Cannock Chase Council

Council Meeting

Wednesday 5 November 2025 at 6:00pm

In the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock

Part 1

Notice is hereby given of the above-mentioned meeting of the Council, which you are summoned to attend for the purpose of transacting the business as set out below:

1. Election of a Chair of the Council

To elect a Chair of the Council for the remainder of the 2025-26 municipal year.

2. Election of a Vice-Chair of the Council

To elect a Vice-Chair of the Council for the remainder of the 2025-26 municipal year.

3. Apologies

4. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

To declare any interests in accordance with the Code of Conduct.

Members should refer to the guidance as included as part of this agenda.

5. Minutes

To approve the Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2025: minute numbers 24 - 33; page numbers 18 - 26.

6. Questions Received from the Public Under Council Procedure Rule 4B(c)

(i) The following question has been submitted by Coleen Worral:

“Councillor Williams was quoted in BBC News on 28 September stating that "opening access to the performing arts would help to tackle social exclusion, support youth development and provide new opportunities for children and families across the district." Given these comments were made just weeks after Cabinet dismissed the community bid to save the Prince of Wales Theatre, can the council provide a detailed timeline of when alternative cultural provisions will be implemented, including specific venues, capacity figures, and annual budgets to replace the 70,000+ annual visits the theatre previously provided?”

(ii) The following question has been submitted by Andrew Moseley:

"Regarding the Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee meeting on 08 September, when asked who decided which stakeholders would be invited, Councillor Williams first stated Cabinet had made the decision, then claimed he had "misspoken" and that the Chair had decided. However, the Chair subsequently confirmed she had not known who was attending until the day of the meeting. Given this contradiction in a public council meeting, who actually decided that SLC consultants could attend whilst excluding both CCTT and the Theatres Trust?"

(iii) The following question has been submitted by Ben Farbrother:

"The Community Wellbeing Portfolio Leader recently announced at the latest Cabinet meeting (and later on social media) a £2.3 million investment in leisure facilities, claiming these are "income-generating assets." However, the current leisure operator has required subsidies for several years. Can the council confirm the specific annual revenue projections from this investment, and whether the contract with the new operator will include legally binding profit-share arrangements to justify describing these as income-generating rather than cost centres?"

7. Chair's Announcements and Correspondence

To receive any announcements and correspondence from the Chair of the Council.

8. Leader's Announcements and Correspondence

To receive any announcements and correspondence from the Leader of the Council.

9. Proposal for Local Government Re-organisation and Devolution

Report of the Chief Executive (Item 9.1 - 9.122).

10. Allocation of Seats to Committees and Other Bodies

Report of the Chief Executive (Item 10.1 - 10.4).

11. Changes to Membership of Committees 2025-26

To receive notification from Group Leaders of proposed changes to memberships of Committees for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year.

12. Recommendations Referred from Cabinet

Council is requested to consider a recommendation from the Cabinet meeting held on 9 October 2025 in respect of the following matters:

(i) Capital Investment to Chase and Rugeley Leisure Centres and Cannock Park Golf Course (Cabinet 09/10/25, Minute Number 51)

"That Council be recommended to incorporate the £2,306,000 in the capital budget for the 2025/26 financial year to enhance facilities at Chase and Rugeley Leisure Centres and Cannock Park Golf Course."

The accompanying report for the above recommendation can be viewed on the 9 October 2025 Cabinet meeting page on the Council's website.

13. Motions Received Under Council Procedure Rule 6

To consider the following Motion submitted in accordance with Council Procedure Rule 6:

(i) Enhancing Transparency Through Recording and Broadcasting of Public Meetings

Submitted by Councillor P.T. Jones (Item 13.1 - 13.2).

14. Comments and Questions on Part 1 Minutes of Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels under Rule 9

To receive any comments or questions submitted under Rule 9 on Part 1 Minutes of meetings of Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees or Panels as included in the Minutes Record circulated alongside this agenda.

T. Clegg
Chief Executive

27 October 2025

Guidance on Declaring Interests at Meetings

Declaring Interests at Full Council

The Code of Conduct requires that where you have an interest in any business of the Council, and where you are aware or ought reasonably to be aware of the existence of the interest, and you attend a meeting of the Council at which the business is considered, you must disclose to that meeting the existence and nature of that interest at the commencement of that consideration, or when the interest becomes apparent.

The following interests must be disclosed where they may be affected by any matter arising at the meeting:

(a) A **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest** is an interest of yourself or your partner (which means spouse or civil partner, a person with whom you are living as husband or wife, or a person with whom you are living as if you are civil partners) in respect of employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried out for profit or gain; sponsorship; contracts; land; licences; corporate tenancies; or securities, as defined with the Localism Act, 2011.

(b) A **Registerable Interest** includes any unpaid directorships or any body of which you are a member, or are in a position of general control, and (i) to which you are appointed by the Council, or (ii) which exercises functions of a public nature, or (iii) which is directed to charitable purposes, or (iv) one of whose principal purposes includes the influence of public opinion or policy.

(c) A **Non-Registerable Interest** is any other matter affecting your financial interest or well-being, or a financial interest or well-being of a relative or close associate.

Where the matter **directly relates** to the interest, you must not take part in any discussion or vote on the matter and must not remain in the room unless you have been granted a dispensation.

Where the matter **affects** the interest, but does not **directly relate** to it, you can remain in the meeting and take part **unless** the matter affects the financial interest or well-being to a greater extent than it affects the financial interests of the majority of inhabitants of the ward affected by the decision, and a reasonable member of the public knowing all the facts would believe that it would affect your view of the wider public interest.

Please make the nature of the interest clear to the meeting

It would be helpful if, prior to the commencement of the meeting, Members informed the Monitoring Officer of any declarations of interest, of which you are aware. This will help in the recording of the declarations in the Minutes of the meeting.

Some items will be mentioned in the papers for full Council but are not actually being considered by Full Council. In such circumstances the Monitoring Officer's advice to Members is that there is no need to declare an interest unless the particular matter is mentioned or discussed. As a general rule, Members only need to declare an interest at full Council in the following circumstances:

- Where a matter is before the Council for a decision and/or
- Where the matter in which the Member has an interest is specifically mentioned or discussed at the Council meeting.

Cannock Chase Council

Minutes of the Meeting of the Council

Held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Cannock

On Wednesday 24 September 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Part 1

Present

Councillors**:**

Thornley, S. (Chair)
Samuels, G. (Vice-Chair)

Aston, J.	Johnson, T.
Bancroft, J.	Jones, P. *(arrived 6:02pm)*
Boulton, C.	Jones, V.
Bullock, L.	Lyons, N.
Cartwright, S. *(arrived 6:16pm)*	Mawle, D.
Craddock, R.	Muckley, A.
Fisher, P.	Preece, J.
Fitzgerald, A.	Prestwood, J.
Freeman, M.	Sutherland, M.
Gaye, D.	Thompson, S.
Haden, P.	Thornley, S.J.
Hill, J.	Todd, D.
Hill, J.O.	Williams, D.
Hughes, G.	Wilson, L.

24. Apologies

Apologies for absence were noted for Councillors L. Bishop, M. Dunnett, J. Elson, J. Johnson, O. Lyons, H. Page.

It was noted that Councillor Cartwright would be arriving late.

25. Declarations of Interests of Members in Contracts and Other Matters and Restriction on Voting by Members

None received.

26. Minutes

Resolved:

That the Minutes of the Council meeting held on 23 July 2025 be approved as a correct record.

27. Chair's Announcements and Correspondence

(i) Kings Award for Industry

The Chair advised that the King's Award for Industry had been awarded to a small but effective company in Hednesford called Mobell Communications.

The Chair noted he was impressed that they were a very small and philanthropic company. One year, the company made so much money that the chairman of the company said they could either choose to buy two new Ferraris or build a school in Malawi. They chose to build the school.

The Award was received by members of staff, not the chief executive, not the chairman of the group, not the senior managers. The staff voted for who should receive the award. As a former union man, the Chair noted it was a very heartwarming thing to see. Having spoken with staff, some of them had been working there 13, 14, 15, 20 plus years.

The company's main trading partners were Japan and China, and they were breaking big grounds in America. They had met with the Ambassador of the Japanese Embassy and that was the importance put on this small industry, small company in Hednesford.

The company had been invited to attend afternoon tea at a later date and to be presented to the Council having won the Award.

(Councillor P. Jones arrived during the presentation of this item.)

(ii) Blue Plaque for Ethel Powell

The Chair advised he attended very recently the unveiling of a blue plaque in honour of Ethel Powell. Ethel was a formidable character who for many years had stood and fought on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis to ensure that there was a hospital in Cannock, which of course was achieved.

The plaque, which was handmade, was made by the Soroptimists and placed by the clock in Cannock town centre alongside a plaque for already there for the Soroptimists.

The Soroptimists were a global volunteer organisation who worked to improve the lives of women and girls through advocating gender equality and human rights. Their focus was on education and human rights and enabling all opportunities for women no matter what class, colour, gender or creed.

The Chair noted it was a fantastic ceremony that was important for the whole town.

(iii) St. Luke's Church - 'Walk Down the Aisle' Event

The Chair advised that he had been contacted by St. Luke's Church as they were planning to organise an event in April 2026 called 'Walk Down the Aisle',

It would display wedding dresses and memorabilia and aim to showcase how weddings had changed over the years. The Church was seeking donations of items for the event, so all Members were encouraged to do so.

(iv) St. Luke's Church - Drug and Alcohol Addiction Support

The Chair advised that he had spent an amazing day with drug addicts and alcoholics at St. Luke's Church Hall on Saturday. He had planned to stay for half an hour and was still there 2½ hours later. The work done was amazing, all of which was undertaken by unpaid volunteers.

The church hall was absolutely full, and the Chair noted it was amazing to hear the stories of those present who all met to support each other and those he spoke to were very open about their experiences.

The Chair would pass on to Members details of the organisations who ran the events so they could visit and see the amazing work done. Organisations involved include Narcotics Anonymous, Better Ways, and First Steps. He noted that seeing those three organisations work together to provide support was absolutely amazing.

28. Leader's Announcements and Correspondence

(i) Councillor T. Johnson

The Deputy Leader raised that before turning to Council business, he wanted to honour a man who defined what public service meant, Councillor T. Johnson.

When Councillor Johnson was a young deputy at Lea Hall Pit, the Deputy Leader's grandfather, Guy Waddell, was his overman. Guy was legendary for what he did for the men and their safety underground.

Guy took Councillor Johnson under his wing, taught him that underground, your word was your bond, your loyalty was your life, and your team came first. Those values remained for Councillor Johnson and were in the Deputy Leader. The bonds forged underground were eternal.

Guy mentored Councillor Johnson and Councillor Johnson mentored the Deputy Leader. That was how it worked - knowledge passed down, values transferred, service as inheritance.

For twenty-five years as a Councillor, Councillor Johnson had carried those values into this chamber and into the work he did for the whole community. Service before self, integrity, and community first always.

Councillor Johnson had been a councillor since 1990 to the present day. From a young councillor in Anglesey ward to Leader of the Council for several years, through austerity, through COVID, through all crises that local government had faced, Councillor Johnson had been there and never wavered. He had never forgotten the people and communities he served.

The Deputy Leader believed that all would agree that Councillor Johnson had earned the right to focus on his health, wife and family. But, typical of him, he was staying on to represent the people of Chadsmoor and to help all in the community and chamber. His work was not finished.

The Deputy Leader then thanked Councillor Johnson and wished him to get well soon.

Members then joined in a standing ovation to Councillor Johnson.

Councillor Johnson then spoke to advise he had first become involved in local politics in 1970, noting there had been successes and failures during that time, but gave thanks to officers and Members for putting up with him, noting it had been a pleasure working with them all. He also thanked officers and Members for the unseen work they did as a lot went on behind the scenes that a lot of people did not see. Thanks were also given those who had contacted him asking about his health, which had been very much appreciated. He would be remaining as ward councillor until 2028, continuing to represent the people of Chadsmoor.

(ii) Enforcement

The Deputy Leader raised that he had a powerful message for people who illegally dumped rubbish in the District. He hoped that Members had seen the video of the car that had been used for fly-tipping purposes being crushed after it was seized by the Council. So, as well as facing prison time or hefty fines, people fly-tipping in the District may find that they will not be able to use their vehicle ever again.

Congratulations were given to all involved and Members were reminded that the Council always needed information to gather as much evidence as possible if those who illegally dumped rubbish were to be successfully dealt with.

(iii) Winter Support

The Deputy Leader advised it was excellent to reaffirm the Council's commitment to supporting local residents by extending its partnership with the excellent energy advice charity, Beat the Cold.

This initiative was being funded through the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Fund allocation for 2025-26 and included help with suppliers regarding energy debt, signposting and referral to partner agencies to maximise people's incomes, assisting local people in managing their accounts properly and appropriately to their needs, and supporting clients to access financial assistance.

(Councillor Hughes left the meeting during the presentation of this item.)

(iv) Heath Hayes Park Masterplan Feedback

The Deputy Leader thanked all who gave the Council feedback on the masterplan for improvements to Heath Hayes Park. The consultation ended on 14 September with hundreds of people having had the opportunity to share their views at events and online on proposals for a fantastic, fully inclusive play area in the park along with other improvements. He noted that Members would be aware of the great track record the Council had of revamping its local parks.

(v) Youth Investment

The Deputy Leader advised that much of the positive contribution being made in local communities was the result of the Council's partnership working. It was a delight to hear that a local dance academy was to be the recipient of the Community Safety Fund, which would enable them to offer some free places for children from just three years old to fourteen years old.

It was expected that Members would be aware that this fund was part of an initiative with the Staffordshire Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner which supported projects that encouraged positive, community-focused activities such as the award-winning Crystal Academy in Hednesford.

The Crystal Academy was recognised as 'Community Leader of the Year' at the 2025 Business Awards. That was probably no surprise to those who were aware of their commitment to delivering outreach and community-led programmes that built confidence, creativity and resilience in young people.

Councillor Hughes returned to the meeting during the presentation of this item.

Councillor Cartwright arrived at the meeting during the presentation of this item.

29. Election of Leader of the Council and Form and Composition of the Cabinet

Councillor Aston nominated Councillor S. (Steve) Thornley to be the Leader of the Council, which was seconded by Councillor D. Williams.

Councillor Mawle nominated Councillor Muckley to be Leader of the Council, which was seconded by Councillor Bancroft.

(Prior to this matter being put to the vote, Councillor S. Thornley stepped aside from chairing the remainder of this agenda item and the Vice-Chair took over proceedings.)

Resolved:

That Councillor S. (Steve) Thornley be elected Leader of the Council to hold office in accordance with the Constitution.

Councillor S. Thornley read and signed the declaration of acceptance of office.

The Head of Law & Governance clarified that as Councillor S. Thornley had been elected Leader of the Council, he could no longer hold the position of Chair of the Council with immediate effect.

The Leader of the Council, Councillor S. Thornley, then notified the Council of the form and composition of the Cabinet:

Councillor	**Portfolio**
Thornley, S.	Leader of the Council
Williams, D.	Deputy Leader of the Council and Community Wellbeing Portfolio Leader
Preece, J.	Environment and Climate Change Portfolio Leader
Thornley, S.J.	Housing and Corporate Assets Portfolio Leader
Samuels, G.	Parks, Culture and Heritage Portfolio Leader
Freeman, M.	Regeneration and High Streets Portfolio Leader
Prestwood, J.	Resources and Transformation Portfolio Leader

The Leader advised that Councillor Samuels would take on the Cabinet role with effect from Thursday 25 September so as to operate as Vice-Chair for the remainder of the Council meeting.

30. Changes to Membership of Committees etc.

The Leader of the Labour Group, Councillor S. Thornley, notified of changes to the Labour Group's membership of the following committees for the remainder of the 2025/26 municipal year:

- Audit & Governance Committee.
- Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee
- Health, Wellbeing and The Community Scrutiny Committee
- Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee

Resolved:

That:

(A) Councillor Boulton be appointed to the Audit & Governance Committee in place of Councillor S. Thornley.

(B) Councillor T. Johnson be appointed to the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor S. Thornley.

(C) Councillor Aston be appointed as the Labour Group's substitute member on the Economic Prosperity Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor Samuels.

(D) Councillor T. Johnson be appointed to the Health, Wellbeing and the Community Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor Samuels and be appointed Chair of the Committee.

(E) Councillor J.O. Hill to appointed as the Labour Group's substitute member on the Health, Wellbeing and the Community Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor S. Thornley.

(F) Councillor T. Johnson be appointed to the Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee in place of Councillor S. Thornley.

31. Recommendations Referred from Cabinet

Consideration was given to the following recommendations to Council, made by the Cabinet at its meeting held on 31 July 2025, in respect of:

(i) Permission to Spend - Swimming Pool Support Fund (Cabinet 31/07/25, Minute Number 25)

"That Council be recommended to include £145,000 in the capital programme for the installation of Photo Voltaic Panels at Chase Leisure Centre."

Resolved:

That £145,000 be included in the capital programme for the installation of Photo Voltaic Panels at Chase Leisure Centre.

(ii) UK Shared Prosperity Fund 2025/26 (Cabinet 31/07/25, Minute Number 26)

"That Council be recommended to amend the current capital programme to accommodate the sum of £210,000 in respect of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to ensure delivery of capital projects identified in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme for 2025/26."

Resolved:

That the current capital programme be amended to accommodate the sum of £210,000 in respect of the UK Shared Prosperity Fund to ensure delivery of capital projects identified in the UK Shared Prosperity Fund programme for 2025/26.

(iii) Development of Heath Hayes Park: Masterplan and Play Area Refurbishment (Cabinet 31/07/25, Minute Number 28)

"That Council be recommended to include £47,580 (Forest of Mercia grant funding) in the capital programme for 2025/26, as detailed in paragraph 6.1 of the 31 July 2025 Cabinet report, to deliver phase 1 of the Heath Hayes Park development project."

Resolved:

That £47,580 Forest of Mercia grant funding be included in the capital programme for 2025/26, as detailed in paragraph 6.1 of the 31 July 2025 Cabinet report, to deliver phase 1 of the Heath Hayes Park development project.

