boundary alignment.
72. Business Bodies: Some respondents that thought the East-West model would impact local public services negatively and cited reasons such as breaking up effective existing services and others thought the impact would be positive reducing confusion of a two-tier system. Some respondents thought that the single unitary model would impact local public services positively, and others negatively. Reasons cited included: single unitary simpler and easier, strengthening what is already in place, and that two unitaries will provide better local services.

- 73.Principal councils: Those respondents that thought the East-West model would impact local public services generally though the impact would be negative, with some citing greater disruption, duplication and complication. Those respondents that thought that the single unitary model would impact local public services generally thought that the impact would be positive, citing greater partnership working and collaborative relationships, amongst other reasons.
- 74.Parishes and Town Councils: Those respondents that thought the East-West model would impact local public services cited mixed reasons, with some viewing it as a positive impact and others as a negative impact. Some thought two unitaries over the area would be more responsive to local need; others thought it would add complexity and that a single point of contact would be better. Those respondents that thought that the single unitary model would impact local public services were also mixed – some viewing it positively and others as a negative impact. Reasons such as local responsiveness, less duplication, and overstretched services were cited.
- 75.Public Service Partners: Health organisations thought the impact would be positive for the single unitary. Reasons cited included that the NHS increasingly works in close partnership with North Yorkshire County Council and the City of York Council. This has created opportunities to develop a more integrated health and care offer for citizens. The proposed NHS legislative proposals are aligned with this, and the intention within the current collaborative arrangements is to build on this. Education organisations generally cited positive impact from the single unitary proposal, citing reasons such as continuity of existing partnership arrangements. North Yorkshire Police note that their service is coterminous with the North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council areas in relation to Safeguarding Boards, Adult and Children’s Services, Community Safety Partnerships, Health and Wellbeing Boards, Directors of Public Health and Multi Agency Hub arrangements. These relationships, working practices and structures are well established and effective. Therefore, Police respondents felt any disbanding of the current arrangements could be detrimental to the effective delivery of policing services during any transition period. The Fire and Rescue Service said that while the day-to-day front line operations of fire and rescue service delivery would be largely unaffected, the simpler landscape would aid information sharing, joint strategy development and could promote shared front-line service delivery by shared members of staff. They felt that existing strong relationships with senior leaders in the County Council and City of York Council would benefit the fire and rescue service and offers great confidence in future partnership working.
- 76.Other: Those respondents that thought the East-West model would impact local public services cited reasons such as: disruption, boundary and alignment issues. Those respondents that thought that the single unitary model would impact local public services cited reasons such as: generally impact in a positive way as better alignment with existing public sector partners.

**Question 4:** Do you support the proposal from the councils?

77. Residents: The majority of residents support the County proposal – with 53% of residents living in the area supporting the County proposal and only 27% of these residents supporting the East-West model. Respondents who support the single unitary proposal cite reasons such as: it would generate savings, be more efficient, value for money, simpler structures, and would maintain an effective status quo. Respondents who support the East-West proposal cite reasons such as: better local organisation and access to services, and more local democracy. Some respondents thought that a single unitary across the area would be too big, with parts of the County area too rural and remote from other parts.
78. Business Bodies: The response from businesses was more balanced, with 52% supporting the single unitary proposal and 45% supporting the East-West model. Respondents who support the single unitary proposal cite reasons such as: more efficient, reduces duplication and red tape, brand and identity, least disruption to services, economies of scale, and existing county services are very good. Respondents who support the East-West proposal cite reasons such as: County council too remote, more equitable model, closer to needs of communities, balanced populations, reflects needs of diverse communities.
79. Principal councils: A large majority of respondents support the single unitary proposal over the East-West model – with 80% supporting the County proposal and only 20% supporting the East-West model. Respondents who support the single unitary proposal cite reasons such as: identity, builds on county's strong services, less disruption, generating savings, strong leadership, and less confusion for residents. Respondents who support the East-West proposal cite reasons such as: more equally sized, better for local democracy, and reflects diverse communities.
80. Parishes and Town Councils: The support from parishes and town councils was generally in favour of the East-West model, with only 39% supporting the single unitary proposal and 50% supporting the East-West model. Respondents who support the single unitary proposal cite reasons such as: trust in existing county services, greater efficiency and value for money, plans for local accountability, and local identity. Respondents who support the East-West proposal cite reasons such as: county is remote and out of touch with needs of communities, better local accountability, better balanced populations, one council is too large, local knowledge and representation lost, and decision making kept close to communities.
81. Local Government Organisation – Other (including councillors): The majority of these respondents (77%) support the single unitary proposal. Respondents who support the single unitary proposal cite reasons such as: less disruption, better decision making, economies of scale, and one stronger voice. Respondents who support the East-West proposal cite reasons such as: City of York is poor performing so will benefit, and a single unitary would be too remote.
82. Public Service Partners: The response from public sector partners – educational, health, police and fire organisations - is generally in favour of the single unitary proposal, with 68% of respondents from health organisations and 75% of respondents from educational organisations supporting the County model. The police and fire organisations support the single unitary model over the East-West

model. In support of the single unitary proposal, educational organisations cited reasons such as: it will build on existing successful services, removes duplication, and the existing expertise of county. In support of the single unitary proposal, health organisations cited reasons such as: good alignment with health and other key partners; consistent with new Integrated Care System (ICS) structures for Humber Coast and Vale; facilitate better coordination of core services such as public health and social care; enables the smoothest transition to unitary local government with the least disruption at this critical time; strengthen our joint working on the wider societal and economic impact of the pandemic particularly in relation to inequalities; supporting the vulnerable; and ensuring health and wellbeing is at the heart of the recovery. North Yorkshire Police considered that the single unitary proposal would build upon the existing structures, relationships and working practices that are already in place, and therefore generate minimal disruption to the day-to-day delivery of policing services. They felt it creates an opportunity to build upon an already effective, established and functioning model, reduce duplication and costs, and drive benefit from economies of scale. The Fire and Rescue Service considered that the single unitary proposal provides the strongest approach to generating the benefits of single tier local authority governance while maximising existing partnership arrangements and relationships, and minimising the disruption that change creates.

**83. Other Responses:** in the 'other' category were also generally supportive of the County proposal over the East-West proposal. Respondents who support the single unitary proposal cite reasons such as: remove duplication, easier for residents and businesses, cost and savings, retains brand and identity, less disruption, and improve local service delivery. Respondents who support the East-West proposal cite reasons such as: less remote, makes more geographic sense, the single unitary would be too big and too remote, struggle to develop homes in York and lack of York's Local Plan, and better for local decision making.

