

Consultation Summary

Please tell us why you chose Option 1 – not to create a parish council

The most popular reason (46% of comments) for objecting to the creation of a town council related to objections to the cost, including fears over increased council tax, and how it would be a waste of money. Comments were also received suggesting respondents were concerned they might end up paying twice for the same services.

The next most popular reason (30% of comments) was that there was no need to reintroduce two tier local government following the implementation of unitary status for the county. This was closely related to the third most popular reason which was that this would lead to an increase in bureaucracy, having just removed a layer of government respondents felt it would not be logical to introduce another layer.

A number of respondents felt that a parish council would just be 'jobs for the boys' with disproportionately high allowances and salaries paid to individuals who would not have a great deal to do. Other comments reflected feelings that parish councils were not relevant in modern times, would not add value and could be toothless and ineffective. Many people felt decisions would be better taken by the unitary council which would be able to take a more strategic overview and employ professionals to make decisions.

There were also concerns that elsewhere parish councils were struggling to get residents interested and voters wouldn't be interested in a town council, resulting in councillors being elected unopposed.

Some respondents said they preferred the idea of charter trustees, whilst other didn't want charter trustees either. A few comments thought the word parish reflected a religious or church based influence, which they were not happy with.

Comment was also made that residents were not consulted on abolishing Harrogate Borough Council, and also that the CGR consultation had not provided enough information on the powers any town council would adopt, or the costs to council tax payers of creation of a town council.

Please tell us why you chose Option 2 – to create a parish council

The reasons given for preferring a parish council largely related to the need for local community representation and for residents to be given a voice. There was a strong feeling that local democracy is important and people wanted a local body to champion Harrogate's interests.

Many stressed the need for decisions to be made locally, by people representing the interests of Harrogate and with an understanding of local issues. A town council would provide a place for the interests of local communities to be heard and actioned. It was felt that a town council would provide a point for local concerns to be considered and dealt with, or taken forward to the unitary council.

A number of respondents felt that as the rest of the county was parished, Harrogate and Scarborough would be disadvantaged by remaining unparished and without a local voice and representation; it would be more equitable for all areas to have the same level of democratic representation. Some also felt unparished areas could miss out on opportunities for funding.

Many comments related to the perception that the new unitary council covered too large an area, and Northallerton was too remote and far away. Decisions could be taken by people who did not know the area or its needs. The priorities for the county as a whole would not align with those for Harrogate, as North Yorkshire was largely rural. Many comments referred to distrust of and lack of confidence in NYCC and its ability to listen to the views of residents.

A town council promote the views of the town and help the unitary council to make good decisions through provision of information. A town council would also act as a consultee on matters such as planning, licensing and highways.

A number of comments referred to Harrogate's unique characteristics, a 'one size fits all' approach to service delivery would not work. Harrogate has a distinctive identity and community, and was different to the rural areas. Respondents preferred to see decisions relating to Harrogate taken locally.

Respondents also talked about preferring to see local services delivered locally and designed to meet specific local needs.

Those who selected Option 2 felt that as Charter Trustees would only perform a ceremonial function and would have no powers, a parish council would be preferable. Charter Trustees were described as pointless and toothless and, as they would be connected to the new unitary, remote. Comments referred to the importance of a Mayor and the importance of a town council in developing civic pride. Comments were also made in relation to the towns historic and heritage links, and that a town council could protect and promote these, particularly through work with other organisations such as the BID and the Chamber of Trade.

Some respondents felt that a town council could lead community action and work with community and voluntary groups to benefit residents of the town. Community engagement could be enhanced through a town council.

Some respondents referred to good experiences of town and parish councils elsewhere, which were an asset to the areas they represented and one respondent said they felt parish councils could be more proactive and passionate in relation to the interests of an area.

Below is a list of services which respondents suggested could be delivered by a parish council:

- Discuss planning and licensing applications
- Manage the Stray
- Community centres
- Community transport schemes
- Neighbourhood planning
- Festivals and fetes
- Promote floral beauty
- Road safety
- Conservation area
- Local administration of civic and ceremonial
- Parks and gardens including Valley Gardens
- Sports
- Car parks
- Tourism related inward investment
- Pump Room museum and Mercer Gallery
- Comment on highways schemes
- Tourism
- Crime reduction
- Traffic management
- Royal Hall and HCC
- Care of woodlands and Crimple Valley
- Play equipment
- Allotments
- Events on the Stray
- Destination management opportunities
- Markets
- Toilets
- Walker Passage, Station Tunnel and Vagrancy at Asda

Please provide details on other options available?

Valley Gardens and Central divisions:

- I strongly support the creation of a parish council for the area of Valley Gardens and Central Harrogate where I live (or a town council for Harrogate overall) in preference over charter trusteeship. The overall concept of depriving local people of their say in local issues, in favour of the creation of unitary authorities, is deplorable. There are many reasons for this. The high density of commercial, residential and leisure activities in central Harrogate mean that local people should be afforded much closer control over these activities than a distant unitary authority with responsibility for many such areas across a wide area. The complex regulatory, administrative and legal interactions between so many local interests in the centre of a substantial local centre of population and businesses like Harrogate dictates that those interests should be afforded a greater ability to self-determine their own fate. In short, they know better than a far-away authority what is best for them.