32. Comments and Questions on Part 1 Minutes of Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels Under Rule 9

(i) The following question on Part 1 Minutes was asked by Councillor Muckley:

"Cabinet Minutes - 4 September 2025:

"Cabinet decided in a meeting dated 4th September to follow officer's recommendations to not go ahead with the Cannock Chase Theatre Trust's bid to secure a Community Asset Transfer of the Prince of Wales. This was referred to the Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee Meeting of 8th September, giving members two working days to prepare questions relating to this decision.

Opposition parties were advised by the Council's legal adviser that the decision could not be "called-in" as provided for by Section 31(3) as the Scrutiny Committee was effectively serving this function. Heads of Service, the CEO and s151 officer of CCDC were present, as were three cabinet members and a representative from SLC, the consultants who assessed the Cannock Chase Theatre Trust's application.

No one from the Theatre Trust was invited, a national organisation who specialise and advise theatres and councils on decisions involving theatres; no one from Wolverhampton Grand Theatre was asked to attend despite writing a letter in support and; no one from the Cannock Chase Theatre Trust was asked to attend.

In a normal call-in, the members who are requesting the call-in list the proposed attendees. Were I to call this in I would have invited all of the above so that the meeting had an air of fairness. With these additional attendees the meeting would have been perceived to be more of a scrutiny rather than a *fait accompli*. Can I ask who exactly decided who should be invited to the scrutiny meeting?"

The following response was provided by Councillor Williams, Deputy Leader of the Council:

"The decision on whether to proceed with a Community Asset Transfer was an Executive decision. It was an evaluation of a bid that had been submitted by Cannock Chase Theatre Trust in accordance with an evaluation process that was set out at the start.

The process was drawn up with the assistance of a reputable consultant with national experience of evaluating such bids. Cabinet are lawfully entitled to refer decisions directly to Scrutiny without waiting for a call-in to be made.

The role of Scrutiny is not to make a case for opposing Executive decisions, but to act as a critical friend in asking questions about the reasons behind the making of those decisions to ensure they are well founded. All information supporting the Cabinet's decision was published both in the Cabinet Agenda and the Scrutiny agenda in advance of the meetings.

The parties who took part in the evaluation decision were invited to the meeting. Senior officers, Cabinet Members, and representatives from the Council's theatre consultant were all present and answered numerous questions. I am satisfied that the process followed was fair and reasonable. Ultimately, the Scrutiny Committee took a democratic vote and determined that the matter should not be reconsidered by Cabinet."

Councillor Muckley asked the following supplementary question:

"The written answer we've already been given did not answer my question, so I wonder if you could answer my question as to who decided who should come as it does look unfair that the consultants SLC who provided the report but weren't part of the decision

making, because surely that was Cabinet otherwise they've fettered their discretion, so surely if it was just Cabinet who made that decision it should have just been Cabinet who attended. Why was SLC invited but nobody else that helped Cabinet make that decision? Why were they not invited? Who made that decision?"

Councillor Williams provided the following response to the supplementary question:

"SLC were there because they were part of the evaluation and so that's why they were there to answer questions on their evaluation, and I think they gave robust and comprehensive answers regarding their evaluation. Regarding, who made the decision, that was a Cabinet decision.

Councillor Muckley then raised a point of clarification to seek confirmation that it was the Cabinet who made the decision who should attend.

In response, the Deputy Leader advised:

"Apologies Chair, I misspoke there, it was the Chair of the scrutiny committee that made that decision on who should have been there."

The Chair of the Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee, Councillor Aston, then raised the following point of clarification:

"Can I just correct the Deputy Leader. I'm the Chair of that scrutiny committee and I wasn't told who was going to be at that meeting until I actually arrived there. I had no part in inviting anyone to that meeting."

(ii) The following question on Part 1 Minutes was asked by Councillor Muckley:

""The minutes of the Responsible Scrutiny Committee of 8th September have, at the date of writing this question (18/09/2025), not been released. Under Council Procedure Rule 9(4) councillors are permitted to ask questions arising from minutes of recent scrutiny and cabinet meetings.

The failure to release these, even in draft form, have prevented councillors from potentially asking questions. Residents of Cannock Chase District are shaken by cabinet's decision to refuse to entertain the Cannock Chase Theatre Trust's application to undertake the running of the Prince of Wales Theatre and have been contacting their councillors in large numbers.

It is right that they be able to see the minutes of the scrutiny meeting which followed the decision and that we, as councillors, are able to ask questions. Can I ask whether it was an error to fail to include the minutes in the minute record or whether it was a deliberate attempt to prevent councillors from asking questions?"

The following response was provided by Councillor Williams, Deputy Leader of the Council:

"I totally agree with the sentiment, but there has been no attempt to conceal the minutes from the Scrutiny Committee meeting. Unfortunately, due to staff taking annual leave, and the volume of discussion at that meeting, it was not practicable to produce draft minutes in time for circulation last week.

As always, if Members do have any questions arising from previous meetings, they should always contact Officers, the Leader, Cabinet or Committee Chair in the first instance before needing to raise a question in full Council."

Councillor Muckley asked the following supplementary question:

"Could I clarify then that at the next full Council meeting we will be permitted, even though it happened before this full Council meeting, we will be permitted to ask questions on that scrutiny committee meeting because it will be in the next Minutes Record?"

Councillor Williams provided the following response to the supplementary question:

"I can absolutely confirm that."

The Vice-Chair welcomed Councillor P. Jones to the chamber following his recent election back on to the Council.

33. Comments and Questions on Part 2 Minutes of Cabinet, Committees, Sub-Committees and Panels Under Rule 9

None received.

The meeting closed at 6:59 p.m.

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Chair

Proposal for Local Government Re-organisation and Devolution

Committee: Council

Date of Meeting: 5 November 2025

Report of: Chief Executive

Portfolio: The Leader of the Council

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 To set out for Members the potential options for Local Government re-organisation in Staffordshire and to propose a single unitary council for southern and mid Staffordshire.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That Council considers the potential options for Local Government Re-organisation in Staffordshire and recommends its preferred option to Cabinet.

Reasons for Recommendations

2.2 The Council has been invited to submit proposals for devolution and local government re-organisation in Staffordshire in response to the Government's White Paper.

2.3 The decision to submit a proposal is a decision for the Executive and the Council's views will be reported to the next Cabinet meeting for members of the Cabinet to consider.

3 Key Issues

3.1 The Government published a White Paper in December 2024 setting out their plans for devolution and local government reorganisation.

3.2 The Government is seeking to:

(i) achieve devolution through the formation of Strategic Authorities, preferably with a mayor (however, the Government has not published a timetable for establishing Strategic authorities); and

(ii) facilitate local government reorganisation in England for two-tier areas (such as Staffordshire) which will see the abolition of County, District and Borough Councils and small unitary councils and the creation of large unitary councils by April 2028.

3.3 Councils were invited to submit initial proposals by 21 March 2025, with final proposals due by 28 November 2025.

3.4 A joint proposal of the six councils in Southern and Mid Staffordshire (Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford Borough, and Tamworth was submitted to Government supporting a single unitary Council in the south but also made reference to the potential splitting of this into two unitaries.

3.5 Following the submission of the outline proposal, the Council along with the other five councils in mid and southern Staffordshire appointed consultants, KPMG, to assist with the further development and drafting of the final submission to the Government.

3.6 KMPG, working with the Leaders and Chief Executives, undertook an initial analysis of a range of options. As a result of this analysis it was agreed to discount all but two options - one or two unitary councils for mid and southern Staffordshire.

3.7 Initially it was anticipated that a high level financial and data analysis would indicate if there was a clear preferred model. But following discussions of the data analysis with the Leaders it was agreed that KPMG would produce two business cases; one for a single unitary council in mid and southern Staffordshire and the other for two unitary councils.

3.8 The work on the draft business cases concluded in September and following further discussions with the Leaders, there has been a difference in views as to the preferred model. Cannock Chase Council's Leader along with the Leaders of East Staffordshire and Stafford Borough favour the single unitary council whilst the Leaders of Lichfield, South Staffordshire, and Tamworth favour two unitary councils for southern and mid Staffordshire. All six Leaders in southern and mid Staffordshire support a northern unitary council based on existing district and borough boundaries which they see as complementary to both proposals for the southern and mid Staffordshire proposals. The proposal for north and south unitary councils for Staffordshire is attached at Appendix 1.

3.9 A summary of the reasons for favouring a single unitary council for southern and mid Staffordshire is set out below:

- **Financial Savings** - it will deliver more savings than two unitaries in the south. ✓
- **Disaggregation of social care and education** - it minimises the risks and costs associated with disaggregating social care and education and will ensure a smoother transition to the new unitary. ✓
- **Greater voice** - a single unitary will have a greater voice regionally than two smaller councils and be able to work effectively with the new Strategic Authority. ✓
- **Delivery of outcomes & targets** - one larger council will have greater capacity and stronger position to deliver government outcomes and targets particularly those for housing supply. ✓
- **Gross Value Added** - there is a balanced Gross Value Added (GVA) between the north and south. ✓
- **Local Identities** - arrangements will be put in place to maintain the local identity and meet the needs of the various communities across mid and southern Staffordshire. ✓
- **Transformation** - greater scale to deliver transformation and improve service delivery to our customers. ✓

- **Resilience -** greater resilience to withstand shocks. ✓
- **Easier for residents -** to understand and interact with a single council in the south. ✓

From a compliance perspective, the proposal:

- Meets the indicative population criteria set by Government. ✓
- Does not disrupt current District and Borough Council boundaries. ✓

3.10 Whilst work has been ongoing in southern and mid Staffordshire, the Councils in the north and Staffordshire County Council have been working on their own preferred models. A summary of the models is set out below (links to the final proposals will be provided when they are published):

Council	**Proposal**	**Details**	**Assessment**
Cannock Chase, Stafford Borough, and East Staffordshire Councils	North and Southern & Mid Staffordshire Unitaries	South to include Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford Borough, Tamworth	• Both Councils >500,000 population at Vesting Day • No boundary changes • £29.9m savings and financial stability • No disaggregation of social services • Sufficient scale to deliver services improvements
Stoke on Trent City Council	North and South Unitaries	North to include Stoke, Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire Moorlands	• Both Councils >500,000 population at Vesting Day • No boundary changes • Financial stability • No disaggregation of social services • Sufficient scale to deliver services improvements
Lichfield, South Staffordshire, and Tamworth Councils	North, South-West and South-East	North = as for Stoke South-East - East Staffordshire, Lichfield, and Tamworth South-West - Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire, and Stafford Borough	• Small population sizes, significantly under 500,000 • Delivers some financial efficiencies, but undermined by duplication of key roles • No boundary changes • Smaller Councils with duplication of services, potential for operational inefficiencies • Need to disaggregate some of social services • Smaller Council areas could enable greater sense of localism

Council	Proposal	Details	Assessment
Staffordshire Moorlands District Council	North and South Unitary (with boundary changes)	As for Stoke but proposal to include northern parts of Stafford Borough and East Staffordshire	• Both Councils >500,000 population at Vesting Day • Boundary changes without sufficient justification • Not supported by enough Councils in North and South • No disaggregation of social services • Alignment with existing stakeholder partnerships limited by boundary changes
Staffordshire County Council	East and West Unitary Councils	East to include Stoke, Staffordshire Moorlands, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, and Tamworth West to include Newcastle, Stafford, South Staffordshire, and Cannock Chase	• Incompatible with functioning economic geography – there is no recognised Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA) • Not reflective of local identity, culture, and history – Stoke-on-Trent is placed in the east when it is located in the northwest • Both Councils >500,000 population at Vesting Day • No boundary changes • No disaggregation of social services • Not supported by enough Councils in the North and South
Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council	Standalone unitary for Newcastle-under Lyme	Borough of Newcastle-under-Lyme only	• Does not meet essential Government criteria for reorganisation e.g. population < 500,000 so unlikely to have sufficient scale to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.

3.11 This Council's proposal is complementary to that of Stoke on Trent City Council and there is agreement in principle by the respective Leaders to submit these as a combined proposal for Staffordshire, subject to the agreement of the relevant Councils.

3.12 The Government has emphasised the importance for principal Local Authorities to work in partnership with communities at the neighbourhood level. It is proposed that new Unitary Authorities will develop plans to introduce a number of Neighbourhood Area Committees led by local ward councillors and including representation from town and parish councils, along with other partner organisations and community groups. The Council is supportive of this as it will help to maintain local democracy and identify and help to offset the gap that will be created by new larger councils. The Government recognises the value that town and parish councils offer to their communities and the Council is supportive of the intention to improve the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities.

3.13 In terms of devolution, there is support for a Staffordshire Strategic Authority that covers the area of the county and the city with a mayor as this will increase access to funding and government departments. There is a strong basis for this proposal as the county is fortunate to have coterminous boundaries with other key public bodies such as the Police and Fire Services and the Integrated Care Board. The proposed area is just short of the requirement for the Strategic Authority to cover a population of 1.5 million at this time and it may be necessary to look wider for other partners. The Councils would welcome further information from Government on the additional powers and funding that will be devolved to the strategic authority. The Government has yet to set out a timescale and process for the development of Strategic Authorities in two tier areas preventing them from benefitting from the funding and freedoms afforded to them.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 The Government's proposals for devolution and local government re-organisation will have an impact on all of the Council's priorities to a degree though there is an expectation that "business as usual" will be maintained during the development and transition phases.

4.2 The primary impact will be on the Council's priority for being an Effective Council.

5. Report Detail

Background

5.1 On 16 December 2024, the Government published a White Paper setting out their plans for devolution and local government reorganisation.

5.2 The Government is seeking to:

(i) achieve devolution through the formation of Strategic Authorities, preferably with a mayor; and

(ii) to facilitate local government reorganisation in England for two-tier areas (such as Staffordshire) which will see the abolition of County, District and Borough Councils and the creation of unitary councils.

5.3 The Government clearly states that their goal is "universal coverage in England of Strategic Authorities" and "devolution by default." The Government have made clear their ambition to reform local government and implement unitary authorities across England and set out a timetable to achieve this by 2028.

5.4 The Government is seeking consensus in the development of the area proposals but is also seeking extended Secretary of State / ministerial powers to intervene and direct where necessary.

5.5 Further details on the Government's proposals can be found in Appendix 2.

5.6 Councils were invited to submit initial proposals by 21 March 2025, with final proposals due by 28 November 2025.

5.7 The Council initially approved a submission supporting two unitary councils for Staffordshire but did not discount exploring a three unitary council model as it recognised the need for data analysis of the options.

5.8 Subsequent to the outline proposal considered by Council, the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Deputy Chief Executive (Resources), acting in accordance with delegated authority approved the submission to Government of a joint proposal with the 5 councils in Southern and Mid Staffordshire (East Staffordshire, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford Borough and Tamworth). This proposal also focussed on a single unitary Council in the south but also made reference to the possibility of splitting this into two unitaries.

5.9 As referred to in 3.5 and 3.6, the six councils in mid and southern Staffordshire have been working with KPMG, to develop two options which were determined to be the most appropriate to take forward based on an initial assessment. Five workstreams were set up to support the work on developing the Finance and data;

- Service design and transformation;
- People and workforce;
- Legal and governance; and
- Communications and Engagement.

Each workstream has been led by one of the Chief Executives with representatives from relevant professional disciplines from each Council.

5.10 The work on the two draft business cases concluded in September and following further discussions with the Leaders, there has been a difference in views as to the preferred model. This Council along with the Leaders of Stafford Borough and East Staffordshire favour the single unitary council whilst the Leaders of Lichfield, South Staffordshire, and Tamworth favour two unitary councils for southern and mid Staffordshire. The proposal for north and south unitary councils for Staffordshire is attached at Appendix 1.

Current Regional Position for LGR

5.11 Currently there are a number of options being considered across Staffordshire and these are summarised in the table at 3.10.

5.12 Option A: two unitary Councils for North and Southern and Mid-Staffordshire, emerges as the strongest model, offering a balanced economic geography, population scale, and alignment with local identity. It avoids boundary changes, maintains service continuity, and enables financial sustainability without the need for disaggregation. Importantly, it is supported by councils across both areas and provides a credible foundation for a future Strategic Authority.

5.13 Option B: three unitary councils. Whilst this offers a greater sense of localism, the smaller scale of each council limits the potential for strategic impact and financial resilience and does not meet the population thresholds. It introduces duplication of roles and services, reducing operational efficiency and increasing complexity, particularly with regards delivery of social services.

5.14 Option C: two unitary model but with boundary changes, this lacks sufficient justification. Although it maintains population balance and avoids some service disaggregation, it does not have broad support across councils, weakening its viability. The Council strongly disagrees with any proposal to include parts of the Borough in a Northern Unitary and the remainder in a Southern Unitary. This is a red-line issue for the Council.

5.15 Option D: two unitary Councils for East and West Staffordshire, is misaligned with the functional geography of Staffordshire. It places Stoke-on-Trent in an illogical position and lacks support from key stakeholders. Despite meeting population thresholds, it fails to reflect local identity and risks undermining regional coherence.

5.16 Option E: two unitary Councils - Stoke-on-Trent City Council and a single Staffordshire unitary, results in significant population imbalance and limited financial sustainability. It lacks support and does not provide a credible platform for strategic county-wide leadership, misaligning with the Government's expectations for financial sustainability for existing small Unitaries. This option is no longer being proposed by any authority.

Cannock Chase Council's Position

5.17 A summary of the reasons for favouring a single unitary council for southern and mid Staffordshire is set out in 3.9 and is explained in more detail below.

(i) Financial Savings

The savings for one unitary in the south will be significantly more than for two unitary councils; £29.9m compared to £25.6m. There will be greater savings from a single management team, reducing IT systems from circa six to one, rationalisation of assets as not all the current Council HQs and depot facilities will be needed and economies of scale from the alignment of contracts for goods and services.

(ii) Disaggregation of social care and education

Whilst some of the services delivered by the County Council will need to be transferred to the northern unitary, Stoke on Trent City Council will have the infrastructure to support this and Staffordshire County Council's infrastructure would support the southern unitary.

This should help to de-risk the disaggregation of such high-profile services and provide for a smoother transition for customers, staff, and stakeholders. If two unitaries are created in mid and southern Staffordshire, the County's infrastructure would have to be split / duplicated across the two new councils and this would increase the level of cost, risk, and disruption of services to our most vulnerable residents.