**Question 5:** Do the unitary councils proposed by the councils represent a credible geography?

**84. Residents:** Similarly, the majority of resident respondents living in the area – 53% - think that the County proposal represents a credible geography, whereas only 32% think that the East-West proposal is a credible geography. Those respondents who thought that the single unitary proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: a sense of historic identity, and that similar sized authorities exist. Those respondents who thought that the East-West proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: that a single unitary would be too big an area, leaving parts of the area remote from others.

**85. Business Bodies:** Business organisations were fairly equally balanced in their responses to this question, with fairly equal numbers thinking that each proposal does and doesn't represent a credible geography. Those respondents who thought that the single unitary proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: identity, brand, existing services already good, and easier for people to understand. Those respondents who thought that the East-West proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: balanced populations, follows the way people live, work and travel, optimum size, establishes realistic

transport infrastructure, and big enough to ensure quality of services can be maintained.

86. Principal councils: The majority of respondents (76%) under this category thought that the single unitary proposal represents a credible geography, with only 26% agreeing that the East-West model represents a credible geography. Those respondents who thought that the single unitary proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: brand, identity, existing infrastructure and knowledge, simpler for residents, better bargaining power, and strong existing services. Those respondents who thought that the East-West proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: two equally sized councils, single unitary would be too big and unwieldy, geography makes sense, and optimum size.
87. Parishes and Town Councils: The responses from parish and town councils was generally in favour of the East-West model representing a credible geography with 40% agreeing, against only 33% of parish and town councils regarding the County proposal as a credible geography. Those respondents who thought that the single unitary proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: identity and brand, strong voice, and least disruption. Those respondents who thought that the East-West proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: loss of identity, transport links - ties in with the road network, and similar geographic size.
88. Local Government Organisation – Other (including councillors): The vast majority of respondents in this category thought that the County proposal represented a credible geography with 74% answering yes, against only 26% agreeing that the East-West model represents a credible geography. Those respondents who thought that the single unitary proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: more creditable, less disruption, more influence, more inward investment, consistent services, manageable, and effective. Those respondents who thought that the East-West proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: large but small enough to manage, balanced split geographically and population, and York's council services run on a larger scale.
89. Public Service Partners: Overall, a far greater proportion of public service partners think that the County proposal represents a credible geography but the East-West proposal does not. Health organisations thought the geography of the East-West proposal was not credible because: it will increase inequalities with greater affluent communities on the west compared to the east, harder for residents to understand, and loses North Yorkshire brand. They thought the geography of the single unitary proposal was credible because the unitary council proposed will be coterminous with the way in which the NHS is organised across North Yorkshire and York, which allows for continued development of integrated working without the need to change current service models to respond to artificial boundaries that the other option on the table would require, and it avoids economic and social inequalities. Most education organisations did not agree that the East-West proposal is a credible geography for reasons such as that: the culture and heritage of York would be undermined, and there is an uneven distribution of demographics. Reasons they supported the geography of the single unitary model included that it is already evident that it works, and that identity of York would be maintained. The Fire and



Rescue Service considered that the geography of each proposed local authority area in the East-West proposal would be of a manageable size and it maintains coterminous boundaries with those of North Yorkshire Police. On the single unitary proposal, the the Fire and Rescue Service thought that, whilst there is a significant difference in the geographical size of the City of York and North Yorkshire County Council areas, it would maintain coterminous boundaries with the fire and rescue service. The North Yorkshire Police considered that the geography of each East-West proposed local authority area would be of a manageable size and it maintains coterminous boundaries with those of North Yorkshire Police. On the single unitary authority, the North Yorkshire Police considered that proposed geographical boundaries are consistent with their boundaries. Whilst this would create one large and one relatively small unitary authority, the two entities already exist and operate effectively within this geography now, and have a proven track record of delivery across that geography.

90.Other: Overall the majority of responses in the ‘other’ category support the geography of the County model, with 46% of respondents thinking that the County proposal is a credible geography, whereas only 24% think that the East-West model is a credible geography. Those respondents who thought that the single unitary proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: familiar geography, and already provides 80% of services. Those respondents who thought that the East-West proposal represents a credible geography cited reasons such as: A1/East Coast railway, recognise local similarities and differences, and more workable than a larger unitary.

**Question 6:** Do you have any other comments with regards to the proposed reorganisation of local government in each area?

91.General comments received in response to this question included:

- That during a pandemic is not the right time to restructure
- York should be left alone
- Many of the responses reiterate why they prefer either proposal or have no further comments

## *Responses to proposals for Somerset*

92.The 5,498 responses for Somerset were from the following respondents:

Resident living in area affected	5,167
Resident not living in area affected	43
Business organisation	32
Education organisation	1
Local Government organisation - principal council	34
Local Government organisation - parish/town council	54
Local Government organisation - other	8
Police organisation	2
Fire organisation	0

Health organisation	3
Other	154

93. The Somerset district councils distributed a leaflet to residents about the consultation, setting out reasons why residents should support the two unitary proposal and not support the single unitary proposal. The leaflet included a response form for submission to the department; the form enabled responders to select a preferred option and tick up to four preselected reasons for their choice. The four choices were: 'It would create one large council for the county'; 'It will provide a strong voice with government'; 'It will give greater value for money in the long run'; and 'It best reflects the geography of Somerset'. 1,314 of these response forms were received in hard copy. Names were not included on these response forms which also did not indicate whether respondents were residents of Somerset (living in the area affected).
94. These forms are considered to be a campaign and in the paragraphs below the responses are identified separately from the analysis of responses to the consultation questions where they are relevant to a consultation question.
95. Below is set out a summary of views expressed by each category of respondents on each of the 6 questions in the consultation – see paragraph 5 above.

**Question 1:** Is the councils' proposal likely to improve local government and service delivery across each area? Specifically, is it likely to improve council services, give greater value for money, generate savings, provide stronger strategic and local leadership, and create more sustainable structures?

