

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document sets out a comprehensive and evidence-based case for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Staffordshire, recommending the establishment of two unitary authorities to replace the existing two-tier system. This proposal focuses on the creation of a Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Unitary Council, complementing the proposal for the North Staffordshire Unitary Council.

Informed through collaboration with the six District and Borough Councils in Southern & Mid-Staffordshire¹, and led and approved by Cannock Chase District, East Staffordshire Borough and Stafford Borough Councils, the proposal responds to the Government's invitation for reorganisation and reflects a shared ambition to deliver more efficient, resilient, and responsive local government for the region.

We have worked closely with our counterpart in the north of the county who have proposed a single unitary council to bring together areas currently served by Stoke-on-Trent City Council, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council and Staffordshire Moorlands District Council. The outcome of our close co-operation is that our proposals complement each other and our good working relationship will ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements.

Southern & Mid-Staffordshire is a diverse and economically vibrant area, home to over 656,000 residents across 279,400 households.

It encompasses a mix of urban centres, rural communities, and strategic transport corridors, contributing significantly to the wider West Midlands economy. The region benefits from strong partnerships and co-terminosity across health, policing, and local services, and has a distinct identity shaped by its heritage, geography, and economic profile. The proposal recognises this uniqueness and seeks to build a governance model that reflects and supports the region's future aspirations.

RATIONALE FOR REORGANISATION

The current two-tier system presents challenges in terms of duplication, fragmented service delivery, and inefficiencies in governance and resource allocation. With increasing financial pressures, rising demand for services, and the need for greater strategic capacity, the case for reform is compelling. The proposed unitary model offers a streamlined structure that removes duplication, simplifies decision-making, and enables a more coherent approach to service delivery and place-based leadership.

The preferred option, Option A, proposes the creation of two unitary Councils: one for North Staffordshire and one for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire. This model aligns with Government criteria for reorganisation, including advised population thresholds, financial sustainability, service quality, and community engagement. It reflects sensible and functioning economic geography, maintains local identity, and provides the scale necessary to deliver efficiencies and withstand future financial shocks.

1 - Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford, Tamworth.

VISION FOR THE NEW COUNCIL

The new Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council will be a modern, resident-focused authority that delivers high-quality services, supports inclusive growth, and champions the unique identity of its communities. Its vision is underpinned by three core values:

ESTABLISH

Laying the foundations for strong, transparent, and effective governance.

ECONOMISE

Delivering high-quality services that represent best value for residents and businesses.

ENGAGE

Ensuring people remain at the centre of every decision.

These values will guide the Council's approach to service design, financial management, democratic representation, and community engagement. The Council will embrace innovation, digital transformation, and continuous improvement, ensuring services are accessible, responsive, and tailored to local needs.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

A detailed financial appraisal confirms that the preferred model delivers significant recurring savings and a strong return on investment. The proposal estimates annual savings of £29.9 million, with a payback period of 1.4 years.

These savings are derived from the consolidation of leadership roles, rationalisation of contracts, integration of ICT systems, and streamlined governance structures. Importantly, the model avoids the disaggregation costs associated with more complex reorganisation options, such as three Unitary Councils (Option B)², further enhancing its financial viability.

The new Council will benefit from a robust Council Tax base, a mixed housing stock, and a growing population. These factors contribute to long-term financial resilience and provide the foundation for sustained investment in public services and infrastructure. The proposal also outlines a clear methodology for financial modelling, scenario analysis, and risk mitigation, ensuring transparency and confidence in the financial case.

IMPLEMENTATION & DAY ONE READINESS

The transition to a unitary authority will be delivered through a phased implementation programme, structured around six tranches: Plan and Define, Building the Foundations, Shadow Authority, Leadership, Go Live, and Post-Vesting Day Transformation. Each tranche is designed to ensure continuity of services, legal compliance, and effective change management.