(iii) Greater voice

A single unitary covering the whole of mid and southern Staffordshire will have a greater voice regionally than two smaller councils to influence its economy and infrastructure. It will also better support the retention of the current close relationship with the West Midlands councils/conurbation. Cannock Chase, Lichfield, Tamworth, and South Staffordshire Councils all border the West Midlands conurbation, with their residents choosing to travel into it for work or pleasure purposes. Stafford and East Staffordshire also have strong rail links into the conurbation. The importance of the relationship is reflected in the fact that Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, and Tamworth joined the inception of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), with Cannock Chase and Tamworth going on to become non-constituent members of the West Midlands Combined Authority.

(iv) Delivery of outcomes & targets

One larger council will have greater capacity and a stronger position to deliver the government's new outcomes framework and targets, particularly those for housing supply. The set up of the new council will provide the financial force and advantages of economies of scale to ensure streamlined planning processes, reduce bureaucracy, and deliver a one stop shop for all council services such as planning and building control for the area. We believe that our approach can build on good practice and accelerate improvement by working closely with partners and across the geography.

(v) Local identities

Each district and borough has its own unique identity and needs. Through close working with town and parish councils, and the effective use of neighbourhood area committees, we will retain and maintain a close connection with our local communities, protect their unique identities, and ensure that we meet their needs.

(vi) Gross Value Added (GVA)

A single Southern and Mid Staffordshire unitary will provide a balanced and healthy GVA per capita with our Northern counterpart. This will provide balanced levels of productivity and positive implications for the distribution of economic prosperity among residents across the whole geography of Staffordshire.

(vii) Transformation

As a single unitary in the south, there will be greater opportunities and the scale to deliver transformation and improve service delivery to our customers. With multiple IT systems to rationalise, the savings can be used to invest in more modern technology to improve our online offer to customers, streamline processes and deliver efficiencies. Whilst IT will be a key driver of our transformation, there will also be opportunities to transform our workforce and our assets. With greater scale, we will aim to be an employer of choice, supporting the learning and development of our workforce and encouraging apprenticeships to develop our professionals for the future. In terms of our assets there is an opportunity to rationalise the current estate and invest in a smaller number of buildings which are central to our communities, bringing together multiple services and partners, and ensuring they are fit for the future and reduce our carbon footprint.

(viii) Resilience

The scale of the proposed single unitary council for the south will give it greater resilience to withstand both financial and operational shocks. Having greater scale will mean that resources will be easier to redeploy should the need arise on a temporary basis without impacting wider planned service delivery.

(ix) Easier for residents

The simplicity of having one single tier council for the south will make it easier for residents to understand the change being made to their Council (it will the same one for all residents in the south of the county) and it will be much easier for them to interact with.

(x) Population

The two unitaries proposed, one for the north and one for the south will meet the indicative target population requirements by vesting day, with the north having an estimated population of 518,710 and the south 718,778.

(xi) Council Boundaries

The proposals for a unitary council in the north and one in the south, are based on the existing boundaries for the district and borough councils, which means that there will be no need to split the existing council areas. We believe that a north and south split preserves the existing relationship between neighbouring councils both within and outside the county. It also better maintains the identity of the respective areas than an east / west split and will be operationally efficient for service delivery.

5.18 The Government has indicated an intention to "rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice." The Council is supportive of this as it will help to maintain local democracy and identity and help to offset the gap that will be created by new larger councils. It is however recognised that Stafford does not currently have a town council and this is covered in a separate report.

Current Position for Devolution

5.19 There is support for a Staffordshire Strategic Authority that covers the area of the county and the city with a mayor as this will increase access to funding and government departments. There is a strong basis for this proposal as the county is fortunate to have coterminous boundaries with other key public bodies such as the Police and Fire Services and the Integrated Care Board. The proposed area is just short of the requirement for the Strategic Authority to cover a population of 1.5 million at this time and it may be necessary to look wider for other partners. The Councils would welcome further information from Government on the additional powers and funding that will be devolved to the strategic authority. The Government has yet to set out a timescale and process for the development of Strategic Authorities in two tier areas preventing them from benefitting from the funding and freedoms afforded to them.

Next Steps and Timescales

5.20 The government will be consulting on the proposals for LGR before making a decision on which model is to be implemented. The decision is expected in summer 2026.

5.21 Whilst awaiting the government's decision, the proposal sets out a plan for transitional workstreams to continue the work that has commenced as part of developing the proposal to ensure that we are well prepared for the creation of the new council(s).

5.22 Once a decision has been made regarding the structure of the new unitary councils, but prior to the election of Shadow Members or the appointment of senior leadership, work will commence on the development of a detailed implementation plan and the establishment of a Structural Change Order (SCO), which provides the legal basis for creating the new authorities and sets out interim governance arrangements during the shadow period. Each existing Council will nominate a balanced representation of members to contribute to the drafting of the SCO and the establishment of Joint Committees.

5.23 Elections will take place in May 2027 to form the Shadow Councils. Their primary role will be to prepare the new Unitary Councils to assume full local government responsibilities by Vesting Day in April 2028.

5.24 Actions relating to the work on LGR will continue to be included in the priority delivery plans. Delivery against these actions will be used to keep the Cabinet and Responsible Council Scrutiny Committee informed of progress on a quarterly basis.

5.25 Members and employees will also be briefed regularly on progress and developments.

5.26 The proposals for LGR have obviously impacted on the Council's plans for transformation as part our shared services arrangements with Stafford Borough Council. This is the subject of a separate report, which also sets out the steps the Council needs to consider as part of its preparations for LGR.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial

The financial analysis of the options presented in this report have been provided by external specialists KPMG, based on evidence provided by the councils in the area and business cases prepared by other areas moving forwards with unitarisation.

As set out in the report and the proposal attached at Appendix 1, the options have identified the potential for substantial ongoing benefits – noting that the savings figures are high level estimates and are also subject to the decision making of any future authority.

Given the estimated existing gross budget gaps across current councils included in these proposals, these potential savings could contribute to closing the estimated budget gap or be used to support the transformation costs of setting up the new authority.

All options also include significant implementation costs. These costs would be shared between authorities included within each option, with the assumption being that Staffordshire County Council would also need to contribute toward these implementation costs. An agreement will be required to formalise contributions from each partner, with individual authorities determining the most appropriate way to fund those costs.

6.2 **Legal**

Section 2 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 authorises the Secretary of State to invite any principal council in a two-tier county area to make a proposal for a single tier of government in that area. The invitation may specify a date by which a proposal may be made, and the council must have regard to any guidance issued setting out what the proposal should include. The council can submit its own proposal or can submit a proposal jointly with other councils. The Secretary of State has written to all two-tier authorities inviting them to make proposals by 28 November 2025.

6.3 **Human Resources**

It is too early as this stage to assess the full implications of the proposal. But it is anticipated that there will be an impact on the Council's ability to recruit and retain staff over the next two years or so as we await news of the Government's decision and we move into the implementation stages.

There will be implications for staff regardless of which option is chosen. This will be a significant period of change and we will work closely with managers to support them and their teams through this. We will ensure that the trade unions and staff are briefed regularly. The provisions of the TUPE Regulations will apply and protect terms and conditions of employees at the point of transfer to the new authority.

6.4 **Risk Management**

LGR is included in the Council's Strategic Risk Register. At present this risk is focussed around the impact that work on LGR is having on capacity to deliver services.

Given the scale of LGR being proposed, it is inevitable that there will be risks in the delivery of this.

As referred to in the financial implications, the financial analysis is based on modelling and the mid-point assessment used for key costs and savings figures. There is an inherent risk with such modelling that the assumptions made may differ from what is actually achieved. In particular:

- The estimated costs may be greater than anticipated;
- The savings may be less than anticipated; and/ or
- The payback period make take longer to achieve.

Our own experience of sharing services indicate that such a complex project will take many years to fully implement and deliver the transformation proposed and it is likely that the payback period in particular will take longer to achieve than is currently forecast.

There are also the more general risks that the government may choose a different option for Staffordshire, LGR may be delayed or that the preferred option may take longer to implement than anticipated.

In order to manage and mitigate the associated risks, risk management will be embedded into the project management arrangements for progressing the setting up and operation of the new unitary councils. This will include the development of comprehensive risk registers.

6.5 **Equalities and Diversity**

Equality impact assessments will be prepared in due course as part of the project planning for the setting up and operation of the new unitary councils.

6.6 **Health**

None

6.7 **Climate Change**

None

7. Appendices

Appendix 1: Proposal for a Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Unitary Council

Appendix 2: Summary of the Government's proposals for devolution and LGR

8. Previous Consideration

Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation Report to Council - 17 March 2025 (Interim Proposal)

9. Background Papers

- The English Devolution White Paper of 16 December 2024.
- Letter from Jim McMahon MP, Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution, dated 5 February 2025, that invites proposals for a single tier of local government and associated guidance.

Contact Officer:	Tim Clegg, Chief Executive
Telephone Number:	01785 619 200
Ward Interest:	All
Report Track:	Council: 05/11/25 and Cabinet: 19/11/25
Key Decision:	Yes

Appendix 1

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE:

A proposal for a Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Unitary Council

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

As Leaders of three District and Borough Councils within the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire area, we are pleased to present this proposal for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) – a bold and forward-thinking vision for the future of our region.

This document reflects the culmination of extensive collaboration, rigorous analysis, and meaningful engagement with our communities, and sets out a clear case for the establishment of a single unitary authority covering the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire geography that is fit for purpose, very financially sustainable, and rooted in the needs and aspirations of our residents and businesses

Our shared ambition is to create a modern, efficient, and resilient Unitary Council that delivers high-quality services, strengthens local democracy, and unlocks the full potential of Southern & Mid-Staffordshire. Our proposal has been designed to complement a second strong Unitary Council for the North of Staffordshire, covering Stoke-on-Trent, Newcastle-under-Lyme, and Staffordshire Moorlands. We recognise the challenges facing local government; rising demand, constrained resources, and increasing complexity, and we believe that this proposal demonstrates a clear way forward. By coming together under a single structure, we can remove duplication, streamline decision-making, and build an organisation that is capable of responding to the evolving needs of our communities with agility and confidence.

This proposal is not simply about structural change, it is about transformation. It is about creating a Council that is resident-focused, digitally enabled, and committed to continuous improvement. It is about empowering our staff, engaging our communities, and fostering a culture of transparency, trust, and innovation. It is about laying the foundations for a future in which Southern & Mid-Staffordshire thrives economically, socially, and environmentally. We are fortunate to have a skilled, knowledgeable and dedicated workforce across our authorities to ensure a smooth transition to a new unitary council while continuing to deliver quality services to our communities.

We have responded constructively to the Government's invitation to reform local government structures, moving away from the existing two-tier system and smaller unitary authorities. In Staffordshire, the current model comprises eight District and Borough Councils, one County Council, and a single Unitary Authority (that serves a population of approximately 260,000). In this context, the creation of three or more new Unitary Councils, each with populations only slightly larger than that of Stoke-on-Trent City Council, would not only fall short of the Government's ambitions but also risk undermining the principles of reform and the imperative for financial sustainability.

Our proposal to establish two new Unitary Authorities, one for North Staffordshire and another for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire, offers a coherent and compliant response to the invitation. It aligns with the Government's objectives by delivering scale, efficiency, and resilience, while supporting sustainable service delivery and governance across the county.

As we look ahead to Vesting Day and beyond, we remain committed to ensuring a smooth and successful transition. We will prioritise service continuity, staff engagement, and stakeholder confidence, while laying the groundwork for long-term transformation. We understand the significance of this moment not just for our organisations, but for the communities we serve, and we approach it with humility, determination, and a deep sense of responsibility.

This proposal is a testament to what can be achieved when Councils work together with a shared purpose and a clear vision. It is a blueprint for a stronger, more unified Southern & Mid-Staffordshire. And it is our collective commitment to delivering a future that is fairer, more efficient, and more responsive to the people we represent.

Signed,

Cllr Steve Thornley,
Leader of Cannock Chase District Council

Cllr Mick Fitzpatrick,
Leader of East Staffordshire Borough Council

Cllr Aidan Godfrey,
Leader of Stafford Borough Council

Supported by: Cllr Jane Ashworth,
Leader of Stoke-on-Trent City Council

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document sets out a comprehensive and evidence-based case for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in Staffordshire, recommending the establishment of a single unitary authority 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-Staffordshire[1], 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.

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

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 diverse 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 will experience 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.

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

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.

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.**

WAR MEMORIAL, CANNOCK

INTRODUCTION TO SOUTHERN & MID-STAFFORDSHIRE

THE SIX DISTRICTS & BOROUGHS

Southern & Mid-Staffordshire is a region steeped in history, defined by vibrant communities and a dynamic business landscape. Surrounded by picturesque countryside and anchored by thriving towns, charming villages, and a historic cathedral city, it is an area with a distinct sense of identity that is confidently looking to the future. The six District and Borough Councils are:

Southern & Mid-Staffordshire continues to attract significant investment from key industries including logistics, retail, services, and light manufacturing, all of which complement the region's strong agricultural foundation.

Tourism is an increasingly valuable sector, with visitors drawn to iconic destinations such as Lichfield Cathedral, Tamworth Castle, Cannock Chase Area National Landscape (formerly Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty), Uttoxeter Racecourse, Shugborough Hall and Trentham Gardens, and the historic city of Lichfield. Emerging events and attractions like the annual Sonic Boom music festival in Burton upon Trent further enhance the region's appeal.

The region is undergoing sustained economic growth, evidenced by rising Gross Value Added (GVA), expanding housing development, and a growing population. Its strategic connectivity – via key transport corridors such as the M6, M6 Toll, A34, A38, A5, and major rail lines – positions it as a vital contributor to the broader West Midlands economy. This economic strength is further reflected in the proactive decision by four of the Councils to join the inception of the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership (GBSLEP), as well as some joining the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) as non-constituent members. These commitments highlight the distinct economic identity of southern Staffordshire and reinforce the region's dedication to collaborative growth and regional prosperity.

The area also benefits from nationally recognised Health Trusts, robust partnerships with the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC), the Integrated Care System (ICS), and local policing, underpinned by a longstanding culture of collaboration through the Leaders' Board and Chief Executives Forum.

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

POPULATION DATA & DEMOGRAPHICS

Southern & Mid-Staffordshire is an area within the West Midlands region that comprises 1,836km^2 of urban, semi-urban and rural geography, with a population of 656,800 (2021 Census) within 279,400 households:

AREA	POPULATION	NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS	AREA (SQUARE KM, ROUNDED)	POPULATION DENSITY
CANNOCK CHASE	100,500	43,500	79	1,274
EAST STAFFORDSHIRE	124,000	51,300	390	320
LICHFIELD	106,400	45,600	331	321
SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE	110,500	46,100	408	271
STAFFORD	136,800	60,000	597	229
TAMWORTH	78,600	32,900	31	2,548
TOTAL	**656,800**	**279,400**	**1,836**	**358**

Within these areas are strong economic urban centres in Burton upon Trent, Cannock, Lichfield, Stafford, and Tamworth, as well as large village and town rural 'hubs' such as Stone, Great Wyrley, Perton and Uttoxeter.

The age profile of the area is as follows:

AGE PROFILE	19 & UNDER	20 - 29	30 - 39	40 - 49	50 - 59	60 - 69	70
CANNOCK CHASE	22,100	11,900	13,500	12,000	15,300	11,400	14,200
EAST STAFFORDSHIRE	28,900	14,600	16,800	15,500	17,700	13,800	16,900
LICHFIELD	22,100	11,100	12,100	13,000	16,000	12,900	19,300
SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE	21,200	11,300	12,400	12,700	17,200	14,800	21,000
STAFFORD	28,200	14,100	16,700	16,900	20,400	16,800	23,600
TAMWORTH	18,200	9,300	10,800	9,900	11,000	9,000	10,500

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

The profile reveals a diverse demographic landscape. Stafford has the highest population across most age groups, particularly among residents aged 70 and over (23,600), followed by South Staffordshire (21,000) and Lichfield (19,300), indicating a significant proportion of older adults in these areas. East Staffordshire leads in the younger age categories, with 28,900 individuals aged 19 and under and 14,600 aged 20–29, highlighting a relatively youthful population.

Cannock Chase and Tamworth show lower figures across most age bands, with Tamworth having the smallest population in the 70+ category (10,500). The 50–59 age group is notably strong in Stafford (20,400) and South Staffordshire (17,200), suggesting a substantial working-age population. Overall, the data reflects a balanced age distribution with regional variations that may influence service planning and resource allocation.

The ethnicity profile of the area is as follows:

ETHNICITY (PERCENTAGE, ROUNDED)	ASIAN, ASIAN BRITISH OR ASIAN WELSH	BLACK, BLACK BRITISH, BLACK WELSH, CARIBBEAN OR AFRICAN	MIXED OR MULTIPLE ETHNIC GROUPS	WHITE	OTHER
CANNOCK CHASE	1.20	0.50	1.30	96.50	0.30
EAST STAFFORDSHIRE	9.40	1.10	2.30	86.30	1.10
LICHFIELD	2.40	0.60	1.90	94.70	0.40
SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE	3.80	1.10	1.50	92.90	0.70
STAFFORD	2.90	1.00	2.10	93.70	0.50
TAMWORTH	3.10	1.10	1.90	93.40	0.70

The ethnicity profile across the six districts in Southern & Mid-Staffordshire reveals a predominantly White population, with Cannock Chase (96.5%) and Lichfield (94.7%) having the highest proportions. East Staffordshire stands out as the most ethnically diverse district, featuring the highest percentages of Asian (9.4%), Mixed (2.3%), and Other ethnic groups (1.1%).

South Staffordshire, Stafford, and Tamworth show moderate diversity, with Asian populations ranging from 2.9% to 3.8% and Mixed ethnic groups between 1.5% and 2.1%. Black populations are relatively consistent across all districts, ranging from 0.5% in Cannock Chase to 1.1% in East Staffordshire, South Staffordshire, and Tamworth.