96. Residents: 57% of resident respondents who live in the area and 44% of resident respondents who do not thought the two unitary option would improve services, compared to 35% and 44% respectively for the single unitary proposal. Those in favour of the two unitary proposal thought it would provide more local organisations with better access to services whilst being more efficient than the current two tier system and generate savings. Conversely, they thought that the single unitary authority would be too remote and local democracy diminished given the large area size of the county, and cited concerns about the current county council services. Some supported the east / west split. Residents in favour of the single unitary proposal thought that it would lead to simplified structures with clearer leadership and be the most efficient outcome, generating savings and reducing duplication. In contrast, they felt the two unitary option would complicate structures, create duplication, not provide value for money and expressed concerns about the disaggregation of services currently provided by the county council.
97. Business Bodies: 59% of business respondents agreed the single unitary proposal would improve services, with only 28% of business respondents thinking the two unitary proposal would. Businesses in favour of the two unitary option thought the proposal would ensure authorities recognise local needs whilst making financial savings and reducing duplication. They had concerns that the single unitary proposal would create too large and diverse an authority. Businesses in favour of

the single unitary proposal thought it would reduce duplication, be more efficient and have better value for money. They thought it would improve services, with specific reference to planning and economic development functions, and would have clearer leadership, leading to a stronger voice for Somerset and greater influence with regional and national stakeholders. They welcomed the proposals to devolve more to town and parish councils. Conversely, they thought the two unitary proposal would not alleviate current duplication, would have unclear lines of responsibility (with specific reference to shared back office and children's services), and would not provide value for money or generate savings.

98. Principal councils:

*Councils submitting proposals:*

Unsurprisingly, the Somerset councils respectively thought their own proposal would improve local government and service delivery, and the other proposal would not. Somerset County Council (who proposed the single unitary option) thought the two unitary proposal would cause duplication, and limit service transformation and influence with regional and national stakeholders. Concerns were cited about the disaggregation of services (specifically children's, adult health and social care, public health, and place-based services), the amount of resource required to support 100 elected members per authority and the financial sustainability of the proposed west authority. Somerset West and Taunton, South Somerset, Sedgemoor, and Mendip District Councils (henceforth referred to as Somerset district councils) - who proposed the two unitary option - thought the single unitary proposal would not improve service delivery due to a lack of ambition and strategy to address current service challenges (specifically children's, adult social care and SEND), arguing a "fresh start" is needed. The districts raised concerns about the lack of a detailed reform agenda, the proposed reduced number of elected members, the proposed Local Community Networks (LCNs), and the financial sustainability of the proposed authority.

*Neighbouring councils:*

Both respondents were clear that unitarisation improves services from their own experiences.

*Other principal council responses:*

These responses were from a mixture of employees and members of the five Somerset councils; their responses are in line with the views of council they work for or of which they are a member.

99. Parishes and Town Councils: 50% of responses from town and parish councils and councillors agreed that the two unitary proposal would improve services and only 22% thought this would be the case with the single unitary. Those in favour of the two unitary option thought this would be more local and responsive, be better for town and parish councils, and thought splitting the area was a good idea. In contrast, they thought the single unitary would be too big and remote, that the two parts of Somerset are too different for a single council and expressed dissatisfaction with county council services and financial management. Some also had concerns about the devolution to town and parish councils in this proposal. Respondents who supported the single unitary thought this would be more efficient, opposed splitting

the area into two, considered county council services to be good, and welcomed the proposals to devolve more to town and parish councils.

100. Public Service Partners: 63% of public service respondents (including health, police and transport) thought the single unitary proposal would bring greater improvement in services than the two unitary option. Benefits cited included simplified structures with clearer leadership, reduction in duplication, a stronger voice for Somerset giving greater influence with regional and national stakeholders, and alignment with health service boundaries. Concerns were raised about the potential negative impact on services of creating an alternative delivery model for children's services and the disaggregation of adult social care. The education organisation respondent was in favour of the two unitary proposal as it felt it would be more efficient, sustainable and cognisant of local needs than the one unitary and would bring needed changes to children's services.
101. Other (excluding Voluntary and Community Sector): This group includes a mixture of local organisations such as churches, landscape bodies and chambers of commerce and email responses where the respondent type did not correspond to the list in the consultation. The majority of responses consisted of very short emails indicating support for one or other of the options; further analysis is not possible. A number of the organisations did not respond to the consultation questions but took the opportunity to set out how they would like a unitary council to work with them.
102. Voluntary and Community Sector (part of 'Other' respondents): In total, there were 15 responses from voluntary and community sector (VCS) representative (part of the 'Other' respondents). Most VCS respondents (53%) agreed the two unitary option would improve services. They thought it would allow local government to respond to local needs better, create a better relationship with communities, and highlighted good existing district council services and partnership working. In contrast, they felt that the single unitary option would be too large and detached from local communities, and cited concerns about existing county council services. VCS respondents who supported the single unitary option (20%) thought it would improve services through better value for money, simplified structures with clearer leadership and alignment with existing services already provided on a county footprint. Conversely, they thought the two unitary option would disrupt services and not provide value for money.
103. Campaign responses: From the campaign response forms received, 61% of the 994 respondents supporting the two unitary proposal ticked the box to agree that the proposal 'will give greater value for money in the long run' and 80% of the 291 responses supporting the single unitary proposal ticked this box. 7% of the 994 respondents supporting the two unitary selected the 'it will provide a strong voice with government' box, compared to 81% of the 291 respondents supporting the single unitary proposal. For the 'it would create one large council for the county' box, 89% of 291 respondents supporting the single unitary proposal selected it; 4% of the 994 respondents supporting the two unitary proposal selected it.

**Question 2:** Where it is proposed that services will be delivered on a different geographic footprint to currently, or through some form of joint arrangements is this likely to improve those services? Such services may for example be children's services, waste collection and disposal, adult health and social care, planning, and transport.

104.Residents: 54% of resident respondents who live in the area and 47% of resident respondents who do not thought the changes in the footprint of services would improve those services with the two unitary proposal, compared to 35% and 44% respectively for the single unitary proposal. Residents in favour of the two unitary proposal cited benefits of services being provided by more local organisations, feeling this would be better tailored to local needs, create better access, be more efficient and generate saving. They raised concerns that a single authority would be too remote to take into account local needs, and cited concerns about the current county council services. Those who supported the single unitary proposal thought that services would be improved by being more consistent across the county due to simplified structures, be more efficient and provide better value for money. They felt that the single unitary maintain existing services was a positive, and raised concerns about the disaggregation of services under the two unitary proposal. Again, they stated the two unitary proposal would complicate structures and be less efficient.

105.Business Bodies: The majority of business respondents (56%) thought that the changes in the footprint of services would improve those services with the single unitary proposal, with only 28% of businesses thinking it would with the two unitary proposal. Businesses in favour of the two unitary proposal stated that services would be more efficient and be able to respond effectively to local needs, and cited concerns about the current county council's service provision. Businesses in favour of the single unitary proposal said the that services would be improved by being more consistent across the county, more efficient and would provide better value for money. They expressed concern about the two unitary proposal breaking up existing services and creating unclear lines of responsibility.

