

**From Keane Duncan, Leader of Ryedale District Council
to all Parish Councils**

There is a lot going on in the world right now as we continue to battle Covid-19. But, as I am sure you will know from media reports, the Government wants North Yorkshire's two-tier council system to change. It wishes to create a single-tier of local government - a unitary system in which one council will deliver services currently shared between the county and district councils. Everything suggests that the status quo is unlikely to be an option, and we have been set a very tight deadline of early September to submit proposals, which is why I am writing to you now.

Ryedale District Council has always had a positive relationship with our town and parish councils. Therefore, I wanted to share my initial thoughts with you, as well as seek yours as the representatives closest to our communities.

While much is unclear at this stage, one thing we do know: North Yorkshire County Council is determined that there will be one council - a "super council" - going forward based on the whole of North Yorkshire. This would cover 8,000 km² and serve 615,000 people: the largest unitary authority ever created in England in both area and population terms.

I know many town and parish councillors will view this with a degree of alarm. Many tell me how remote Northallerton feels. They point at the roads, the grass verges, the decision in 2016 to approve fracking at Kirby Misperton, among many other things. They also feel communication between the county council and the towns and parishes could be more effective.

I would not want to see this feeling replicated in a "super council" controlling almost everything that happens here in Ryedale. I think that local government should be based as closely to the people it serves as it possibly can be. That's why district and borough councils in North Yorkshire are working on potential alternative proposals.

I hope you feel, like me, that an alternative to a "super council" could work better for Ryedale. But regardless of your views, I would be interested to hear from you. Please email me on cllr.keane.duncan@ryedale.gov.uk with your personal views as a councillor and (if possible) the collective views of your council after a discussion at a meeting in the near future.

For the "super council" scheme to go forward, it needs the support of a majority of county councillors. Some are supporting it because they say they want the government to be able to choose between all the options. But we should make as many choices here in North Yorkshire as we can. That is why I do not think this option should even be presented to government. To do so runs the risk that we will end up with something that few of us want.

Whether you are for or against North Yorkshire's "super council" proposal, I would urge you to seek out your county councillor, lobby them strongly with your views and ask them to vote accordingly when the decision comes to the County Council.

I look forward to hearing from you about these proposals and will endeavour to answer any questions you may have.

With kind regards, and sincere thanks for your work.

**Cllr Keane Duncan
Leader of Ryedale District Council**