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

With regards to demand for statutory people services, the following tables capture a snapshot of need for adult social care services, children's services, and homelessness support services:

ADULT SOCIAL CARE DEMAND IN SOUTHERN & MID-STAFFORDSHIRE	
POPULATION AGED 18-64 WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY	9,285
POPULATION AGED 65+ WITH A LEARNING DISABILITY	3,134
NUMBER OF ADULTS 18-64 ACCESSING SHORT-TERM SUPPORT	1,056
NUMBER OF ADULTS 65+ ACCESSING SHORT-TERM SUPPORT	893
NUMBER OF ADULTS 18-64 ACCESSING LONG-TERM SUPPORT	3,980
NUMBER OF ADULTS 65+ ACCESSING LONG-TERM SUPPORT	6,508
NUMBER OF REQUESTS TO ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES FOR 18-64	6,623
NUMBER OF REQUESTS TO ADULT SOCIAL CARE SERVICES FOR 65+	21,887
PROPORTION OF OLDER PEOPLE (65+) WHO REMAIN AT HOME AFTER BEING DISCHARGED FROM HOSPITAL INTO REHABILITATION SERVICES	84

EDUCATION, SEND & CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEMAND IN SOUTHERN & MID-STAFFORDSHIRE	
POPULATION AGED 0-19	145,290
PUPILS STAYING IN EDUCATION OR ENTERING EMPLOYMENT	12,943
NUMBER OF CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE (0-25) WITH EDUCATION HEALTH AND CARE PLANS (EHCP)	5,872
FORECASTED GROWTH IN ECHP UNTIL 2030	3,207
PUPIL ATTENDANCE – SCHOOL ABSENCE RATE (%)	7.2
NUMBER OF CHILDREN ON CHILD PROTECTION PLANS	452
NUMBER OF CHILDREN IN NEED	896
NUMBER OF CHILDREN LOOKED AFTER	650
NUMBER OF FAMILIES AND CHILDREN SUPPORTED THROUGH THE FAMILY HELP MODEL	1,560

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

HOMELESSNESS & ROUGH SLEEPING DEMAND IN SOUTHERN & MID-STAFFORDSHIRE	
POPULATION	656,800
HOMELESSNESS RATE (PER 1,000 HOUSEHOLDS)	0.90
ROUGH SLEEPER COUNTS	20
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS IN TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION (PER 1,000 POPULATION)	0.72
TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS IN B&B HOTELS	59

This level of demand highlights the importance of social services career pathways, such as through the innovative realistic learning environment at Burton and South Derbyshire College, funded through the Towns Fund and already seeing an increase in outputs of 70 more people becoming qualified at FE and HE level. Extrapolating this approach across the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire region is key to supporting the future of this sector.

The data provided in this section has been selected to provide an illustration of the area through selected key criteria. A wider review of local data and demographic evidence has been undertaken covering metrics such as travel to work patterns, health equalities, skills and more. This has informed the evaluation of options and ultimately the selection of a preferred option.

RELATIONSHIP WITH NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE

In developing this proposal, the six District and Borough Councils in Southern & Mid-Staffordshire have worked collaboratively with Stoke-on-Trent City Council, who have developed a partner proposal covering the North Staffordshire area:

Southern & Mid-Staffordshire and North Staffordshire together form a diverse and interconnected geography within the wider county of Staffordshire. While each area has its own distinct character, they are linked by shared infrastructure, economic flows, and patterns of daily life that reflect the realities of how people live, work, travel, and access services across the region.

North Staffordshire, anchored by Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme, has a more urban and industrial profile, shaped by its heritage in ceramics, manufacturing, and logistics. The area is also home to Staffordshire Moorlands, which adds a rural dimension and connects the region to the Peak District. Together, these places form a functional economic zone with strong internal commuting patterns, shared retail and leisure catchments, and overlapping service footprints. Residents in both areas routinely travel across boundaries for employment, education, healthcare, and recreation, underscoring the need for coordinated planning and investment.

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

The two areas also share environmental assets and challenges. The River Trent flows through both regions, linking communities and ecosystems from the Moorlands to Burton upon Trent. Green infrastructure, such as Cannock Chase National Landscape and the Churnet Valley, provide recreational and ecological value across the county. Flood risk management, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable transport planning are all areas where cross-boundary collaboration is essential.

Culturally and socially, Southern & Mid-Staffordshire and North Staffordshire are part of a wider Staffordshire identity, but with distinct local nuances. Southern areas tend to have stronger economic ties to the West Midlands conurbation, while northern areas are more closely aligned with Greater Manchester and Cheshire, demonstrating two distinct functioning economic market areas. Despite these differences, there is a shared sense of place rooted in Staffordshire's history, rural heritage, and community values.

In practical terms, the relationship between the two areas is one of interdependence. Whether through shared infrastructure, overlapping service demand, or regional economic strategies, the geography of Staffordshire functions as a connected whole. Any future governance or strategic planning arrangements must reflect this reality, ensuring that both Southern & Mid-Staffordshire and North Staffordshire can operate effectively in their own right, while continuing to collaborate on issues that span the county.

With regards population for the two areas, estimates for 2024 from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show a three year growth from the 2021 figures of 3.95% (1.32% annually) for the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire area and a similar three year growth of 3.62% (1.21% annually) for North Staffordshire. Extrapolating this further to 2028, when Vesting Day for the new Councils will take place, shows the following:

POPULATION PROJECTIONS	SOUTHERN & MID-STAFFORDSHIRE	NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE
2021 CENSUS	656,800	477,500
2024 ONS ESTIMATES	682,775	494,803
2028 (VESTING DAY)	718,778	518,710

Both areas demonstrate compliance with the Government's guidance on populations around 500,000 for establishing new unitary Councils, by the point of Vesting Day for those Councils.

The significance of the 500,000 population is articulated in two County Councils' Network commissioned reports:

- The PriceWaterhouseCooper report in 2020 noted there are significant issues and risks associated with creating smaller Councils, leading to increased costs, reducing efficiency savings and ultimately a greater burden on local taxpayers *3.*
- The Newton report in October 2025 states that breaking Councils up into areas serving fewer than 500,000 residents would add up to £270m in annual care costs, require over 1,000 additional senior roles and risk lowering care quality *4.*

3 - https://countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/download/3148/
4 - https://www.countycouncilsnetwork.org.uk/download/6113/?tmstv=1760088825

> **Southern areas tend to have stronger economic ties to the West Midlands conurbation, while northern areas are more closely aligned with Greater Manchester and Cheshire, demonstrating two distinct functioning economic market areas.**

TAMWORTH CASTLE, TAMWORTH

OBJECTIVES & OPERATING MODEL DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION

OBJECTIVES

The six District and Borough Councils across Southern & Mid-Staffordshire have worked collaboratively to develop proposals for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), drawing on financial data, service performance information, and community feedback. This joint effort reflects a shared commitment to creating a governance model that delivers efficient, high-quality services and long-term sustainability for the region.

In late summer, three of the six Councils – Lichfield, South Staffordshire and Tamworth – expressed a preference for an alternative model involving two unitary authorities in Southern & Mid-Staffordshire. As a result, the work evolved into two parallel streams: Option A, proposing a single unitary Council, and Option B, proposing two. While this introduced a natural divergence from the initial unified approach, all Councils remain aligned in the overarching objective to create a resilient, future-ready model for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire that delivers excellent local services and remains financially sustainable, whilst complementing the proposal for a North Staffordshire Unitary.

To that end, our objectives for Local Government Reorganisation at the point of diverging into two distinct workstreams were to:

- Serve a growing and dynamic population within a coherent and recognised economic geography, underpinned by a financially sustainable foundation.
- Be centred around the needs of residents and businesses, leveraging technology to enhance service delivery and structured to remain effective, efficient, and relevant for the next 50 years and beyond.
- Empower local communities and organisations, placing local priorities at the heart of decision-making and fostering greater civic participation.
- Unlock the potential of devolution by establishing a new Strategic Authority covering, at a minimum, the Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent area.

OPERATING MODEL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Sitting alongside these objectives are service design principles that demonstrate our ambition and guide our decision making.

These principles are:

- Secure financial sustainability;
- Deliver high quality services, with a mixed economy delivery model, deciding where and how services are best delivered;
- Act in the best interests of the place, integrating across sectors to secure the best outcomes;
- Prioritise innovation, prevention and continuous improvement – using digital as an enabler;
- Act early, driven by insight, and ensuring that everyone can benefit from opportunities in the place;
- Consider the impact of our actions on environmental sustainability;
- Enable our residents to build resilience and support one another, in thriving communities.

ASSESSMENT OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION OPTIONS

This document has been developed in response to the Government's request for proposals for Local Government Reorganisation on 6th February 2025 and it builds on an earlier plan submitted on 21st March 2025, taking account of feedback from MHCLG received on 3rd June 2025 regarding all the proposals for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

OPTIONS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

This section of the proposal assesses four main proposals for reorganisation in Staffordshire, considering feedback from local residents, the key attributes for each option and, most crucially, a financial appraisal that sets out costs, benefits and overall sustainability. In undertaking this analysis, weight is given to qualitative and quantitative factors that have then been appraised against the Government's six criteria:

- **Criterion 1:** A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government.
- **Criterion 2:** Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks.
- **Criterion 3:** Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high quality and sustainable public services to citizens.
- **Criterion 4**: Proposals should show how Councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views.
- **Criterion 5**: New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements.
- **Criterion 6:** New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment.

Consideration has also been given to the 12 sub-criteria sitting underneath these six.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

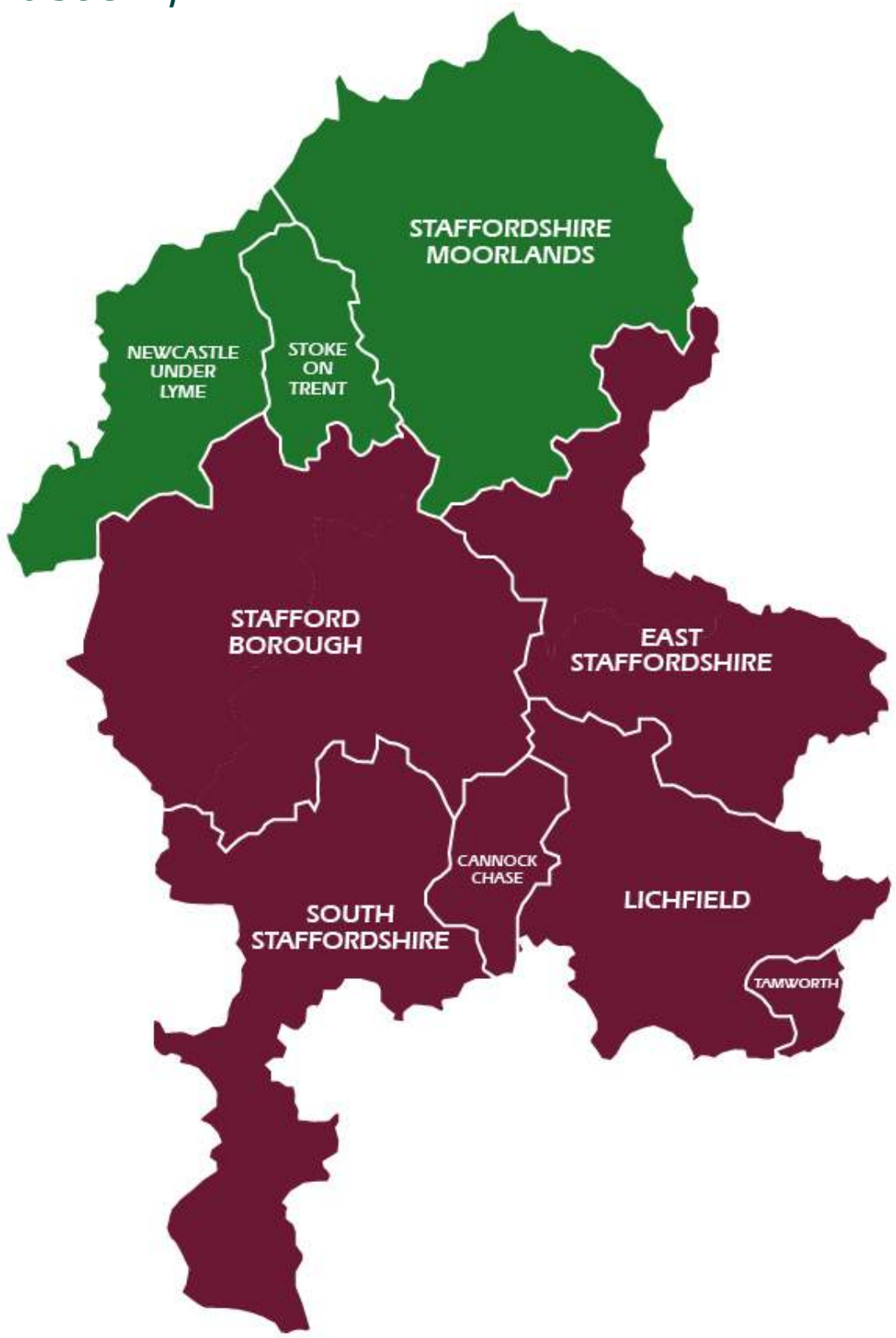
There are five options for reorganisation in Staffordshire that have been initially appraised as part of this proposal:

OPTION A

TWO UNITARY COUNCILS (NORTH & SOUTH)

North Staffordshire:
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire Moorlands
Stoke-on-Trent

Southern & Mid-Staffordshire:
Cannock Chase
East Staffordshire
Lichfield
South Staffordshire
Stafford Borough
Tamworth



REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

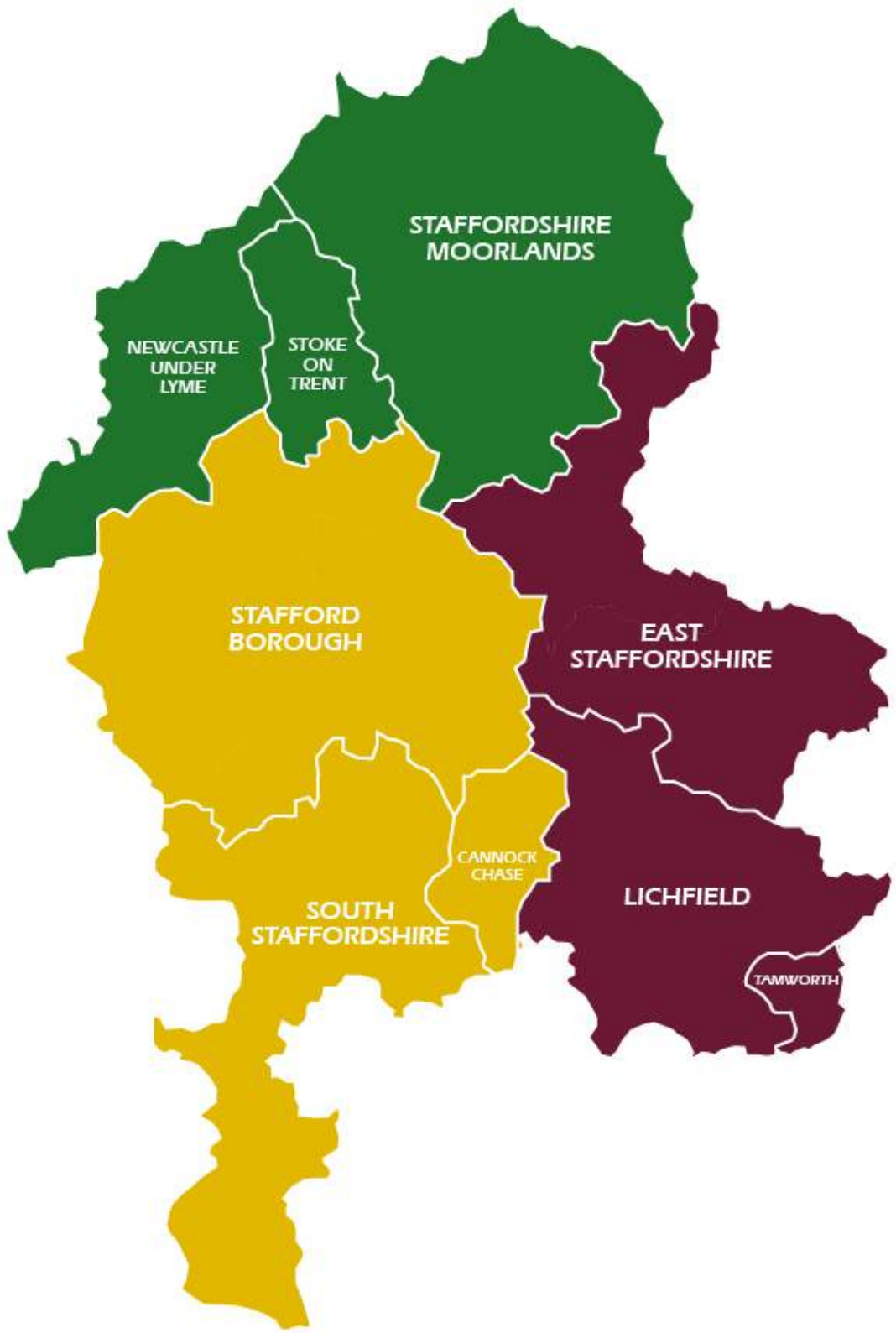
OPTION B

THREE UNITARY COUNCILS (NORTH, SOUTH, WEST & SOUTH EAST)

North Staffordshire:
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire Moorlands
Stoke-on-Trent