106.Principal councils:

*Councils submitting proposals*

Somerset County Council thought that the changes in the footprint of services would not improve services with the two unitary proposal. They argued that scale is important to service delivery, and that the proposed two unitary authorities would have too small a scale, causing issues of relying on small teams, challenges attracting and retaining talent and creating a greater risk of failure. The Somerset district councils thought that the changes in the footprint of services would not improve those services with the single unitary proposal. They argued that the proposal assumes service improvements from the collation of functions but does not provide evidence of how this will lead to service improvement, and does not set out plans for the new services currently delivered by district councils that it would take on (such as housing and planning). The district councils felt that one large council would mean vital local knowledge and contribution would be lost.

*Neighbouring councils*

Concerns were raised regarding the disaggregation of services and complex governance of the two unitary proposal.

*Other principal council responses*

These responses were from a mixture of employees and members of the five Somerset councils; their responses are in line with council they work for or of which they are a member.

107. Parishes and Town Councils: More town and parish council respondent thought that the changes in the footprint of services would improve those services with the two unitary proposal (44%) than the single unitary proposal (22%). Again, those supportive of the two unitary proposal cited the smaller and more local nature of the two unitaries as bringing service improvement. Some respondents were concerned about the disaggregation of adults' social care services with two unitaries and the complexity of the proposed arrangements, taking into account the alternative delivery model for children's services. Respondents who were supportive of the single unitary considered it would be a more efficient and effective arrangement.
108. Public Service Partners: 75% of public service partner respondents (including health, police and safeguarding) stated that the changes in the footprint of services would improve those services with the single unitary proposal. They thought that public health, adult social care, children's services and safeguarding should be provided on a county-footprint, aligning with the Integrated Care System (ICS) footprint. Health respondents welcomed the commitment to work with Primary Care Networks at a local level via the LCNs, suggesting the more explicit alignment of them would maximise the effectiveness of local engagement. Health and police respondents raised concerns about the two authority proposal having the potential to create two authorities with competing priorities for social care and community safety causing duplication and disparity in provision, and expressed concerns about the disaggregation of children's services and the governance of the proposed alternative delivery model. The education organisation respondent in favour of the two unitary proposal thought that services would be improved, and cited concerns about the current county council's service provision.
109. Other (excluding Voluntary and Community Sector): This group includes a mixture of local organisations such as churches, landscape bodies and chambers of commerce and email responses where the respondent type did not correspond to the list in the consultation. The majority of responses consisted of very short emails indicating support for one or other of the options; further analysis is not possible. A number of the organisations did not respond to the consultation questions but took the opportunity to set out how they would like a unitary council to work with them.
110. Voluntary and Community Sector (part of 'Other' respondents): More VCS respondents thought that the changes in the footprint of services would improve those services with the two unitary proposal than the single unitary proposal. Those who supported the two unitary proposal cited the smaller and more local nature of the two unitaries as bringing service improvement and raised concerns about existing county council services. Those in favour of the single unitary proposal

thought services would be improved by all being on a county footprint and were concerned about the disaggregation of services in the two unitary proposal.

**Question 3:** Is the councils' proposal also likely to impact local public services delivered by others, such as police, fire and rescue, and health services?

111. Residents: For both proposals, the majority of respondents thought there would be an impact on other services (53% two unitary and 46% one unitary). Residents who supported the two unitary proposal thought it would lead to better partnership working and reduced duplication. Those that supported the single unitary felt this would be positive due to better boundary alignment and a reduced number of authorities to deal with but thought the two unitary would be negative due to poorer boundary alignment and duplication of partners. For both proposals, those that thought there would not be any impact on other services cited that the existing boundaries of police, fire and rescue services stretch beyond Somerset and that the one unitary proposal aligns with health boundaries.

112. Business Bodies: For both proposals, the majority of respondents who thought there would be an impact on other services (38% two unitary and 28% one unitary) felt it would be positive as other services would have a reduced number of authorities to deal with. However, some raised concerns that there would be a negative impact from the two unitary proposal due to the dismantling of existing links with the county council. For both proposals, those that thought there would not be any impact on other services cited that the existing boundaries of police, fire and rescue services stretch beyond Somerset and that the one unitary proposal aligns with health boundaries.

113. Principal Councils:

*Councils submitting proposals*

The Somerset councils respectively thought their own proposal would have a positive impact on local public services delivered by others, and the other proposal would not. Somerset County Council thought it would be harder for public sector partners to work with two unitaries, rather than one, with specific reference to adult health and social care and the forthcoming ICS. They also expressed concerns that, to be effective, the two unitary proposal relies on political and operational cooperation, which are not certain going forward and could cause challenges for partners. Somerset district councils thought the lack of proposed changes impacting on local services delivered by other partners in the single unitary proposal was a missed opportunity, arguing that the authority's relationship with partners needs to be refreshed and existing strategies need a fresh impetus to be successfully delivered.

*Neighbouring councils*

Wiltshire Council considered that the two unitary proposal might complicate the relationship on shared transport initiatives, such as the second strategic route to the South West.

*Other principal council responses*

These responses were from a mixture of employees and members of the five Somerset councils; their responses are in line with council they work for or of which they are a member.

114. Parishes and Town Councils: For both proposals, respondents who thought that there would not be any impact on other services considered that the existing boundaries of police and fire services - stretching well beyond Somerset - meant that changes within Somerset alone would not have an impact on the services. For this question respondents considered the impact on town and parish councils and positive and negative responses reflected whether they thought the proposal would benefit their organisations.
115. Public Service Partners: For the single unitary proposal, the majority of public service partner respondents (63%) thought there would be an impact on other services and thought this would be positive. Police respondents felt a single unitary would simplify the number of partners and reporting lines, allowing for better coordination, enhanced collaboration and more effective joint working. Health respondents welcomed the simplification of structures and alignment with ICS boundaries, stating it would drive consistent services and good working relationships between bodies. They expressed concerns that the two unitary proposal would risk the benefits of integration that the ICS and its partnership between health and social care offers. The education organisation respondent in favour of the two unitary proposal thought that there would be a positive impact on other services from a more efficient structure and improved leadership.
116. Other (excluding Voluntary and Community Sector): This group includes a mixture of local organisations such as churches, landscape bodies and chambers of commerce and email responses where the respondent type did not correspond to the list in the consultation. The majority of responses consisted of very short emails indicating support for one or other of the options; further analysis is not possible. A number of the organisations did not respond to the consultation questions but took the opportunity to set out how they would like a unitary council to work with them.
117. Voluntary and Community Sector (part of 'Other' respondents): For both proposals, the majority of VCS respondents thought there would be an impact on other services (73% two unitary and 53% single unitary). For the single unitary proposal, they thought there would be a positive impact via better coordination with partners and alignment with health service boundaries, but considered the two unitary proposal detrimental due to minimising influence with partners and the lack of alignment with health. For the two unitary, they thought there would be benefits due to the authorities being more local. For both proposals, those that thought there would not be any impact on other services cited that the existing boundaries of police, fire and rescue services stretch beyond Somerset and that the one unitary proposal aligns with health boundaries.