Day One, Vesting Day, will mark the formal commencement of the new Council. On this day, statutory powers will transfer, governance structures will be activated, and services will continue without disruption. Staff will be supported through clear communication, induction processes, and leadership engagement, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. Residents and businesses can expect a seamless transition, with consistent access to services and simplified points of contact.

2 - Option B is the preferred option for Lichfield, South Staffordshire and Tamworth Councils.

GOVERNANCE & REPRESENTATION

The new Council will establish a governance framework that is transparent, accountable, and locally responsive. It will eliminate the complexities of two-tier governance, creating clear lines of decision-making and responsibility. Neighbourhood Area Committees will be introduced to ensure local representation and engagement, building on the strength of existing community organisations and enabling local people to influence local decisions and shape service delivery.

Elected Members will play a central role in the new structure, supported by streamlined Cabinet and committee arrangements. The Council will uphold the Nolan Principles of public life: selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership, embedding these values into its organisational culture and behaviours.

HOUSING & INFRASTRUCTURE

Southern & Mid-Staffordshire has a strong track record of housing delivery with the six existing Councils collectively exceeding their targets. The new authority will build on this success, with a target of 53,040 homes between 2024 and 2040, including social housing. A unified planning framework will accelerate delivery, reduce bureaucracy, and align with national policy.

Infrastructure planning will be integrated across the region, enabling coordinated investment in transport, regeneration, and employment. The Council will take a holistic approach, ensuring that regeneration initiatives reflect broader social, economic, and environmental needs. Strategic asset and estate management will support this vision, unlocking opportunities for growth and community development.

SERVICE INTEGRATION & TRANSFORMATION

The proposal outlines a clear strategy for integrating services from the six District and Borough Councils and the County Council. This includes harmonising service delivery models, aligning policies and procedures, and consolidating assets and contracts. Priority areas for transformation include adult social care, children's services, housing, waste management, and planning.

The Council will adopt a mixed economy approach to service delivery, exploring alternative models and partnerships to enhance efficiency and outcomes. Digital transformation will be a key enabler, improving accessibility, streamlining processes, and supporting data-driven decision-making. Continuous improvement will be embedded across all service areas, supported by performance management, resident feedback, and innovation.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATION

The new Council will foster strong partnerships across the public, private, and voluntary sectors. Existing relationships with health providers, police, fire services, and regional bodies will be maintained and strengthened. The Council will work collaboratively with the North Staffordshire Unitary Council and any future Strategic Authority to ensure alignment, shared priorities, and regional coherence.

Stakeholder engagement will be a core component of the transition and transformation process. The Council will actively involve residents, businesses, staff, and partners in shaping its future, promoting transparency, trust, and shared ownership of change.

DELIVERING A STRONGER STAFFORDSHIRE

PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

The Programme Management Office (PMO) will oversee the planning for the creation of the new Council, setting it up, readiness for Day One and delivery of a comprehensive transformation programme, including the approach to risk mitigation.

Transitional workstreams covering: legal and governance; finance; contracts and assets; service design; social services transition; people and workforce; and communications, will provide the capacity and expertise required to deliver the programme. These workstreams will continue beyond Vesting Day, supporting the Council's transformation journey and embedding a culture of continuous improvement.

CONCLUSION

This proposal represents a bold and pragmatic step forward for local government in Southern & Mid-Staffordshire. It offers a clear vision, a robust financial case, and a practical implementation plan for creating a single unitary authority that is fit for the future. By focusing on residents, removing duplication, streamlining governance, and empowering our residents, the new Council will deliver better outcomes, stronger partnerships, and a renewed sense of place.

The Leaders of Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire and Stafford Borough Councils are united in their commitment to this vision. They recognise the significance of the opportunity and the responsibility it carries. Through collaboration, transparency, and ambition, they aim to build a Council that reflects the values of its communities and delivers lasting benefits for generations to come.



“

Importantly, the model avoids the disaggregation costs associated with more complex reorganisation options, such as three Unitary Councils (Option B), further enhancing its financial viability.

”