South West:
Cannock Chase
South Staffordshire
Stafford Borough

South East:
East Staffordshire
Lichfield
Tamworth



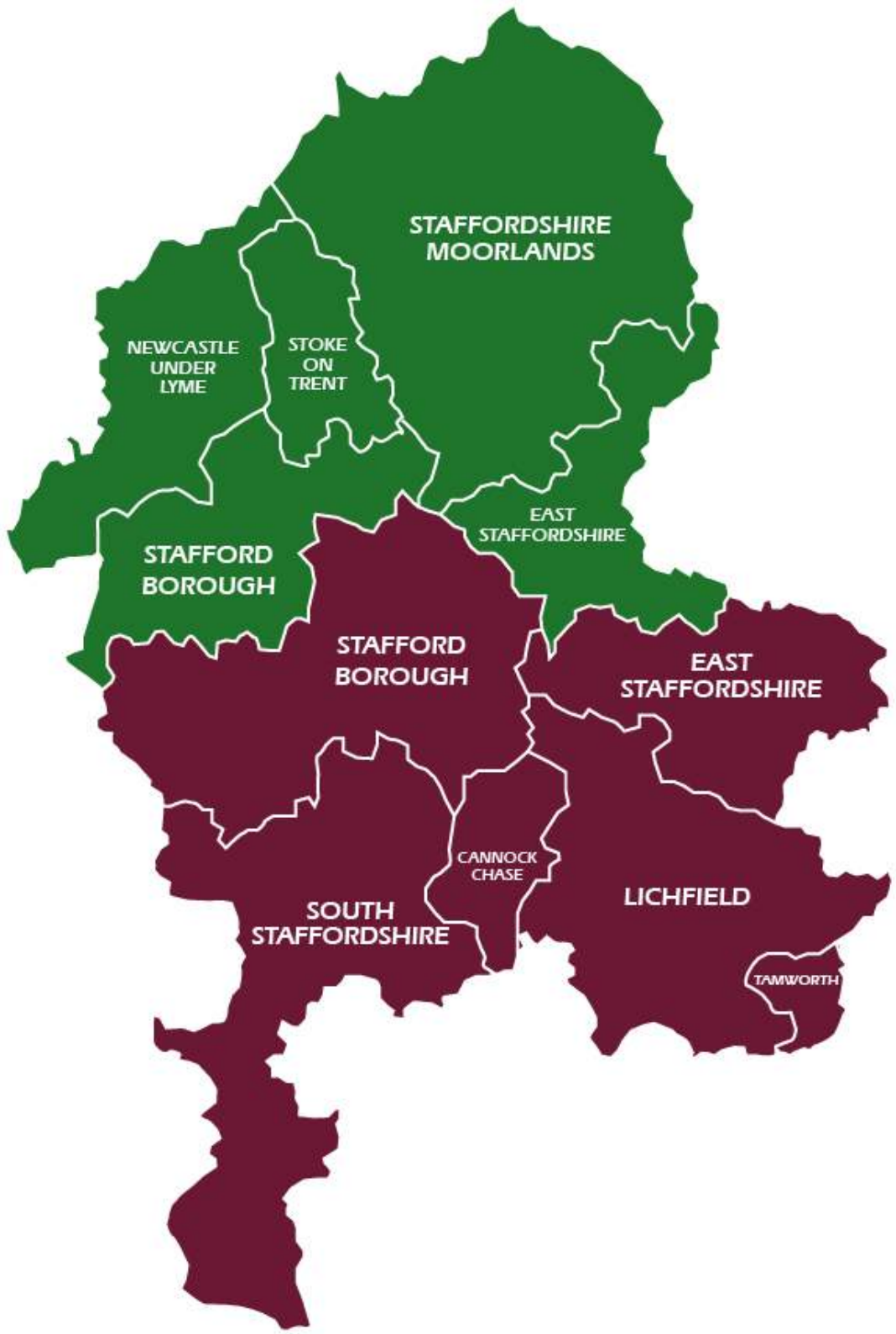
REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

OPTION C

TWO UNITARY COUNCILS (NORTH & SOUTH WITH BOUNDARY CHANGES)

North Staffordshire:
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire Moorlands
Stoke-on-Trent

South West:
Cannock Chase
East Staffordshire
Lichfield
South Staffordshire
Stafford Borough
Tamworth



REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

OPTION D

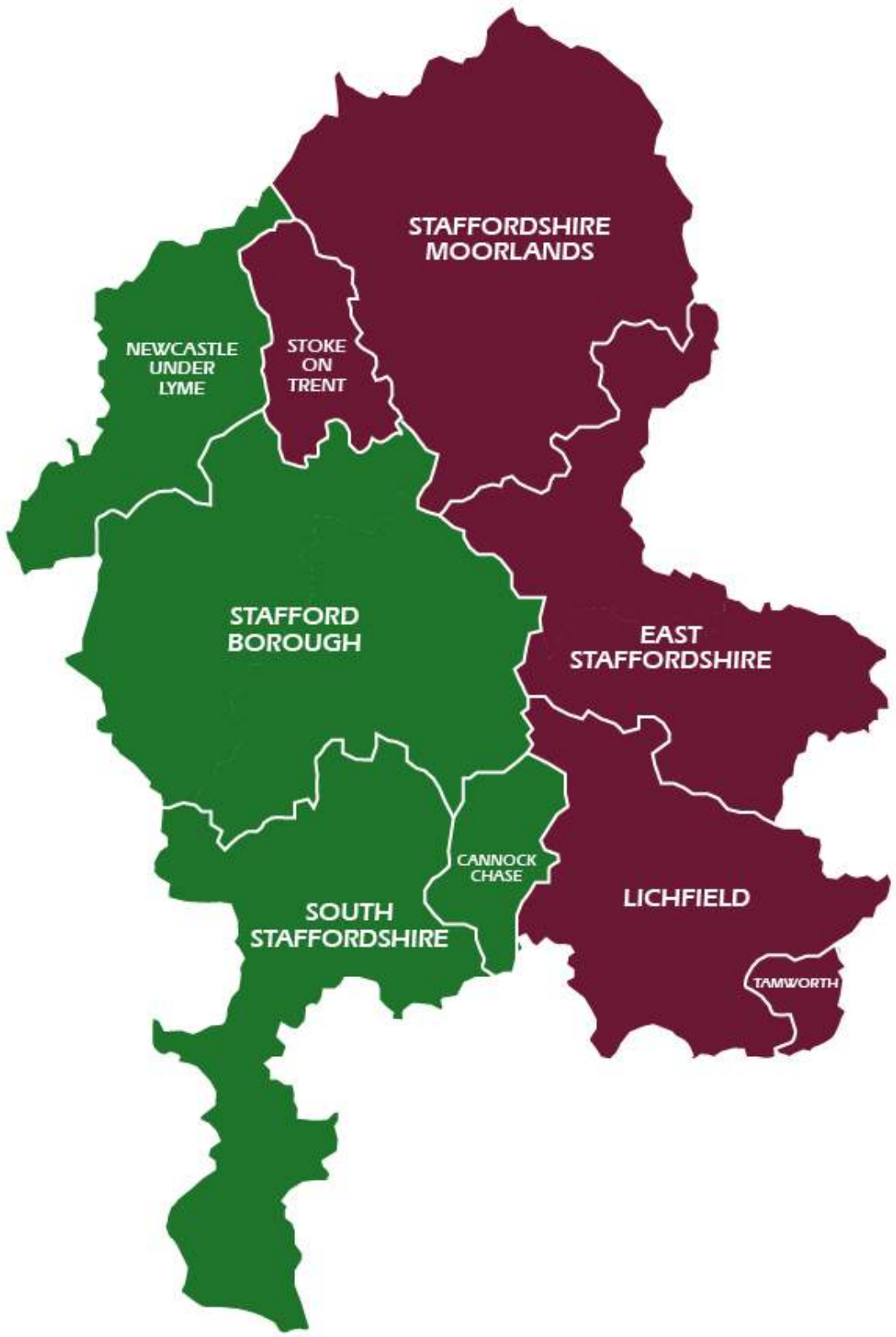
TWO UNITARY COUNCILS (EAST & WEST)

East Staffordshire:

East Staffordshire
Lichfield
Tamworth
Staffordshire Moorlands
Stoke-on-Trent

West Staffordshire:

Cannock Chase
Newcastle-under-Lyme
South Staffordshire
Stafford Borough



REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

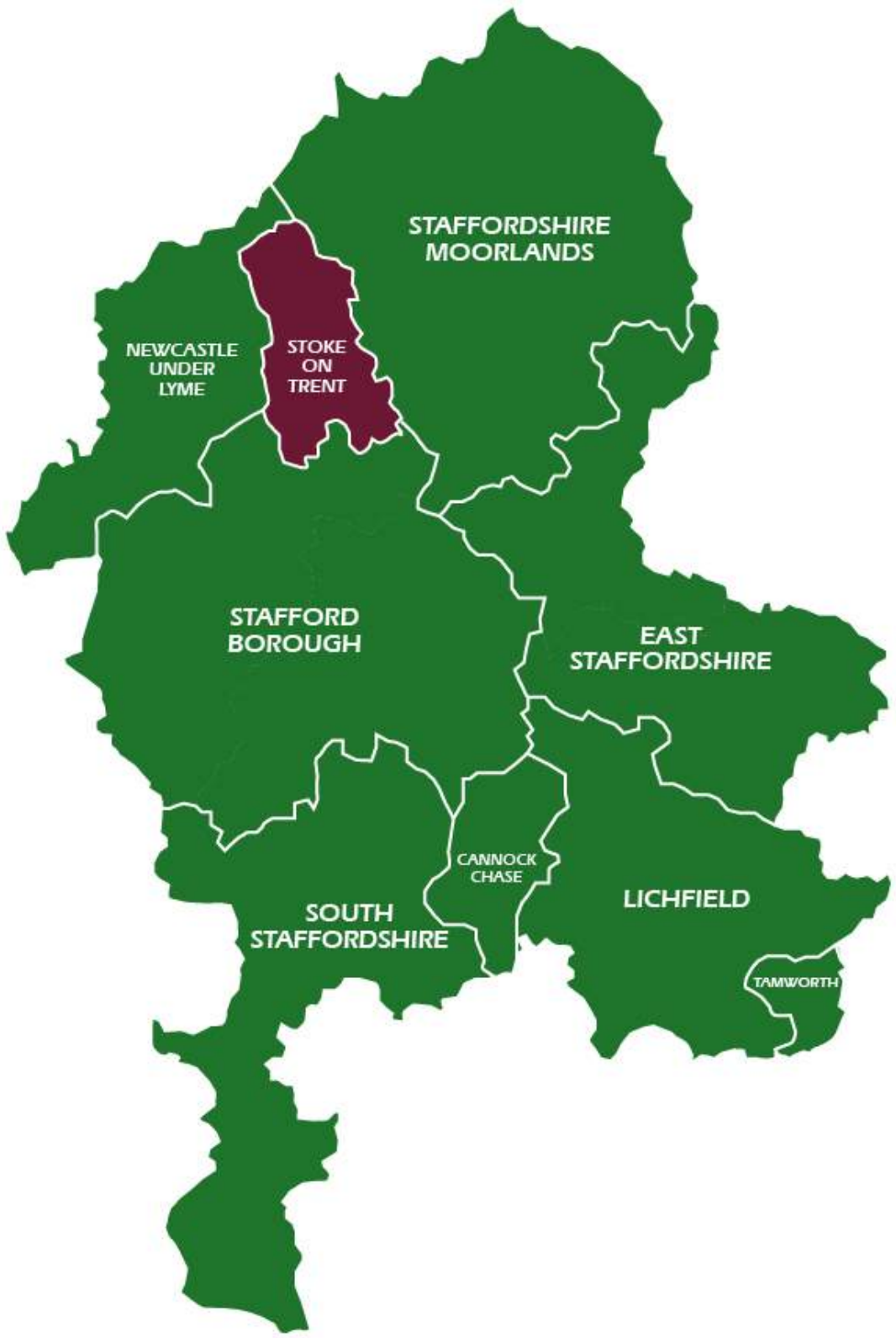
OPTION E

TWO UNITARY COUNCILS (STOKE ON TRENT CC & STAFFORDSHIRE UNITARY)

Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Staffordshire Unitary Council:

Cannock Chase
East Staffordshire
Lichfield
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Stafford Borough
Staffordshire Moorlands
South Staffordshire
Tamworth



RESIDENT FEEDBACK ON REORGANISATION CONCEPTS

A comprehensive public engagement campaign was undertaken to ensure residents, businesses, and local and regional stakeholders had the opportunity to contribute meaningfully from the outset of the LGR process. Conducted prior to the completion of detailed financial analysis, the engagement focused on gathering views on early concepts for reorganisation in Southern & Mid-Staffordshire, while also identifying the priorities that matter most to local communities.

The campaign employed a range of methods, including a public survey, stakeholder briefings, and collaborative events with Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Digital channels such as websites and social media were also utilised to maximise reach and ensure cost-effective delivery and value for money, with no external expenditure.

16,756 responses received

Staff & partner workshops

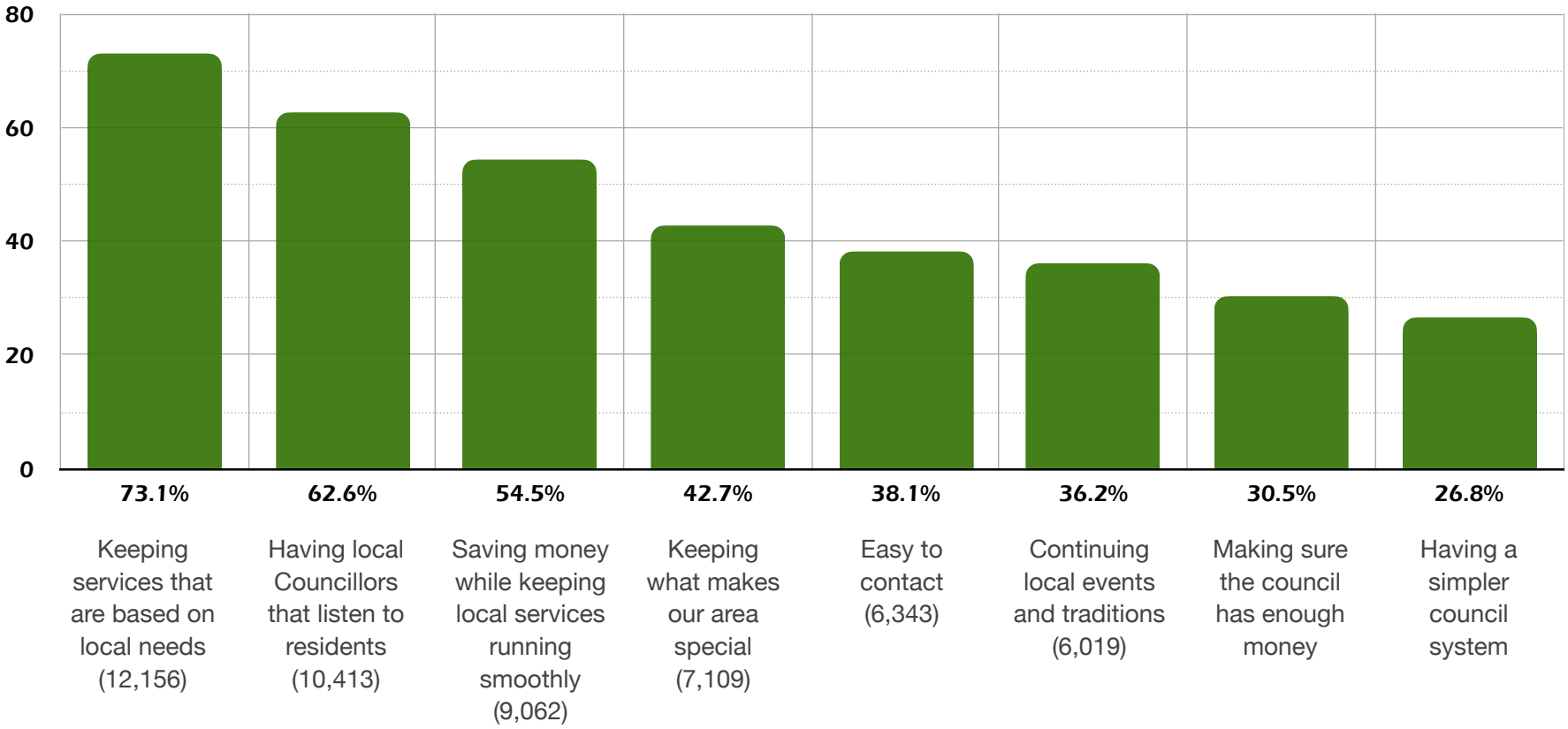
Member engagement sessions

Promotional information across region

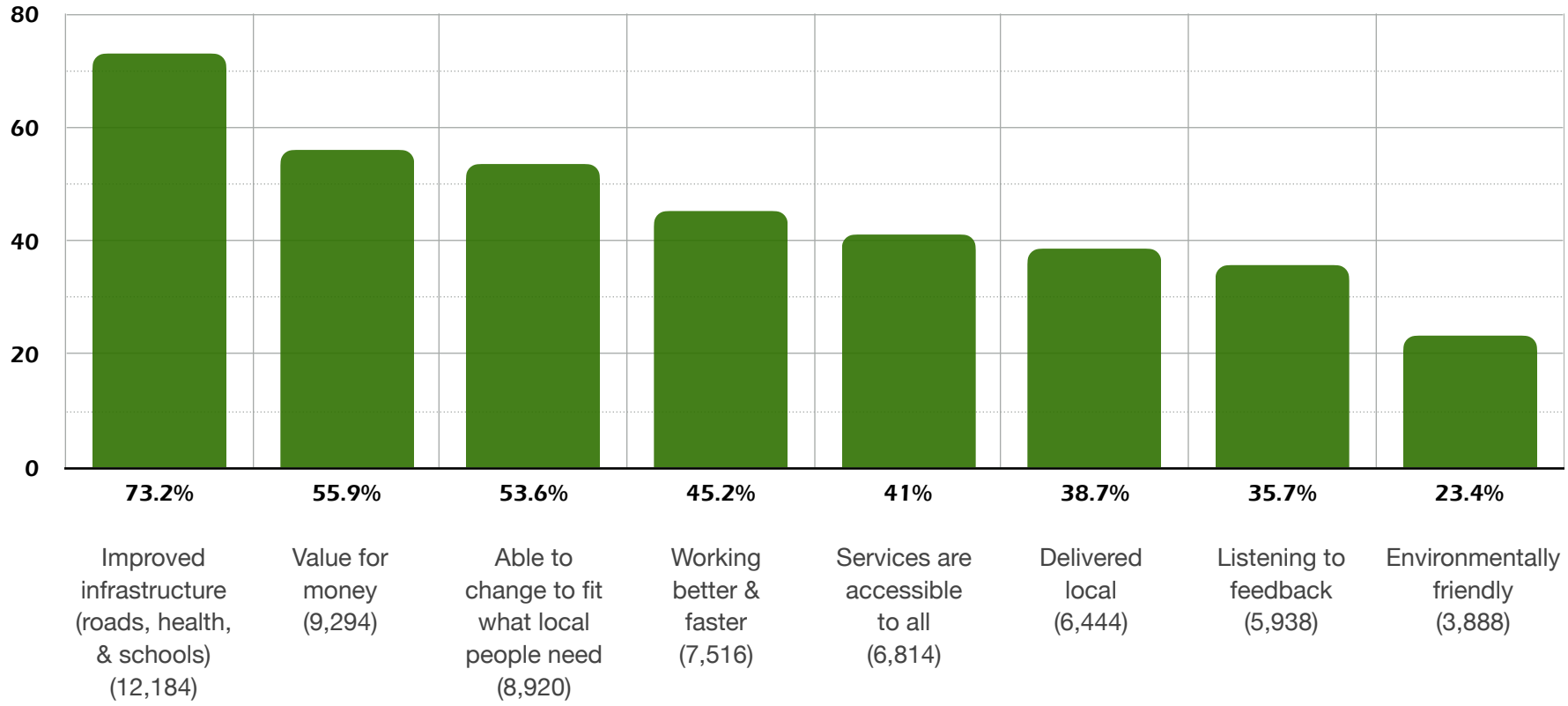
Physical & digital engagement

In total, 16,756 responses were received and analysed, providing valuable insights that helped shape the proposals and inform the evaluation of options.