**Question 4:** Do you support the proposal from the councils?

118. Residents: The majority of resident respondents – 58% who live in the area and 42% who do not – supported the two unitary proposal, compared to the one unitary



proposal - 34% who live in the area and 44% who do not. Residents who supported the two unitary proposal thought that the new authorities would be more accessible local organisations better able to respond to local needs whilst providing savings and efficiencies. They felt that Somerset is too big and rural an area for a single unitary authority, which would make services too remote and diminish local democracy, and raised concerns with existing county council services. Some residents expressed support for the east / west split. Residents in favour of the single unitary proposal thought it would provide a simplified, more efficient structure which would provide better value for money and be more sustainable. In contrast, they felt the two unitary proposal would complicate structures, be less efficient, provide poorer value for money, and expressed concerns about the disaggregation of services currently provided by the county council.

119. Business Bodies: The majority of business respondents - 72% - supported the one unitary proposal, compared to 25% who supported the two unitary proposal. As in previous questions, those supporting the one unitary proposal stated it would be more efficient, decrease duplication, give better value for money, and improve services (with a specific reference to economic development). They also felt it would provide better governance, a clearer strategy for Somerset, give the county greater influence with regional and national stakeholder, and streamline engagement with local authorities for businesses whilst supporting town and parish councils. Conversely, they felt the two unitary proposal would divide the county unnecessarily and provide less efficient services. Businesses who supported the two unitary proposal cited concerns about the county council's current services and the size of a single unitary authority.

120. Principal Councils:

*Councils submitting proposals*

The Somerset councils supported the proposals they have respectively submitted, and do not support the other proposal. However, all Somerset councils agreed that the current two-tier system of local government is unsustainable and that unitarisation is the way forward.

*Neighbouring councils*

Both neighbouring councils supported unitarisation in principle and were more supportive of the single unitary option.

*Other principal council responses*

These responses were from a mixture of employees and members of the five Somerset councils; their responses are in line with council they work for or of which they are a member.

121. Parishes and Town Councils: Far more town and parish council respondents (67%) supported the two unitary proposal than the single unitary proposal (22%). A key theme, as in question one, was that two unitaries would provide a more local, accessible and responsive service than a single unitary. This was also linked to support for splitting the area because of difference between the two parts of Somerset and travel difficulties between these areas. Those who supported the

single unitary considered it to be the more efficient option and were likely to oppose splitting the area in two.

122. Public Service Partners: 88% of public service partner respondents (including health, police, safeguarding and transport) supported the one unitary proposal more. They felt it would enhance the health, social care, safeguarding, community safety and transport offer. Other benefits referenced included simplified structures with clearer leadership, greater sustainability, a stronger voice for Somerset giving greater influence with regional and national stakeholders, and alignment with health service boundaries. However, most public service partner respondents stressed that they would work with either successful option and could see merits of both proposals. The education organisation respondent supported the two unitary proposal, stating that it was a good opportunity to reset the relationship between local people and local representatives.

123. Other (excluding Voluntary and Community Sector): This group includes a mixture of local organisations such as churches, landscape bodies and chambers of commerce and email responses where the respondent type did not correspond to the list in the consultation. The majority of responses consisted of very short emails indicating support for one or other of the options; further analysis is not possible. A number of the organisations did not respond to the consultation questions but took the opportunity to set out how they would like a unitary council to work with them.

124. Voluntary and Community Sector (part of 'Other' respondents): More VCS respondents (53%) supported the two unitary proposal. They stated that two unitaries would be able to respond to the needs of local communities more effectively and cited the district councils as currently engaging well locally. In contrast, they felt that a single unitary would be too large and remote, and expressed concern with existing county council services. VCS respondents who supported the single unitary proposal (33%) thought it would provide a stronger voice for Somerset giving greater influence, be more efficient, more stable, and give better value for money. They also stated that the county should be kept as a unified area for the benefit of services and did not see any difference between the east and west.

125. Campaign responses: 76% of the campaign response forms received were in support of the two unitary proposal; 22% supported the single unitary, and 2% supported both proposals.

**Question 5:** Do the unitary councils proposed by the councils represent a credible geography?

126. Residents: The majority of resident respondents – 60% who live in the area and 51% who do not – thought the two unitary proposal represented a credible geography. The reasons stated included that they agreed with the east / west split and that the area of the single unitary was too big geographically and too rural for a single authority. 38% of resident respondents who live in the area and 44% who do not thought the single unitary proposal represented a credible geography. Reasons included that it retained the current county footprint and that the area of current

Somerset was too small to be divided into two. They disagreed with the east / west split, seeing the proposed division and boundaries as arbitrary.

127.Business Bodies: 56% of business respondents thought the one unitary proposal represented a credible geography, stating that the area is a good size for a unitary authority, matches existing boundaries and their services, and helps to keep the county together. They did not support the two unitary proposal, seeing the east / west split as an arbitrary divide down existing district council boundaries and opposing the splitting of the area. 22% of business respondents thought the two unitary proposal represented a credible geography, supporting the east / west split due to the differences of the areas. They did not support the one unitary option as they felt the area is too large and diverse for a single authority.

128.Principal councils:

*Councils submitting proposals*

Somerset County Council thought the two unitary proposal did not represent a credible geography as each proposed authority would have a population below the 300,000 people threshold, and the proposed combined authority geography would be too small. They did not support the east / west split, arguing that it is not a natural divide and citing concerns that the authorities would be imbalanced due to the decreased income base but increased service need in the west. The four Somerset district councils thought the one unitary proposal did not represent a credible geography as it would shortly exceed the 600,000 people threshold, and it does not recognise the different needs of the east and west communities. They stated that it would cut across the functional economic area, potentially disadvantaging initiatives that link to the local east and west Somerset economies.

*Neighbouring councils*

Dorset Council considered that the single unitary was a better fit on the basis of population size.

*Other principal council responses*

These responses were from a mixture of employees and members of the five Somerset councils; their responses are in line with council they work for or of which they are a member.