Starbeck:

- There may be a case for Starbeck having its own Parish Council, along the original Starbeck boundary (rather than current ward) as it is a distinct Community,
- Why can't my ward, Fairfax and Starbeck have a parish council.
- Starbeck is like a village and a parish council will better represent the area. We would have local protection from decisions made by the council and have a representative for our area.
- To give people in Starbeck a voice
- Local governance to the Starbeck area
- I think it would give Starbeck the opportunity to put forward their own views instead of being told what was going to happen by the new large authority
- To have a say in the running of our communities and promote the "village " of Starbeck

I believe Harrogate should be given parish status. How many parishes there would be is not easy for a person not familiar with the practicalities of local government to judge but I believe between two to four parishes should be able to represent the residents. I would think existing Councillors would be able to recommend a structure - if a parish is too small it carries a relatively high overhead per capita and has a low collective presence, but if too big it will not represent local interests. The current "Divisions" in Harrogate Borough areas look rather too small to be converted one-for-one into new parishes.

I think a community of residents would be best, my reasons for this:

1. A Charter of trustees I feel won't do enough for everyone in the county, after all it is a very large area and they will have more pressing things to attend.
2. I don't believe/trust a parish council as we will be putting people who were already on the Harrogate Council back into power and even though we are able to attend their meetings they have the final say, not the residents. It has been seen that Harrogate Council do their own thing regardless of the people of Harrogate going

against them. This new cycle scheme is one of them as is the new houses when we don't have the infrastructure.

3. Having a community of residents looking after each area I feel would be better and replacing them every 1 or 2 years would be better as we get a fresh outlook/ideas with new people coming in. I feel more people would be interested in this as they can all make their mark on the area they're within and take pride in this!

Jennyfield

A new parish for Harrogate should encompass all of the areas which fall within Harrogate town. At present, as the current warding arrangements show, there are bits of what are generally considered Harrogate which spill out into other parishes. Mainly along the western side of the town where all the new housebuilding is taking place. It would also be worth looking as whether the part of Jennyfield which is currently in Killinghall should be brought into a new Harrogate parish.

Killinghall covers saltergate and has clearly indicated that they do not serve our interests nor want to

Please tell us why you don't know or are not sure on which option you prefer?

The main reason given for not being sure was that not enough information had been provided to enable an informed choice to be made. Respondents asked for more information on what services a parish council would be responsible for and what the cost would be of a parish council. Some felt they would have liked information on the pros and cons of a parish council.

There was a view that until the remit of Area Committees was known it was too soon to make a decision about a town council, and someone else also suggested it would be better to wait to see.

A number of respondents said they didn't understand and were confused about the information provided and options given. Some said they couldn't see the difference between the two options or that they had no preference either way.

Some expressed the view that they felt the existing 2 tier structure was better and they didn't understand why it had to change.

Are there any further comments you would like to add about the Community Governance Review?

A total of 534 further comments were received.

Theme	No. of comments	Proportion
LGR/Double Devolution queries	70	13.1%
Reasons to create a Parish Council	55	10.3%
Insufficient information provided in the consultation	53	9.9%
Harrogate residents need a voice	47	8.8%
Cost implications for options 1 and 2	44	8.2%
Complaints about the format of the consultation	39	7.3%
Reasons not to create a Parish Council	24	4.5%
Geographical areas that ought to be included	8	1.5%
Requests to be kept informed of CGR developments	8	1.5%

A total of 65.1% of the 534 further comments relate to one of the above themes.

CGR further comments that do not correspond to a particular theme

Parish Council details:

- If Harrogate is parished, it should be named Harrogate Town Council
- A parish council would support the Voluntary and Community Sector
- The parish council should not be political
- Parish councillors should not be paid
- Parish councillors should live in Harrogate
- If a parish council is created it should not duplicate unitary functions

Format/outcome of the consultation:

- Concerns over the total number of consultation responses
- Concerns that the public's wishes will not be listened to
- During the current cost of living crisis funds should be spent elsewhere rather than on a CGR
- The consultation is clear
- Residents thankful for the opportunity to comment on the CGR
- Requests to provide statistics of the outcome of the consultation
- There should be a vote for option 1 or option 2 once both options have been made clearer

Other:

- Complaints about the current provision of services on a county or district level – especially road maintenance, parking and planning
- Young people need a voice in future governance arrangements for Harrogate
- Proposals for other forms of representation for Harrogate (e.g. Citizens Assembly) – alternative forms of Community Governance
- Concerns that Harrogate residents may not be aware of LGR

Are you aware of any existing local community governance in the areas (e.g. community or neighbourhood forums, resident associations etc.) which would serve the local community as an alternative to a parish council?

Area Committees
Bilton Community Group
Coppice Residents Action Group
Devonshire Gardens Residents Association
Duchy Residents Association
Fairfax Community
Friends of the Mercer Gallery
Harlow and Pannal Ash Residents Association
Harlow Moor Drive Residents Association
Harrogate BID
Harrogate Borough Council
Harrogate Chamber of Trade
Harrogate Civic Society
Harrogate in Bloom/Team Harrogate
Harrogate Residents Association
Jennyfields Residents Group
Kingsley Residents Association
Knox Residents Association
Royal Hall Restoration Trust
Starbeck Christmas Lights Appeal
Starbeck Community Group
Starbeck in Bloom
Starbeck Residents Association
The Stray Defence Association
Valley Gardens and Pinewoods Groups

- They are no substitute for an elected authority which would give it some defined powers and democratic legitimacy
- It is unlikely that such organisations could be offered as an alternative to a town parish council. They may address very local issues but not real key matters.
- There is currently a number of organisations with a patchwork approach to delivery. There needs to be a clear leadership option within the area to bring everything together.
- Members of all these organisations are capable of forming a parish council but none could independently serve the local community as an alternative to a parish council. All these organisations are composed of members who care about the community and the environment.
- They exist in many areas of Harrogate - they do nothing of any significance because they are ignored. However, I would definitely prefer this model than a parish council - as community reps are usually more interested in serving their local area than councillors.

- have already made reference to the role of Area Committees. I don't think that there are other community forums in the area with the capacity to take on the role of a town council.