Most notably, the top priorities for a new Council were:



When asked about what was most important in how services are delivered, the responses were:



The top three priorities for both of these questions have specifically been taken to inform the vision and values set out in section 4 of this document (Establish, Economise, Engage), with all of the feedback informing the actions that sit underneath that vision.

Further detail on public engagement and resident feedback is contained within Annex 1.

SUMMARY OF ASSESSMENT OF OPTIONS AGAINST GOVERNMENT CRITERIA

Below is a summary of the key attributes for each of the five options considered, which seeks to highlight at a high level how they sit against each of the Government's six criteria.

This summary is designed to give an indication of how easily each structure can meet the criteria and the detail behind this has been considered alongside resident feedback and the financial analysis.

OPTION A

TWO UNITARY COUNCILS (NORTH & SOUTH)

KEY ATTRIBUTES AGAINST CRITERIA	
CRITERION 1	• Sensible and functioning economic geography and balanced population sizes • Reflective of local identity, culture and history
CRITERION 2	• Both Councils >500,000 population at Vesting Day • No boundary changes
CRITERION 3	• Small number of Councils, enabling financial sustainability and aligning with the 55.9% of survey respondents who prioritised value for money • No disaggregation of social services
CRITERION 4	• Supported by Councils in both North and South • Aligns with existing stakeholder partnerships and enables sufficient scale and capacity to address resident concerns and priorities
CRITERION 5	• Two Unitary Councils can facilitate a Strategic Authority that covers the County area
CRITERION 6	• Use of Neighbourhood Area Committees to facilitate local engagement • Sufficient scale to deliver improvements across communities and neighbourhoods

North Staffordshire:
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire Moorlands
Stoke-on-Trent

Southern & Mid-Staffordshire:
Cannock Chase
East Staffordshire
Lichfield
South Staffordshire
Stafford
Tamworth

OPTION B

THREE UNITARY COUNCILS (NORTH, SOUTH WEST & SOUTH EAST)

KEY ATTRIBUTES AGAINST CRITERIA	
CRITERION 1	• Sensible economic geography, but small population sizes, significantly under 500,000 • Reflective of local identity, culture and history
CRITERION 2	• Delivers **some** financial efficiencies, but undermined by duplication of key roles • No boundary changes
CRITERION 3	• Smaller Councils with duplication of services, potential for operational inefficiencies • Need to disaggregate some of social services
CRITERION 4	• Aligns with resident preferences on LGR concepts
CRITERION 5	• Three Unitary Councils can facilitate a Strategic Authority that covers the County area
CRITERION 6	• Smaller Council areas could enable greater sense of localism • Potential scale to deliver some improvements across communities and neighbourhoods

North Staffordshire:
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Staffordshire Moorlands
Stoke-on-Trent

South West:
Cannock Chase
South Staffordshire
Stafford

South East:
East Staffordshire
Lichfield
Tamworth

OPTION C

TWO UNITARY COUNCILS (NORTH & SOUTH WITH BOUNDARY CHANGES)

KEY ATTRIBUTES AGAINST CRITERIA	
CRITERION 1	• Sensible economic geography and balanced population sizes • Reflective of local identity, culture and history
CRITERION 2	• Both Councils >500,000 population at Vesting Day • Boundary changes without sufficient justification
CRITERION 3	• Small number of Councils • No disaggregation of social services
CRITERION 4	• Not supported by enough Councils in North and South • Aligns with existing stakeholder partnerships and enables sufficient scale and capacity to address resident concerns and priorities
CRITERION 5	• Two Unitary Councils can facilitate a Strategic Authority that covers the County area
CRITERION 6	• Use of Neighbourhood Area Committees to facilitate local engagement • Sufficient scale to deliver improvements across communities and neighbourhoods

<u>North Staffordshire:</u>
East Staffordshire (parts of)
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Stafford (parts of)
Staffordshire Moorlands
Stoke-on-Trent

<u>Southern and Mid-Staffordshire:</u>
Cannock Chase
East Staffordshire (parts of)
Lichfield
South Staffordshire
Stafford (parts of)
Tamworth

OPTION D

TWO UNITARY COUNCILS (EAST & WEST)

KEY ATTRIBUTES AGAINST CRITERIA	
CRITERION 1	• Incompatible with functioning economic geography – there is no recognised FEMA • Not reflective of local identity, culture and history – Stoke-on-Trent is placed in the east when it is located in the northwest
CRITERION 2	• Both Councils >500,000 population at Vesting Day • No boundary changes
CRITERION 3	• Small number of Councils • No disaggregation of social services
CRITERION 4	• Not supported by enough Councils in the North and South
CRITERION 5	• Two Unitary Councils can facilitate a Strategic Authority that covers the County area
CRITERION 6	• Use of Neighbourhood Area Committees to facilitate local engagement • Sufficient scale to deliver improvements across communities and neighbourhoods

East Staffordshire:
East Staffordshire
Lichfield
Tamworth
Staffordshire Moorlands
Stoke-on-Trent

West Staffordshire:
Cannock Chase
Newcastle-under-Lyme
South Staffordshire
Stafford

OPTION E

TWO UNITARY COUNCILS (STOKE ON TRENT CC & STAFFORDSHIRE UNITARY)

KEY ATTRIBUTES AGAINST CRITERIA	
CRITERION 1	• Incompatible with functioning economic geography – there is no recognised FEMA • Not reflective of local identity, culture and history – Stoke-on-Trent is placed in the east when it is located in the northwest
CRITERION 2	• Both Councils >500,000 population at Vesting Day • No boundary changes
CRITERION 3	• Small number of Councils • No disaggregation of social services
CRITERION 4	• Not supported by enough Councils in the North and South
CRITERION 5	• Two Unitary Councils can facilitate a Strategic Authority that covers the County area
CRITERION 6	• Use of Neighbourhood Area Committees to facilitate local engagement • Sufficient scale to deliver improvements across communities and neighbourhoods

Stoke-on-Trent City Council

Staffordshire Unitary Council:
Cannock Chase
East Staffordshire
Lichfield
Newcastle-under-Lyme
Stafford
Staffordshire Moorlands
South Staffordshire
Tamworth

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

The assessment of the five reorganisation options demonstrates a clear variation in how each structure aligns with the Government's criteria for Local Government Reorganisation.

Option A: two unitary Councils for North and Southern & Mid-Staffordshire, emerges as the strongest model, offering a balanced economic geography, population scale, and alignment with local identity. It avoids boundary changes, maintains service continuity, and enables financial sustainability without the need for disaggregation. Importantly, it is supported by Councils across both areas and provides a credible foundation for a future Strategic Authority.

Option B: three unitary Councils, reflects an even more localised approach; however, it introduces duplication of roles and services, reducing operational efficiency and increasing complexity, particularly with regard delivery of social services and the cost of disaggregating these. While it offers a greater sense of localism, the smaller scale of each Council limits the potential for strategic impact and financial resilience.

Option C: two unitary model but with boundary changes, lacks sufficient justification and consensus. Although it maintains population balance and avoids some service disaggregation, it does not have broad support across Councils, weakening its viability.

Option D: two unitary Councils for East and West Staffordshire, is misaligned with the functional geography of Staffordshire. It places Stoke-on-Trent in an illogical position and lacks support from key stakeholders. Despite meeting population thresholds, it fails to reflect local identity and risks undermining regional coherence.

Option E: two unitary Councils - Stoke-on-Trent City Council and a single Staffordshire unitary, results in significant population imbalance and limited financial sustainability. It lacks support and does not provide a credible platform for strategic county-wide leadership, misaligning with the Government's expectations for financial sustainability for existing small Unitaries.

FINANCIAL APPRAISAL OF OPTIONS

Appraising the financial sustainability of any proposal forms a central component of this proposal. Understanding the financial implications of Local Government Reorganisation across Southern & Mid-Staffordshire is key to assessing whether the proposed structure would deliver measurable, long-term improvements in financial resilience, efficiency, and value for money.

The table below summaries the financial appraisal of each of the five options against a number of key metrics, including:

GROSS ANNUAL SAVINGS

The savings identified as being achievable in a single full year at the point the new authority/authorities can be considered ‘stable. These include savings arising from the consolidation of leadership/senior management positions as well as wider operational cost reductions.

ONE OFF IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

These are the estimated costs to enable the creation of the new Unitary Councils and deliver the changes required to enable the annual savings identified.

DISAGGREGATION COSTS *(WHERE APPLICABLE)*

Staffordshire currently operates with two upper-tier authorities: Staffordshire County Council and Stoke-on-Trent City Council. Proposals involving the creation of more than two unitary authorities would incur disaggregation costs, arising from the division of county-level services and the establishment of additional statutory leadership and management structures. Even in scenarios proposing two unitary authorities, where boundaries necessitate the redistribution or rebalancing of existing county services, some level of disaggregation cost remains. These financial implications are an important consideration in evaluating the viability and efficiency of different reorganisation models.

OPTIONS	NOTES	GROSS ANNUAL SAVINGS (FULL YEAR)	ADDITIONAL ANNUAL (DIS) AGGREGATION (FULL YEAR)	ONE OFF IMPLEMENTATION COSTS	PAYBACK PERIOD	NET BENEFIT AFTER 5 YEARS
OPTION A	1	£29.9m	£0	(£31.5m)	1.4 years	£92.7m
OPTION B	2	£25.6m	(£10.5m)	(£35.4m)	3.8 years	£18.2m
OPTION C	3	£28.8m	(£7.5m)	(£35.7m)	3.8 years	£24.5m
OPTION D	3	£28.8m	(£7.5m)	(£31.9m)	3.6 years	£28.4m
OPTION E	3	£29.9m	(£1.7m)	(£23.3m)	2.2 years	£67.5m

Notes:
1. Presents the financial impact for the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Unitary Authority only. A number of external experts have been utilised across the county, and whilst the same information base has been used the outputs from those experts highlight a potential range of options for the county area as a whole with a 2 unitary north-south split, with saving ranges of between £12.6m - £51.7m and implementation cost ranges of between £20.6m - £54.4m.

2. Presents the financial impact for the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire area only where two new Unitary Councils are proposed (South-East and South-West), proposed by Lichfield, South Staffordshire and Tamworth.
3. Analysis undertaken by Staffordshire County Council. Presents the financial impact for the current County area as a whole, including Stoke-on-Trent.

In relation to Options A and B the figures represent a midpoint case, based on modelling provided by the external advisors to the authorities, as a typical benchmark for comparison. Further financial analysis on the preferred option is contained within section 5, including detail on the modelling approach, the sensitivity analysis of the payback period (base and stretch case), and a detailed assessment of the implementation costs.

PREFERRED OPTION

Following a thorough evaluation against the Government's assessment criteria, alongside financial analysis and feedback from residents on local priorities, Option A - establishing two unitary Councils, one for North Staffordshire and one for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire, has emerged as the preferred model.

This option clearly presents a more robust and sustainable model when assessed against the Government's six criteria. It offers a balanced and functioning economic geography and population scale, with both Councils exceeding the 500,000 population preferred threshold at Vesting Day. This scale is critical for ensuring financial sustainability, operational efficiency, and the ability to deliver high-quality services without the need for disaggregation.

Option A also benefits from strong alignment with existing partnerships and stakeholder structures, and crucially, it avoids boundary changes, which minimise disruption and enabling a smoother transition. The model is supported by Councils across both areas and provides a credible platform for establishing a future Strategic Authority, ensuring coherence and continuity across the county. Further information on the evidence base for this preferred geography can be found at Annex 2.

By comparison, the option that proposes the creation of three Unitary Councils, Option B, introduces several challenges that undermine its long-term viability. While it may reflect a more localised approach and align with some resident preferences, the smaller population sizes of each Council fall significantly below the Government's preferred threshold, raising concerns about financial resilience, ability to withstand financial shocks and ultimately the strategic capacity of those authorities. The model also results in duplication of key governance roles and services, increasing operational complexity and costs. The need to disaggregate social services across three authorities would not only incur significant one-off and ongoing costs but also risk service fragmentation and reduced effectiveness. Financially, Option B delivers lower gross annual savings, a longer payback period and a substantially lower net benefit after five years, making it a less compelling option in terms of value for money and long-term sustainability.

The subsequent sections of this proposal outline the vision for the new Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council, detailing how this vision will be realised through a focused and practical implementation plan, with an emphasis on Day One readiness.

VISION FOR A SOUTHERN & MID-STAFFORDSHIRE UNITARY COUNCIL

VISION & VALUES

The new Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council will be a forward-thinking, resident-focused authority that delivers high quality services, supports inclusive growth, and champions the unique identity of its communities. Rooted in a rich heritage and shaped by vibrant towns, villages, and rural landscapes, the Council will work to ensure that every resident has access to opportunity, wellbeing, and a strong sense of place.

As a modern and efficient organisation of scale, the Council will embrace innovation. Our size and breadth of services will enable efficiencies to be achieved through transformation, including digital transformation to deliver services that are responsive, accessible, and financially sustainable. We will foster a thriving local economy by supporting businesses, attracting investment. Our sensible geographical footprint will enable effective transport infrastructure that connects people and places and attracts inward investment.

The Council will be built on a foundation of collaboration, transparency, and local empowerment. It will work in partnership with residents, voluntary groups, public services, and regional stakeholders to co-design solutions that reflect local priorities. By choosing a recognisable geography of a sensible size and developing Neighbourhood Area Committees we will be able to place communities at the heart of decision-making. By unlocking the potential of devolution, Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council will become a resilient, future-ready authority fit to serve the needs of today and the generations to come.

This vision is underpinned by three core values, under which are 19 actions that set out how the new Unitary Council will meet this vision. Each of the value and associated actions are designed to demonstrate how the new Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Unitary Council will meet the Government's six criteria.

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

The table below provides references to some of the sections where compliance with the Government's criteria is demonstrated, through the three values of **Establish**, **Economise** and **Engage**, as a non-exhaustive reference list:

VALUES	CRITERION 1	CRITERION 2	CRITERION 3	CRITERION 4	CRITERION 5	CRITERION 6
ESTABLISH	**Section 4:** Alignment with North Staffordshire Unitary Council	**Section 3:** Preferred Option & **Section 5:** Financial Sustainability	**Section 4:** Vision & Values	**Section 2:** Objectives & **Section 3:** Resident Feedback	**Section 6:** Implementation and Day One readiness	**Section 4:** Democracy, Governance, Engagement & Representation
ECONOMISE						
ENGAGE						

ESTABLISH

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

DAY ONE READINESS

Continuity of service delivery on Day One in a legally sound and safe way will be the most important priority of the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council, ensuring this continues throughout the transition period.

As part of this, the new Council will ensure a seamless and uninterrupted transfer of critical services from Day One through robust planning and learning from other LGR areas, taking account of issue such as contact channels, case management systems, and procurement of care packages, for example.

Taking an approach to LGR where upper tier services do not require disaggregation is key to achieving this outcome and a major advantage of this proposal compared to alternatives.

Day One readiness is a focus of the implementation plan at section 6 and so more detail on how this will be achieved can be found there.

CREATING A COUNCIL STRATEGY & PLAN

A new Southern & Mid-Staffordshire needs to stand for something and show its residents what it plans to deliver and how it will take the necessary steps to achieve this. As part of the transitional period in 2027/28, the Shadow Council will adopt a set of priorities that will establish a long-term strategy for the area, under which will be a set of targets and actions that residents and businesses will be able to access, understand and scrutinise in advance of Vesting Day.

The creation of this plan will also take the first steps in promoting the shared identity of Southern & Mid-Staffordshire, bringing together the nuances and individualities of the component parts under a shared sense of place that acknowledges the history, culture and economy of the area. This approach to reflecting the areas identify will focus on investment in key assets, community engagement, storytelling, supporting local businesses, events and festivals, and the development of infrastructure, which will create a strong voice for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire in the region and beyond.

BUILDING RESILIENCE TO EXTERNAL CHALLENGES

The Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council is projected to deliver a healthy Gross Value Added (GVA) per capita, comparable to that of the North Staffordshire Council. This will support a balanced distribution of economic prosperity across the county, ensuring that residents throughout Staffordshire benefit from sustained and inclusive growth.

From a Council Tax perspective, the area encompasses a sufficient volume and diversity of housing stock to establish a robust and sustainable tax base due to the population of 656,800 people.

This financial foundation will enable the Council to effectively fund the transformation and delivery of high-quality public services, positioning it as a key enabler of regional economic development.

At this scale, the new Council will possess the critical mass necessary to withstand and respond to financial pressures, including changes in Government funding, rising service demands, and challenges in essential areas such as adult social care and homelessness. This resilience will be vital in maintaining stability and continuity in service delivery.

ENGAGING NEIGHBOURHOODS & COMMUNITIES

Engaging local communities is fundamental to effective Local Government and the proposed reorganisation of the six District and Borough Councils into a single unitary authority presents a valuable opportunity to establish new, innovative mechanisms for neighbourhood and community engagement. These reforms aim to enhance democratic participation, strengthen local accountability, and improve the quality of local governance.

As part of the new Council's implementation, Neighbourhood Area Committees will be introduced to give communities a stronger voice in shaping local priorities. These committees will serve as a platform for residents to influence policy development and service delivery, complementing the important role already played by Parish and Town Councils.

Further details on the structure and function of these committees can be found in the *Democracy, Governance, Engagement and Representation* section.

SAFEGUARDING THE VULNERABLE & YOUNG

Services to vulnerable people and groups is an important matter for the new Council and understanding how these services are currently provided by upper tier authorities is critical in supporting the quality of life and safety of those who use the services. The existing six District and Borough Councils already work closely with the uppier tier authority in key areas such as homelessness and so have the experience and skills to mitigate any potential adverse impacts on individuals, including children.