129.Parishes and Town Councils: 50% of town and parish council respondents thought the two unitary proposal represented a credible geography, supporting the east / west split on the grounds that the two areas are very different and transport links across Somerset as a whole are very poor. Only 17% of town and parish council respondents thought that the single unitary council represented a credible geography, opposing splitting the area and supporting the view that the area of Somerset is a good size for a unitary council.

130.Public Service Partners: Where answered, public service partners felt that both proposals represented credible geographies. Health, police and transport respondents supported one unitary proposal due to its alignment with existing

boundaries and their services. The education respondent supported the east / west split of the two unitary proposal.

131. Other (excluding Voluntary and Community Sector): This group includes a mixture of local organisations such as churches, landscape bodies and chambers of commerce and email responses where the respondent type did not correspond to the list in the consultation. The majority of responses consisted of very short emails indicating support for one or other of the options; further analysis is not possible. A number of the organisations did not respond to the consultation questions but took the opportunity to set out how they would like a unitary council to work with them.

132. Voluntary and Community Sector (part of 'Other' respondents): The majority of VCS respondents thought the two unitary proposal represented a credible geography (60%), supporting the east / west split on the basis of the county area being too large and diverse for one unitary authority. VCS respondents who supported the one unitary proposal thought it represented a credible geography (20%), opposing splitting the area into east / west, with references to keeping the county together on the grounds of local identity and existing service provision.

133. Campaign responses: 89% of the 994 campaign response forms received supporting the two unitary proposal ticked the box to say 'it best reflects the geography of Somerset', as did 54% of the 291 responses that supported the single unitary option.

**Question 6:** Do you have any other comments with regards to the proposed reorganisation of local government in each area?

134. Residents: Resident respondents used this opportunity to reinforce their answers to previous questions and their support for their preferred proposal. Some resident respondents stated that their preference would be for the existing two tier structure to remain, seeing it as currently working well and better able to reflect local needs.

135. Business Bodies: Business respondents used this opportunity to reinforce their answers to previous questions and their support for proposals. Others commented on the need to ensure that, regardless of the outcome, local views and needs are still recognised, and that any change needs to be implemented quickly. Two respondents stated they would rather the current two tier arrangements remain in place.

136. Principal councils

*Councils submitting proposals*

The Somerset district councils' responses raised their concerns that the Stronger Somerset proposal had been the "victims of a deliberate campaign of misinformation and negative characterisation that we feel obliged to bring to your attention." Their submitted Appendix 5 contained a log of One Somerset communications activity.

*Neighbouring councils*

Dorset Council considered that the disaggregation of services in the two unitary option would bring cost, disruption and risk.

*Other principal council responses*

These responses were from a mixture of employees and members of the five Somerset councils; no further comments were given.

137. Parishes and Town Councils: Respondents used this opportunity to reinforce their previous comments and also outlined how they would like to see a future relationship work with a new unitary council.
138. Local Government Organisation – Other (including councillors): The very small number of additional comments included observations on the consultation process, reinforcement of previous comments and on outline of expectations of future relationships.
139. Public Service Partners: A health respondent used this opportunity to welcome the proposals' commitment to invest in technology, address digital poverty, use data to inform population health management and address inequalities, work towards sustainability, tackle climate change and delivering carbon neutrality.
140. Other (excluding Voluntary and Community Sector): The majority of responses to this section reinforced answers to previous questions and support for their preferred proposal. A few respondents stated that their preference would be for the existing two tier structure to remain and others made comments on the consultation process, including commenting on the behaviour of the councils.
141. Voluntary and Community Sector (part of 'Other' respondents): Some VCS respondents raised their desire for engagement with local communities to be a key focus for any future authority. One respondent stated that would rather the current two tier arrangement remain in place.

# Annex A

In deciding which proposal, if any, to implement in an area, subject to Parliamentary approval, the Secretary of State made a balanced judgement assessing the proposals against the three criteria set out in the statutory guidance accompanying the invitation, and having regard to all representations received, including responses to the consultation, and to all other relevant information available to him. These criteria, which reflect longstanding criteria for assessing unitary proposals, are that - a proposal should seek to achieve for the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government, that is the establishment of one or more unitary authorities:

- a. which are likely to improve local government and service delivery across the area of the proposal, giving greater value for money, generating savings, providing stronger strategic and local leadership, and which are more sustainable structures;
- b. which command a good deal of local support as assessed in the round overall across the whole area of the proposal; and
- c. where the area of each unitary authority is a credible geography consisting of one or more existing local government areas with an aggregate population which is either within the range 300,000 to 600,000, or such other figure that, having regard to the circumstances of the authority, including local identity and geography, could be considered substantial.

Below are copies of letters which set out the decisions that the Secretary of State has made in relation to unitary proposals for Cumbria, North Yorkshire, and Somerset.

## **DECISIONS - TEXT OF LETTERS FROM THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO COUNCIL LEADERS IN EACH OF THE THREE AREAS**

### **LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN CUMBRIA**

On 22 February 2021, I launched a consultation on eight proposals for unitary local government that councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset had submitted in response to my invitation of 9 October 2020; four proposals were received from councils in Cumbria. The consultation ran for eight weeks to 19 April 2021; we received over 13,000 responses in total; for Cumbria some 3,200 responses were received.

I am now writing to let you know that I have today announced my decisions, subject to Parliamentary approval, to implement the proposal for two unitary councils on an East-West geography for the whole of the administrative county of Cumbria, and not to implement the proposal for a single unitary council nor the two other proposals for two unitary councils for the area. I attach a copy of my Written Ministerial Statement announcing my decisions to Parliament. I will be placing a summary of the consultation responses in the libraries of Parliament and it will be available via gov.uk.

In reaching my decisions, I carefully considered each of the proposals. I assessed each proposal against the three criteria set out in the invitation sent to all the principal councils in Cumbria on 9 October. These criteria provide that for a proposal to be implemented,

that proposal is likely to improve local government and service delivery across its area; commands a good deal of local support as assessed in the round overall across the whole area of the proposal; and any unitary councils to be established have a credible geography. I have had regard to all the representations I received, including those received through the consultation, and to all the relevant information available to me. I have concluded that the proposal for East-West unitary councils meets all three criteria. I particularly noted that due to the size and geographical barriers within Cumbria, together with the rurality of its population, it was more appropriate to implement this compared to the one unitary proposal that also met all three criteria. The other two unitary proposals did not meet all the criteria and accordingly it is appropriate to implement the East-West two unitary proposal.

