

Proposals for unitary local government in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset

A consultation on proposals for unitary local government submitted by councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset has been launched by government today (22 February 2021).

Following a [formal invitation from government](#) last October to councils in these areas to submit proposals for reorganisation, the Local Government Secretary has received 8 locally-led proposals for consideration: 4 from councils in Cumbria and 2 each from councils in Somerset and North Yorkshire.

The proposals outline how the councils who have responded to the invitation want to restructure local government in their area to establish unitary local government. This means moving from a two-tier system of county and district councils, to a system where there is a single tier for any given area.

The consultation asks a number of questions about each proposal around value for money, proposed geography of the council and impact of the proposal on local services.

As a result of today's consultation launch, the district and county council elections due to be held in May this year in the 3 areas will be rescheduled to May 2022.

Rescheduling local elections avoids the possibility of the electorate being asked to vote for councils while at the same time they are being given the opportunity to express their views on the possible abolition of those councils. It also avoids members potentially being elected to serve short terms.

The elections for local Police and Crime Commissioners, as well as elections to any town or parish councils, will continue to take place in May 2021.

Local Government Secretary Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP said:

I have always been clear that any restructuring of local government must be locally-led and will not involve top-down solutions from government.

Now that councils in Cumbria, North Yorkshire and Somerset have submitted their proposals, I am pleased residents, businesses and service providers will have the opportunity to have their say on what will work best for their area.

Where there is local support, changing the structure of local government can offer better value for money and improved services

for residents.

Residents, councils, Local Enterprise Partnerships, public service providers, businesses and voluntary organisations will now have the opportunity to have their say on which proposal, if any, they see as the best fit for their area.

The Local Government Secretary will consider all proposals following the consultation before making a decision about which option, if any, to implement in each of the 3 areas. This would be subject to Parliamentary approval.

The consultation period will run for 8 weeks until Monday 19 April. Those responding may do so on the department's online platform 'Citizen Space' or by email or post.

Subject to Parliamentary approval, we would expect any new unitary council to be fully operational from April 2023 with transitional arrangements expected to be in place from 2022, including elections in May 2022 to the shadow or continuing councils.