Consistency and stability of placement/worker is a key driver of positive outcomes for vulnerable people and so a pragmatic approach will be taken, especially in children's services, to maintain consistency of service delivery. The amalgamation of existing two-tier services is key to safeguarding the vulnerable and young. By bringing together services such as housing, social care, leisure and parks, a more holistic approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable service users can be made.

With regards Adult Social Care and Children's Services, there will be a focus on early intervention, prevention initiatives and community support integration that will be enabled by the size of the authority. This will be led by a commitment to protect life chances, build confidence with families, and streamline access to support.

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

DRIVING HOUSING GROWTH

The six existing District and Borough Councils collectively exceed their housing delivery targets, achieving over 100% of the aggregated requirement. This demonstrates a strong and coordinated capacity to meet, and indeed surpass, local housing needs.

This momentum will be carried forward into the new authority, which is tasked with delivering 53,040 homes between 2024 and 2040, including social and affordable housing, noting that some of this will be delivered prior to Vesting Day.

The formation of the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council will enable a more integrated and efficient approach to town planning. By streamlining processes and reducing bureaucratic barriers, the new authority will be well-positioned to accelerate housing delivery in alignment with national planning policy and Government priorities.

In addition, we will explore the potential to align the existing housing stock in Cannock and Tamworth under a single management structure. This would facilitate a consistent and strategic approach to tenancy management, property allocation, and enhance financial and operational resilience. We will also work with other registered social landlords to identify innovative models of social housing provision for the future.

BRINGING TOGETHER SERVICES

Many of the services currently delivered by the existing six District and Borough Councils are administered in different ways; there are inconsistent approaches to in-house and outsourcing of services such as waste collection, parks/grounds maintenance, leisure services, and housing stock management.

Under the administration of a single Unitary Council, these services will be brought together under clear and cohesive policies and strategies that will remove any risk of fragmented service delivery, complex governance, and systemic differences.

The amalgamation of public services will achieve a greater level of consistency and understanding for all stakeholders, including residents who may access those services and the staff who provide them.

> ***Taking an approach to LGR where upper tier services do not require disaggregation is key to achieving this outcome and a major advantage of this proposal compared to alternatives.***

TRENTHAM ESTATE, STAFFORD BOROUGH

SONIC BOOM FESTIVAL, BURTON UPON TRENT

CASE STUDY:

ENGAGING NEIGHBOURHOODS & COMMUNITIES

SONICBOOM CIC & THE SONIC BOOM FESTIVAL
A CULTURAL CATALYST FOR BURTON UPON TRENT

In 2023, a transformative cultural initiative took root in Burton upon Trent with the founding of Sonicboom Music CIC, a not-for-profit community interest company dedicated to revitalising the town's music scene and fostering grassroots talent. Inspired by the success of Future Yard in Birkenhead, a post-industrial music venue and creative hub, local stakeholders saw an opportunity to replicate a similar model in Burton. This vision was championed by East Staffordshire Borough Council, who recognised the potential of music-led regeneration to breathe new life into the town's cultural identity.

Launched in 2024, the inaugural Sonic Boom Festival was a collaborative effort between Sonicboom CIC and East Staffordshire Borough Council, with additional support from Arts Council England. The event transformed Burton's town centre into a vibrant music venue, attracting over 6,000 attendees from across the UK. The free main stage in the Market Square, hosted by BBC Radio 6 Music's Chris Hawkins, featured national touring acts including The K's, Nubiyan Twist, DECO, and Divorce. Complementing the main event were Aftershock gigs held at local venues, extending the festival's reach and impact into the evening hours.

Beyond entertainment, the Sonic Boom Festival has become a platform for skills development and youth engagement. The TURBO training programme, piloted alongside the festival, offered young people hands-on experience in live event production and led to Bronze Arts Awards certifications. In 2025, the programme expanded to include 30 learners, supported by Burton College, further embedding the festival's educational legacy.

In just two years, Sonicboom CIC and East Staffordshire Borough Council have demonstrated how strategic partnerships and community-driven initiatives can catalyse cultural regeneration. The collaboration was also a finalist at the 2025 LGC awards for the public-private partnership category.

The creation of a single Unitary Council for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire will provide a strong platform for community and neighbourhood engagement, using our experiences of supporting the delivery of grassroots cultural projects like Sonicboom.

HOUSING DEVELOPMENT, CODSALL

CASE STUDY:

DRIVING HOUSING GROWTH

THE SIX DISTRICT AND BOROUGH COUNCIL'S APPROACH TO HOUSING DELIVERY

The six Councils have a proven track record of delivering large-scale, strategic housing developments that support regional growth and regeneration. A prime example is the transformation of the former Rugeley Power Station, a cross-boundary project between Cannock Chase and Lichfield Councils and the private sector, which will deliver 2,300 new homes, a through school and employment land on previously heavily contaminated brownfield land. This ambitious scheme reflects the Councils ability to collaborate effectively across jurisdictions and deliver complex, multi-phased developments.

Similarly, East Staffordshire has successfully enabled 2,700 new homes to the west and south of Burton upon Trent, demonstrating its capacity to manage sustained growth while maintaining quality and community integration.

In addition, the Council has facilitated the delivery of 1,400 affordable homes during its current Local Plan period, ensuring inclusive access to housing and supporting long-term social sustainability.

A new Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council will bring together planning, highways, economic development, strategic infrastructure and housing into one organisation. This will give us an economic geography of a scale where we can have regional influence and work effectively with the Strategic Authority, developers and inward investors to accelerate the delivery of housing and employment.

ECONOMISE

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

FLATTER STRUCTURES, LEANER & MORE FLEXIBLE SERVICES – RIGHT SIZING THE ORGANISATION

The organisation structure of the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council will be lean, flat and efficient, removing unnecessary layers of management, duplicated roles and prioritising efficient service delivery. This approach minimises the need to add additional statutory posts across the area, increasing resilience compared to smaller Local Authorities, ensuring service continuity and flexibility should resources be required to respond to unforeseen circumstances or increased demand.

As part of this, there will be increased opportunities for staff specialisation and professional development due to the size of the workforce, leading to an increase in skills and effectiveness, which can in turn be used to improve service design and delivery. This will allow for more flexible deployment of staff across the wider area based on need and local demand, whilst enabling continuous service efficiencies and promoting career pathways for young people as an attractive local employer.

This approach to organisational design is only achievable within a single Unitary approach, any increase in the number of Local Authorities creates duplication of leadership and statutory roles that increase the ongoing budgetary pressures of those authorities, removing the scale of operational efficiencies that only a single Unitary in Southern & Mid-Staffordshire can achieve.

SHARING IT SYSTEMS & SERVICES – IMPROVED DIGITAL & IT SYSTEMS

There will be a range of existing IT systems that require review and consolidation as part of creating a consistent and coherent environment for service delivery. This includes a need to understand the operational support for frontline services, such as that which enables the effective design of waste collection routes or food safety evaluations.

As part of taking this forward, there will be opportunity to explore a joint procurement approach with the proposed North Staffordshire Council with regards to IT and digital support for operational services, encouraging a compatibility of support services across the wider Staffordshire county and achieving greater economies of scale through partnership working.

MORE ECONOMICAL PROCUREMENT – SERVICE CONTRACT CONSOLIDATION

A larger Council has the scale and capacity to create efficiencies in procurement through the alignment and standardisation of contracts, which will in turn improve accountability and value for money. A unified approach to strategic commissioning will retain economies of scale, maintain market stability and ensure a resident focused approach whilst ensuring contracts can be tailored to local circumstances and need.

This approach enables the new authority to optimise and rationalise procurement spend and contracts, reducing the volume of individual contract management requirements and increasing value for money in contract awards.

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

EFFICIENT SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Public sector services experience evolving expectations from residents and increases in acute demand for services. Our ability to deliver services to those that need them, when they need them, in a way that works for them will be enhanced as a result of LGR.

Service delivery models will continue to evolve over time, continuously learning from experience and best practice, building on the current ethos of continuous improvement and innovation within the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire area. This will include ongoing consideration of the most appropriate geographical level for service delivery, such as through regional, unitary or neighbourhood structures, based on service type, context and stakeholder engagement.

Furthermore, the new Council will make a commitment to continuously explore alternative methods of service delivery, ensuring that the method of providing services to resident always remains the most effective, economical and sensible approach.

CONSOLIDATING UNDERUTILISED PROPERTY – ASSET & PROPERTY OPTIMISATION

Council owned property will be brought together under single ownership and reviewed in order to understand what is still needed and what requires investment or repurposing. Property that the new Council no longer needs could be subject to an asset transfer to Parish and Town Councils, or used as a springboard for local regeneration initiatives that create housing or employment uses.

Similarly, we will explore opportunities to repurpose Council property as local service delivery hubs that can be used to ensure services are delivered locally in appropriate places.

INVESTING IN INFRASTRUCTURE OVER THE LONGER-TERM

The Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council will be well positioned to adopt a more integrated strategic approach to infrastructure planning, supporting the delivery of housing, employment, and sustainable economic growth.

By taking a holistic view of infrastructure investment, the Council can ensure that regeneration is not pursued in isolation, but instead responds to the broader social, economic, and environmental needs that arise from growth.

“Any increase in the number of Local Authorities creates duplication of leadership and statutory roles that increase the ongoing budgetary pressures of those authorities, removing the scale of operational efficiencies that only a single Unitary in Southern & Mid-Staffordshire can achieve.”

THE WASHLANDS, BURTON UPON TRENT

CANNOCK CHASE FOREST, CANNOCK

CASE STUDY:

EFFICIENT SERVICE DELIVERY MODELS & CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

CANNOCK CHASE & STAFFORD SHARED SERVICES

Cannock Chase District and Stafford Borough Councils have been sharing a range of services since 2011. In total this saved both Councils in excess of £1m each year from streamlined teams/ management structures, process and sharing IT systems. The Councils decided to share a chief executive from June 2021 and extend the sharing to nearly all services with effect from April 2023 which to date has saved more than £260k pa for both authorities through establishing a shared Leadership Team and Senior Management.

Sharing services has provided us with continuity of service delivery while transforming processes along with improving services to our residents.

LICHFIELD CATHEDRAL, LICHFIELD

CASE STUDY:

SHARING IT SYSTEMS & SERVICES

LICHFIELD & TAMWORTH JOINT WASTE SERVICES

Since its formation in 2010, the Joint Waste Service between Lichfield District Council and Tamworth Borough Council has become a model of collaborative service delivery, serving approximately 80,000 households across both districts. The partnership was established to improve efficiency, reduce costs, and enhance the quality of waste collection services without compromising performance.

Strategically, the Joint Waste Service aims to achieve a 65% recycling rate by 2035, introducing food waste and plastic film recycling, and reducing contamination in recyclable materials. The service is guided by a shared business plan that aligns with national strategies and Staffordshire-wide waste targets. It leverages data-driven decision-making and route optimisation to reduce fuel usage and operational costs.

Technology has played a key role in transformation. The adoption of the Collective system has enabled real-time tracking, improved customer service, and fewer missed bin collections. Integration with CRM systems allows for immediate feedback and resolution of resident queries, significantly improving satisfaction levels.

This long-standing partnership demonstrates how shared services can deliver financial savings, environmental benefits, and improved public service outcomes. It continues to evolve, positioning itself as a leader in waste management innovation and circular economy practices.

ENGAGE

"Ensuring people remain at the centre of every decision we make"

CLEAR LINES OF ACCOUNTABILITY – OPTIMISING LEADERSHIP

The establishment of a single Unitary Council for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire will eliminate the complexities of two-tier governance, removing duplication across key Cabinet and Elected Member roles. This will create clear, streamlined lines of decision-making, responsibility, and accountability.

As part of the Vesting Day process, a key priority will be the design and implementation of a governance framework that can deliver consistently high standards of service to residents. This will be underpinned by locally responsive leadership and enhanced capacity to address regional challenges and opportunities more effectively.

This unified approach will enable more efficient and cost-effective service delivery, while strengthening democratic accountability, transparency and responsiveness across the new authority, with *proportionate democratic services*.

More information on our approach to governance can be found in the *Democracy, Governance, Engagement and Representation* section and detail on the savings analysis can be found in section 5 – *Financial Sustainability of the new Council*.

IMPROVING RESIDENT EXPERIENCE – CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT

Establishing a consistent standard and delivery model across Southern & Mid-Staffordshire is essential to enhancing residents' experience of Council services.

This alignment will eliminate the perception of a 'postcode lottery', where service quality and access vary depending on the legacy Council area.

A single Unitary Council structure will simplify resident and business interactions by removing multiple layers of engagement and reducing complexity. This streamlined model will make it easier for communities to access the services they need, fostering greater trust and responsiveness.

Furthermore, the new authority will introduce integrated service pathways for complex, cross-service issues, such as social care and housing, ensuring a more holistic and coordinated approach to meeting residents' needs. This will reduce fragmentation, improve outcomes, and help prevent individuals from falling through the gaps between services.

BREAKING DOWN ARTIFICIAL BOUNDARIES – CONSOLIDATING FLEETS & OPTIMISING ROUTES

Process alignment within the new authority is not solely about achieving consistency in policy development, it is about recognising and responding to the broader functional economic geography in which residents live, work, learn, and play. By removing artificial administrative boundaries that hold little relevance to everyday life, the new Council can deliver a more coherent and simplified model of local government that better reflects the lived experience of its communities.

In practical terms, this will result in more streamlined access to services such as permits, licences, waste collection, planning, and housing, regardless of where individuals live or travel within the area. This integrated approach will foster a greater sense of continuity and clarity for residents and businesses alike.

As part of implementing this transition, it will be essential for the new Council to adopt a fair and proportionate strategy for harmonising Council Tax across the region, ensuring that the financial impact on residents is managed responsibly and equitably, appreciating that it will take time to get this right.

ENGAGING THROUGH REPRESENTATION

The Elected Member governance model for the proposed Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council must be carefully designed to reflect the unique characteristics of the area while ensuring efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and strong democratic representation.

As part of this proposal, a streamlined and effective governance structure is being put forward based on a Councillor-to-resident ratio of approximately 1:5,847, which results in a total of 92 Councillors representing the new authority. By aligning with existing county divisions, this model adopts a uniform two-member ward approach across the entire geography. This consistency ensures that all residents, regardless of location, have equitable access to their local representatives and a clear understanding of how to engage with the democratic process.

This approach strikes a balance between effective governance and fiscal responsibility. It enables the new Council to maintain high standards of democratic accountability while avoiding the inefficiencies that can arise from overly complex or fragmented governance arrangements. Ultimately, this model is designed to support a modern, responsive, and representative Council that is well-positioned to meet the needs of its residents and deliver high-quality local services.

ENSURING EASY POINTS OF ACCESS

Ensuring accessible and responsive engagement with the Council is fundamental to delivering high-quality public services. The new Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council will place residents and businesses at the heart of its operations, making it straightforward to access information, attend meetings, and resolve queries. This resident-focused approach will be embedded across all service areas, reinforcing transparency, responsiveness, and trust in local government.

By simplifying points of access and removing unnecessary complexity, the Council will create a more inclusive and user-friendly experience for all that includes delivering services locally. Whether interacting online, in person, or through community-based channels, individuals will benefit from a consistent and efficient interface with their Local Authority, reflecting a modern and forward looking customer-centric model of public service delivery.

COLLABORATING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

The new Council will foster strong collaboration with partners across the public, private and third sectors at all levels, enhancing integration and promoting preventative approaches where appropriate. An early mapping exercise will be undertaken in order to understand the existing partnership arrangements and how these can be streamlined and incorporated into the new authority to ensure effective partnership working in the future.

Utilising these existing partnerships and communication channels throughout the transition and implementation period will ensure that local insight and information can shape the future of the Unitary Council, fostering a culture of collaboration and establishing a wider partnership ecosystem.

> ***A single Unitary Council structure will simplify resident and business interactions by removing multiple layers of engagement and reducing complexity. This streamlined model will make it easier for communities to access the services they need, fostering greater trust and responsiveness.***

NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM, ALREWAS

TAMWORTH CASTLE, TAMWORTH

CASE STUDY:

IMPROVING RESIDENT EXPERIENCE

TAMWORTH'S HONEST CONVERSATIONS

In response to civil unrest during the summer of 2024, Tamworth Borough Council launched the Honest Conversations project, a pioneering initiative aimed at strengthening community cohesion through open dialogue. Delivered in partnership with the Belong Network, a national charity specialising in integration and social cohesion, the project sought to address underlying tensions and foster constructive engagement across the borough.

Funded through the Community Recovery Fund, the project ran from November 2024 to April 2025 and involved a wide-ranging programme of community engagement, including focus groups, structured workshops, and informal discussions in schools, churches, pubs, and community centres. Participants included residents, asylum seekers, students, faith leaders, and representatives from local agencies and voluntary organisations.

The initiative was designed to surface and explore "difficult" issues, such as migration, social inequality, and the cost-of-living crisis, that had contributed to local tensions. Belong's approach was to listen deeply and reflect back community perspectives, enabling the Council to develop a shared understanding of local dynamics and inform a new cohesion and engagement strategy.

Tamworth's Honest Conversations project exemplifies how Local Authorities can take a whole-Council approach to integration, by listening, learning, and leading with empathy and transparency.

BOSCOBEL HOUSE, SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

CASE STUDY:

COLLABORATING THROUGH PARTNERSHIPS

PARTNERSHIP WORKING IN SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE

The Codsall Community Hub was developed through the Staffordshire One Public Estate Steering Group. This award-winning project transformed the Council's headquarters into a multi-agency hub, co-locating over 29 organisations from the public, private, health, and voluntary sectors. The initiative has reduced operational costs, improved service accessibility, and created a modern, sustainable environment for residents. It includes a new GP surgery, integrated NHS Trust services, and local policing teams, all under one roof.

The partnerships in South Staffordshire are underpinned by a shared commitment to place-based leadership, innovation, and inclusive growth.

The development of a single unitary council for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire will provide many new opportunities for co-locating public sector and voluntary and community services. This will make best use of expensive public estate, encourage joint working and development of services and be more convenient for residents.

ALIGNMENT WITH OPERATING MODEL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The Operating Model Design Principles referenced in section 2 are at the centre of this vision and how it will be implemented.