I now intend to seek Parliamentary approval for the necessary secondary legislation to implement this unitary proposal. I intend the draft structural changes Order to be laid in Parliament around the turn of the year and that it will include provision for appropriate transitional arrangements, including elections in May 2022 for the future unitary councils and for those councils to assume the full range of local authority responsibilities on 1 April 2023, when the predecessor councils would be abolished.

We look forward to working constructively with you and your officers on the implementation of the proposal. As a first step, my officials will be discussing with your officers details to be included in the Order and subsequently we will be sharing with you detailed texts of the Order as the drafting is developed.

I now expect all the councils in Cumbria to work collaboratively and constructively together. I am clear that there is now an opportunity, if Parliament approves the structural changes Order, to establish for the people of Cumbria more sustainable local government which will better serve local communities and businesses across the area, delivering for them the high quality and efficient local services people and businesses need and deserve.

I am writing in similar terms to the leaders of Lancaster City Council and Lancashire County Council. We are also writing on this matter to the Cumbria MPs, the Lord Lieutenant of Cumbria, and the Chair of the Local Government Association. I am copying this letter to the Police and Crime Commissioner of Cumbria, the Cumbria County Council lead member with responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service, and the Chair of the Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership.

**RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP**

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN NORTH YORKSHIRE**

On 22 February 2021, I launched a consultation on eight proposals for unitary local government that councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset had submitted in response to my invitation of 9 October 2020; two proposals were received from councils in North Yorkshire. The consultation ran for eight weeks to 19 April 2021; we received over 13,000 responses in total; for North Yorkshire some 4,200 responses were received.

I am now writing to let you know that I have today announced my decisions, subject to Parliamentary approval, to implement the proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the administrative county of North Yorkshire, and not to implement the proposal for two unitary councils for this area. I attach a copy of my Written Ministerial Statement announcing my decisions to Parliament. I will be placing a summary of the consultation responses in the libraries of Parliament and it will be available via gov.uk.

In reaching my decisions, I carefully considered each of the proposals. I assessed each proposal against the three criteria set out in the invitation sent to all the principal councils in North Yorkshire on 9 October. These criteria provide that for a proposal to be implemented, that proposal is likely to improve local government and service delivery across its area; commands a good deal of local support as assessed in the round overall across the whole area of the proposal; and any unitary councils to be established have a credible geography. I have had regard to all the representations I received, including those received through the consultation, and to all the relevant information available to me. I have concluded that the proposal for a single unitary council meets all three criteria and that the proposal for two unitary councils meets only the criterion on local support, and accordingly it is appropriate to implement the former proposal.

I now intend to seek Parliamentary approval for the necessary secondary legislation to implement this single unitary proposal. I intend the draft structural changes Order to be laid in Parliament around the turn of the year and that it will include provision for appropriate transitional arrangements, including elections in May 2022 for the future unitary council and for that council to assume the full range of local authority responsibilities on 1 April 2023, when the predecessor councils would be abolished.

We look forward to working constructively with you and your officers on the implementation of the proposal. As a first step, my officials will be discussing with your officers details to be included in the Order and subsequently we will be sharing with you detailed texts of the Order as the drafting is developed.

I now expect all the councils in North Yorkshire to work collaboratively and constructively together. I am clear that there is now an opportunity, if Parliament approves the structural changes Order, to establish for the people of North Yorkshire more sustainable local government which will better serve local communities and businesses across the area, delivering for them the high quality and efficient local services people and businesses need and deserve.

I am writing in similar terms to the Leader of the City of York Council. We are also writing on this matter to the North Yorkshire and York MPs, the Lord Lieutenant, and the Chair of the Local Government Association. I am copying this letter to the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner for North Yorkshire and the Chair of the York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

**RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP**



## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN SOMERSET**

On 22 February 2021, I launched a consultation on eight proposals for unitary local government that councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset had submitted in response to my invitation of 9 October 2020; two proposals were received from councils in Somerset. The consultation ran for eight weeks to 19 April 2021; we received over 13,000 responses in total; for Somerset some 5,500 responses were received as well as a number of campaign leaflet “tear off slips” about the Somerset proposals.

I am now writing to let you know that I have today announced my decisions, subject to Parliamentary approval, to implement the proposal for a single unitary council for the whole of the administrative county of Somerset, and not to implement the proposal for two unitary councils for this area. I attach a copy of my Written Ministerial Statement announcing my decisions to Parliament. I will be placing a summary of the consultation responses in the libraries of Parliament and it will be available via gov.uk.

In reaching my decisions, I carefully considered each of the proposals. I assessed each proposal against the three criteria set out in the invitation sent to all the principal councils in Somerset on 9 October. These criteria provide that for a proposal to be implemented, that proposal is likely to improve local government and service delivery across its area; commands a good deal of local support as assessed in the round overall across the whole area of the proposal; and any unitary councils to be established have a credible geography. I have had regard to all the representations I received, including those received through the consultation, and to all the relevant information available to me, including the results of the local poll that the Somerset district councils held during the period from 18 May to 4 June and the representations received about the poll and its conduct. I have concluded that the proposal for a single unitary council meets all three criteria and that the proposal for two unitary councils meets only the criterion on local support, and accordingly it is appropriate to implement the former proposal.

I now intend to seek Parliamentary approval for the necessary secondary legislation to implement this single unitary proposal. I intend the draft structural changes Order to be laid in Parliament around the turn of the year and that it will include provision for appropriate transitional arrangements, including elections in May 2022 for the future unitary council and for that council to assume the full range of local authority responsibilities on 1 April 2023, when the predecessor councils would be abolished.

We look forward to working constructively with you and your officers on the implementation of the proposal. As a first step, my officials will be discussing with your officers details to be included in the Order and subsequently we will be sharing with you detailed texts of the Order as the drafting is developed.

I now expect all the councils in Somerset to work collaboratively and constructively together. I am clear that there is now an opportunity, if Parliament approves the structural changes Order, to establish for the people of Somerset more sustainable local government which will better serve local communities and businesses across the area, delivering for them the high quality and efficient local services people and businesses need and deserve.

We are also writing on this matter to the Somerset MPs, the Lord Lieutenant, the Chair of the Local Government Association. I am copying this letter to the Police and Crime Commissioner, the Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority, and the Chair of the Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership.

**RT HON ROBERT JENRICK MP**

# Annex B

## Named Consultees

We welcome the views of all those interested in the proposals, including local residents, town and parish councils, businesses, and the voluntary sector. In this annex we list for information those who are specifically named consultees.

The 2007 Act requires that before a proposal for local government reorganisation can be implemented, the Secretary of State must first consult every authority affected by the proposal (except the authority or authorities which made it); and any such other persons as he considers appropriate. This consultation is specifically inviting comments from the following councils and other named bodies:

## Cumbria Consultees

- **Principal councils in the area:**

Allerdale Borough Council  
Barrow Borough Council  
Copeland Borough Council  
Cumbria County Council  
Carlisle City Council  
Eden District Council  
Lancashire County Council  
Lancaster City Council  
the district councils within Lancashire County  
South Lakeland District Council

- **Neighbouring principal councils:**

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council  
Blackpool Council  
Durham County Council  
North Yorkshire County Council,  
The district councils within North Yorkshire County  
The district councils within Lancashire County  
Northumberland County Council

North of Tyne Combined Authority  
North East Combined Authority

- **Other named consultees:**

### **Public Service Bodies –**

*Health Bodies:* NHS Morecambe Bay CCG, NHS North Cumbria CCG, Calderdale & Huddersfield NHS Foundation Trust, North Cumbria Integrated Care Foundation Trust, South West Yorkshire Partnership NHS Foundation Trust, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust, Lancashire and South Cumbria Integrated Care System, North East and North Cumbria Integrated Care System, North West Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

*Policing, Fire and Rescue Bodies:* Chief Constable of Cumbria Constabulary, Chief Constable of Lancashire Constabulary, Chief Fire Officer of Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, Chief Fire Officer of Lancashire Fire and Rescue, Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service, Cumbria Police and Crime Commissioner, Lancashire Police and Crime Commissioner, Lancashire Combined Fire Authority

*Other Public Sector Bodies:* Arnside and Silverdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Lake District National Park Authority, North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Nuclear Decommissioning Authority, Independent Chair of the Cumbria Children's Safeguarding Partnership, Independent Chair of the Safeguarding Adults' Board, Dumfries & Galloway Council, Scottish Borders Council, Transport for the North.

**Business Bodies:** Cumbria Chamber of Commerce, Cumbria Local Enterprise Partnership, Federation of Small Businesses (Lancashire & Cumbria), Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership, Lancashire Chamber of Commerce, Sellafeld Ltd.

**Voluntary Sector Bodies:** Cumbria Community Foundation, Cumbria Council for Voluntary Services, Cumbria Third Sector Network, Lancaster Council for Voluntary Services.

**Education Bodies:** Lancaster University, University of Central Lancashire, University of Cumbria.

**Other Bodies:** Cumbria Tourism, Lord-Lieutenant for Cumbria, Lord-Lieutenant for Lancashire.

**National Bodies:** Environment Agency, Highways England, Local Government Association, National Housing Federation, National Association of Local Councils, Public Health England.

## **North Yorkshire Consultees**

- **Principal Councils in the area:**

City of York Unitary Council,  
Craven District Council,  
Hambleton District Council,  
Harrogate Borough Council,  
North Yorkshire County Council,  
Richmondshire District Council,  
Ryedale District Council,  
Scarborough Borough Council  
Selby District Council.

- **Neighbouring Principal Councils:**

Bradford Metropolitan District Council,  
Cumbria County Council and the district councils within Cumbria County,  
Darlington Borough Council,  
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council,  
Durham County Council,  
East Riding of Yorkshire Council,  
Lancashire County Council, the district councils within Lancashire County,  
Leeds City Council,

Middlesbrough Council  
Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council,  
Stockton on Tees Borough Council,  
Wakefield Metropolitan District Council,

Sheffield City Region Combined Authority  
Tees Valley Combined Authority  
West Yorkshire Combined Authority.

- **Other named consultees:**

**Public Service Bodies –**

*Health Bodies:* Bradford and Craven CCG, Morecambe Bay CCG, North Yorkshire CCG, Vale of York CCG, Airedale NHS Trust Hospital, Bradford District Care Trust, Harrogate and District NHS Foundation Trust, Humber Coast and Vale ICS, Humber Teaching Foundation Trust, South Tees Foundation Trust, Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust, York Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Yorkshire Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

*Policing, Fire and Rescue Bodies:* North Yorkshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, Chief Constable of North Yorkshire Police, Chief Fire Officer of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

*Other Public Sector Bodies:* Howardian Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Forest of Bowland Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, North Yorkshire Moors National Park Authority, Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority, Independent Chair of the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Adults Board, Independent Chair and Scrutineer of the North Yorkshire Safeguarding Children's Board, Transport for the North.

**Business Bodies:** Federation of Small Business (Yorkshire, Humber and the North East), West and North Yorkshire Chambers of Commerce, York and North Yorkshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Yorkshire & Humber CBI.

**Voluntary Sector Bodies:** Community First Yorkshire, York CVS.

**Education Bodies:** University of York, York St John's University.

**Other Bodies:** Lord-Lieutenant for North Yorkshire, Welcome to Yorkshire.

**National Bodies:** Environment Agency, Highways England, Local Government Association, National Housing Federation, National Association of Local Councils, Public Health England.

**Somerset Consultees**

- **Principal Councils in the area:**

Mendip District Council  
Sedgemoor District Council  
Somerset County Council  
Somerset West & Taunton Council  
South Somerset District Council

- **Neighbouring Principal Councils:**

Bath & North East Somerset Council  
Bristol City Council  
Devon County Council and the district councils within Devon County  
Dorset Unitary Council  
North Somerset Council  
Wiltshire Council

West of England Combined Authority

- **Other named consultees:**

**Public Service Bodies –**

*Health Bodies:* NHS Somerset CCG, Somerset NHS Foundation Trust, Royal United Hospitals Bath NHS Foundation Trust, South Western Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust, University Hospitals Bristol and Weston NHS Foundation Trust (UHBW), Yeovil District Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, The Somerset Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (ICS).

*Policing, Fire and Rescue Bodies:* Avon and Somerset Police and Crime Commissioner, Chief Constable of Avon and Somerset Police, Chief Fire Officer of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service, Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Authority.

*Other Public Sector Bodies:* Somerset Rivers Authority, Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Cranbourne Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Mendip Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Quantock Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Independent Chair Somerset Safeguarding Adults Board, Somerset Safeguarding Children Partnership, Independent Chair of the Somerset Corporate Parenting Board, Western Gateway, Peninsula Transport.

**Business Bodies:** Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership, Somerset Chambers of Commerce, Institute of Directors (South West), Federation of Small Businesses (South West), CBI (South West)

**Voluntary Sector Bodies:** Spark Somerset

**Other Bodies:** Lord-Lieutenant for Somerset, Visit Somerset (Somerset Tourism Association)

**National Bodies:** Environment Agency, Highways England, Local Government Association, National Housing Federation, National Association of Local Councils, Public Health England