SECURE FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Council will be established on a financially sustainable footing, ensuring that public money is spent wisely and transparently. By consolidating assets, eliminating duplication, and leveraging economies of scale, the Council will reduce the burden on local taxpayers while maintaining high-quality services. This approach reflects a commitment to long-term value for money and responsible stewardship of public resources, which was a priority for local residents in the survey feedback, for example 56% felt value for money was important in service delivery and 55% said one of their top priorities was saving money while keeping local services running smoothly.

DELIVER HIGH QUALITY SERVICES, WITH A MIXED ECONOMY DELIVERY MODEL, DECIDING WHERE AND HOW SERVICES ARE BEST DELIVERED

The Council will adopt a flexible and pragmatic approach to service delivery, using a mixed economy model that considers in-house provision, partnerships, and commissioned services. This will ensure that services are delivered in the most effective and efficient way, tailored to local needs and continuously improved through feedback and innovation.

ACT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE PLACE, INTEGRATING ACROSS SECTORS TO SECURE THE BEST OUTCOMES

The Council will act as a convenor of place, bringing together partners across health, education, housing, and the voluntary sector to deliver joined-up services that reflect the lived experience of residents. Integration will be central to how services are designed and delivered, ensuring that outcomes are improved through collaboration and shared accountability.

PRIORITISE INNOVATION, PREVENTION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT – USING DIGITAL AS AN ENABLER

Digital transformation will be a cornerstone of the Council's operating model. From streamlining resident interactions to enabling data-driven decision-making, digital tools will enhance service delivery, reduce costs, and improve accessibility. Innovation will be embedded across all service areas, supported by a culture of learning and adaptation.

ACT EARLY, DRIVEN BY INSIGHT, AND ENSURING THAT EVERYONE CAN BENEFIT FROM OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PLACE

The Council will use local insight and data to inform early intervention strategies, ensuring that services are targeted where they are most needed. This proactive approach will help prevent issues before they escalate, improving outcomes and reducing long-term costs.

CONSIDER THE IMPACT OF OUR ACTIONS ON ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Council will take a proactive approach to environmental sustainability, focusing on future-proof housing, reducing underutilised property, and embedding sustainability into infrastructure planning. These actions will not only reduce the Council's environmental footprint but also contribute to healthier, more resilient communities.

ENABLE OUR RESIDENTS TO BUILD RESILIENCE & SUPPORT ONE ANOTHER, IN THRIVING COMMUNITIES

Neighbourhood Area Committees will be a key mechanism for embedding local voice and influence into the Council's governance model. These committees will empower communities, building on existing local and neighbourhood organisations to shape local priorities, support one another, and build resilience from the ground up, ensuring that the Council is not just delivering services, but enabling communities to thrive.

MAKING THIS HAPPEN: OUR WORKFORCE

Our ability to transform and realise this vision is largely based on our biggest asset; our people. This is why we have created a set of workforce principles that will inform the organisational design (OD) of the new Council, and our aspirations for the new culture.

We want to be seen as an employer of choice and to create a workforce that has the capacity, capability and drive to create an environment where all have the opportunity to thrive. To do this we will:

- *Help everyone feel like they belong*: Make sure people feel personally connected to the new Council's identity so they feel like part of the team.
- *Encourage action and success*: Promote values, beliefs and ways of thinking that help people achieve their goals.
- *Be fair and inclusive*: Create a safe environment where everyone feels equal, can be themselves, and our staff reflect the diversity of the communities we serve.
- *Listen and involve everyone*: Make sure people feel comfortable speaking up, sharing ideas, giving feedback, and making decisions that shape the organisation's future.
- *Make sure leaders lead by example*: Our senior managers will be visible, easy to talk to, and actively involved with our communities and employees. They will create a workplace where everyone feels valued, respected, and empowered.
- *Invest in our people*: Provide training and development to keep our staff skilled, knowledgeable, and talented.
- *Support innovation*: We want our people to work together, innovate, and support each other's performance, creating an environment where continuous learning leads to excellence.

DEMOCRACY, GOVERNANCE, ENGAGEMENT & REPRESENTATION

ELECTED REPRESENTATION

Through the process of devolution and the proposed reforms to governance and organisational structures, there is significant opportunity to strengthen local democracy. By enhancing the effectiveness and accountability of the new Council's governance arrangements and building upon existing mechanisms for community and stakeholder engagement, it is possible to create a more responsive and representative system.

A key element of this transformation is the empowerment of local leaders by establishing a Councillor-to-electorate ratio that ensures a manageable and effective number of elected representatives. Transitioning to a single-tier Council model will further streamline Local Government, providing clearer lines of accountability and improving service delivery for residents.

The Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE) has put forward proposals for changes across Staffordshire. However, the Commission has confirmed that it cannot undertake a structural review of any authority prior to its formal establishment. Consequently, any electoral arrangements must be based on existing ward boundaries, whether at parish, district, or county level, as these have already been subject to prior review by the LGBCE. Furthermore, the Commission expects that any new Council proposal should include no fewer than 30 and no more than 99 Councillors.

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

Currently, there are 46 Councillors at County Council level and 232 at District and Borough Council level:

CURRENT REPRESENTATION ACROSS SOUTHERN & MID-STAFFORDSHIRE				
DISTRICT	DIVISIONS	COUNCILLORS (C)	COUNCILLORS (D&B)	ELECTORATE (2029)
CANNOCK CHASE DISTRICT	7	7	36	82,337
EAST STAFFORDSHIRE BOROUGH	9	9	37	104,022
LICHFIELD DISTRICT	8	8	47	91,177
SOUTH STAFFORDSHIRE DISTRICT	8	8	42	88,881
STAFFORD BOROUGH	9	9	40	108,355
TAMWORTH BOROUGH	5	5	30	63,166
TOTAL	**46**	**46**	**232**	**537,938**

Assuming that existing county divisions are retained as the foundation for the new Unitary Councils across Staffordshire, the proposed approach is to create two member wards. This approach would result in a Councillor-to-electorate ratio of approximately 1:5,847, with 92 Councillors representing the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Unitary Council. Adopting a single-member ward model would lead to an unacceptably high ratio and create a significant imbalance in representation between the northern and southern areas, despite remaining within the parameters set by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England (LGBCE).

This proposal also enables a more efficient governance model by minimising duplication of key leadership roles, including Cabinet positions and statutory responsibilities such as Lead Member for Children's Services and Adult Social Care. This structure avoids unnecessary replication of governance functions across the new authority.

As part of the vesting process, a central priority will be to establish a governance framework that delivers high standards of democratic accountability and service delivery. The creation of two unitary Councils for Staffordshire will enable more focused, locally responsive leadership. Each Council will be better positioned to address regional challenges and opportunities, while delivering services in a more streamlined and cost-effective manner. Efficiencies will be achieved through a reduction in the number of Councillors and associated governance structures.

REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

ENGAGING LOCAL PEOPLE THROUGH NEIGHBOURHOOD AREA COMMITTEES

MHCLG guidance is clear that any new arrangements under LGR should enhance community engagement and create clear, accountable local governance. In line with this, in forming new Unitary Councils, it will be important to establish Neighbourhood Area Committees (NACs) that can build on the strong foundations of existing locality and community engagement structures, while ensuring every community has a meaningful voice in local decision-making.

It is recognised that new governance models will emerge through Local Government Reorganisation, and we are committed to learning from elsewhere and adapting our approach to effectively meet local needs.

DRAFT PURPOSE OF NACS

"To empower local communities by amplifying their voice, preserving their unique identity, and influencing programme design and delivery in local services through engaged, member-led decision-making and effective action plans, ultimately shaping a better future for their neighbourhoods."

This draft purpose is designed to inform the creation of NACs and it is grounded in four key principles which will guide how are they are formed and how they will operate, subject to their agreement:

1 LOCAL VOICE & OWNERSHIP

These committees should serve as a strong local voice for residents, fostering civic pride and identity. They are intended to own and plan for local priorities, addressing community needs and supporting community assets.

2 ACCOUNTABILITY & DECISION MAKING

A primary function is to work with the council at a local level to enhance and, where necessary, improve local delivery. They should be empowered as decision-making bodies with allocated budgets, operating in a data and intelligence-driven manner.

3 REPRESENTATION & INCLUSIVITY

Ensuring fair, representative, and inclusive participation from all localities and residents is crucial. They should engage all key stakeholders and align with existing stakeholder boundaries where practicable, this includes taking account of existing Parish and Town Council Boundaries.

4 DISTINCT & RESPONSIVE ROLE

These committees are not meant to replace district councils or assume statutory responsibilities. Instead, their focus is on being locally responsive, staying true to local identity, and supporting residents effectively. They could be formally constituted and potentially work alongside town councils.

HOW NACS WILL WORK

NACs will provide a structured, transparent, and inclusive approach to locality governance. They will:

- Operate at a district or sub-district level (aligned, where possible, with existing parish, town, or community boundaries);
- Be member-led, with representation from unitary Councillors and, parish and town Councils for example;
- Include opportunities for co-opted members from community, youth, and business sectors to ensure diversity and local insight;
- Hold regular public forums to gather community input and report on progress;
- Oversee any locally devolved budgets, linked to clear priorities and transparent reporting mechanisms;
- Feed directly into the unitary Council's decision-making through local area boards or scrutiny channels;
- For unparished areas, NACs would play an essential representative role, ensuring equality of local voice and influence across the entire geography.

This approach also aligns closely with the proposed Local Government Outcomes Framework (2025), particularly the outcomes that:

- People feel safe and included in their local community.
- Residents feel they can influence local decisions.
- People are satisfied with their local area as a place to live.

Outcomes will be monitored through a combination of engagement metrics and periodic reporting, to be confirmed by Government in 2026. Nevertheless, the Outcomes will be a relevant consideration in the later development of our NACs.

ALIGNMENT WITH NORTH STAFFORDSHIRE UNITARY COUNCIL

The creation of two new unitary authorities, one for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire and one for North Staffordshire, represents a coordinated and strategic approach to local government reform across the county. This dual structure reflects the distinct identities, economic geographies, and service needs of each area, while enabling a coherent framework for collaboration, efficiency, and regional leadership. The alignment between the two proposed Councils is a critical component of this proposal, ensuring that Staffordshire as a whole is well-positioned to deliver high-quality services, respond to future challenges, and unlock the benefits of devolution.

Throughout the development of this proposal, the six District and Borough Councils in Southern & Mid-Staffordshire have worked closely with the North Staffordshire area. This collaboration has been underpinned by a mutual commitment to creating resilient and future-ready governance structures.

Both areas have demonstrated compliance with Government guidance on population thresholds, with Southern & Mid-Staffordshire projected to reach over 718,000 residents by Vesting Day, and North Staffordshire over 518,000. These figures confirm the viability of two balanced unitary authorities capable of delivering strategic leadership and operational effectiveness.

The alignment between the two Councils will be reflected in several key areas that will be explored in the future by the Councils, at the appropriate time:

First, there will be opportunities to explore joint procurement, particularly in ICT, digital infrastructure, and operational services, enabling economies of scale and improved value for money.

Second, both Councils will benefit from shared learning and coordinated transformation programmes, particularly in areas such as adult social care and children services.

Third, the Councils will work together to support the development of a Strategic Authority for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, which could provide a platform for county-wide collaboration on transport, economic development, and regional investment.

Importantly, this alignment will also support the delivery of consistent and equitable services across the wider Staffordshire geography. Residents and businesses will benefit from simplified access to services, clearer governance structures, and a more coherent approach to wider regional planning through a Strategic Authority. The Councils will maintain strong local identities while collaborating on shared priorities, ensuring that the benefits of reorganisation are realised at both the local and strategic levels.

In summary, the alignment with the North Staffordshire Unitary Council is not only a practical necessity, it is a strategic opportunity for the whole of Staffordshire. It enables the creation of two complementary authorities that reflect the diversity of Staffordshire while working together to deliver better outcomes for all. This partnership will be built on mutual respect, shared ambition, and a commitment to public service, ensuring that Staffordshire remains a strong, unified voice within the West Midlands and beyond.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF THE NEW COUNCIL

Financial sustainability analysis forms a central component of this proposal. Its purpose is to evaluate the financial implications of structural reform across Staffordshire assessing whether the proposed reorganisation delivers measurable, long-term improvements in financial resilience, efficiency, and value for money. The analysis provides a structured, evidence-based appraisal of potential savings, required investment, and net benefit.

Across Staffordshire, existing Councils are managing substantial budget gaps, rising social care and housing pressures, and constrained funding growth. The current structure also leads to duplication of roles, fragmented service delivery, and inefficiencies in support functions, digital infrastructure, and decision-making.

This proposal provides an opportunity to streamline governance, transform services tailored to local needs, and release efficiencies.

However, it also requires upfront investment and, like most Local Government Reorganisation processes, may involve some temporary financial disruption during transition. This makes it critical to assess whether, over a realistic implementation horizon, the financial benefits outweigh the costs, and whether the new authorities would be more resilient and sustainable than the status quo.

The financial sustainability analysis therefore aims to:

- Quantify the financial impact of the evaluated reorganisation options;
- Compare options on a like-for-like basis, considering savings, costs, and payback;
- Demonstrate the financial viability and strength of the evaluated options;
- Provide confidence in assumptions, modelling approach, and scenario flexibility.

METHODOLOGY & CONSIDERATIONS FOR FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

The financial analysis followed a consistent, structured methodology, grounded in learning from other Local Government Reorganisation processes. and aligned with government guidance.

The steps included:

1. SCOPING & AGREEMENT OF METHOD

- Worked with local finance teams to define scope, financial principles, and data needs.
- Agreed on the options to be modelled and the treatment of shared services and disaggregation and harmonisation.

2. DATA COLLECTION & VALIDATION

- Issued standardised data requests to all involved Councils, covering revenue budgets, reserves, capital plans, balance sheets, and key service metrics.
- Gathered contextual and narrative information to understand pressures, risks, and transformation plans.
- Held follow-up meetings with finance officers to verify data accuracy, reconcile discrepancies, and align on inputs.

3. BASELINE CONSTRUCTION

- Built a consolidated financial baseline, combining district, unitary and county budgets into unified figures based on agreed assumptions (e.g., population apportionment).

4. SAVINGS ESTIMATION

- Applied standardised top-down models to estimate savings across key categories:
  - Senior management and democratic structures
  - Corporate and back-office services
  - ICT rationalisation and systems integration
  - Estates and asset rationalisation
  - Procurement and contract consolidation
  - Service transformation and demand management (where credible)
- Incorporated both direct (cashable) and enabling (efficiency) savings.
- Used a combination of local inputs and benchmark data from other Local Government Reorganisation programmes to calibrate assumptions.

5. IMPLEMENTATION COST ESTIMATION

- Identified one-off costs required to deliver the reorganisation, including:
  - Programme management and transition team costs
  - Redundancy and pension strain
  - ICT integration or separation
  - Property and rebranding
  - Legal and governance setup
- Costs were phased over a 6-year period, with timing aligned to implementation logic.

6. SCENARIO MODELLING

- Developed a structured financial model that calculates, for each scenario:
  - Annual and cumulative savings
  - Phased implementation costs
  - Year-on-year net benefit
  - Breakeven year
  - Total 10-year net financial benefit

ITEMS CONSIDERED IN THE FINANCIAL CASE

The financial analysis integrates a wide range of inputs and assumptions, grouped into two main elements:

RECURRING SAVINGS

Cashable savings expected once reorganisation is complete and steady state is reached. These cover workforce reductions, systems rationalisation, contract management, and operating model changes. Savings are categorised by source, with baselines derived from current budgets.

IMPLEMENTATION COSTS

One-off costs required to implement the preferred options, typically incurred over the first two to three years. Includes programme delivery, ICT, staff redundancy, estates changes, and transitional double running.

MODELLING APPROACH

Recognising the inherent uncertainty in savings realisation and implementation cost delivery, the analysis uses the midpoint financial scenario to bracket the likely outcomes:

SCENARIO	DESCRIPTION
BASE CASE	A conservative scenario reflecting lower-end savings assumptions and higher delivery costs. Reflects cautious change with limited transformation ambition.
MIDPOINT CASE	The most likely scenario based on agreed central assumptions. Balances prudent savings estimates with realistic implementation ambition, aligned to local capability.
STRETCH CASE	A more ambitious but achievable scenario, assuming bolder service transformation, more aggressive rationalisation, and faster delivery. Also assumes more investment in digital and commercial capacity.

Each scenario uses the same methodology but varies assumptions across:

- Percentage savings by category.
- One-off cost estimates.
- Degree of service transformation.

This enables the financial case to:

- Demonstrate the robustness of the evaluated options under different delivery environments.
- Quantify the risk and upside potential of reorganisation.
- Support stakeholder discussions on ambition vs feasibility.

OUTPUTS & USE IN THE PROPOSAL

For each scenario and option, the model outputs:

- Gross and net annual savings
- Cumulative implementation costs
- Payback period (breakeven year)
- Total net benefit over 10 years

These outputs inform both the financial case and the comparative analysis between reorganisation options.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE PREFERRED OPTION

The purpose of this section is to consolidate and explain the end-state financial profile of the new unitary Councils. It brings together detailed evidence and modelling outputs across all relevant dimensions of Local Authority finance. This includes projected revenue budgets, the distribution and sufficiency of reserves and balances, and the scale and timing of both anticipated savings and implementation costs. A critical component is the breakeven analysis, which models how quickly upfront investment in reorganisation will be recouped through long-term efficiencies. Taken together, these elements enable a judgement on the long-term financial viability of the new authority structure and whether it provides a credible route to enhanced sustainability compared to the status quo.

To structure this analysis, the section is organised into four sub-sections:

1. **Savings and efficiencies:** An estimate of recurrent savings achievable from reorganisation, including staff, systems, governance, and estate rationalisation.
2. **Implementation costs:** A detailed breakdown of one-off transition costs required to achieve the reorganisation, including redundancy, ICT, and programme delivery.
3. **Breakeven and 10-year outlook:** A forward-looking payback analysis that tracks the net financial benefit of reorganisation over a seven-year period and illustrates improved fiscal resilience.
4. **Other considerations:** Consideration of other financial factors alongside the impact of transformation.

Each subsection includes validated financial inputs, analytical findings, and clearly explained narrative commentary. To aid interpretation and support transparency, visualisations such as summary tables, charts, and cumulative impact graphs are used throughout.

Ultimately, this section forms the evidential backbone of the financial case for reorganisation. It ensures that decision-makers, including Section 151 Officers, programme sponsors, and central government stakeholders, have a clear and comprehensive view of the fiscal implications of the proposal. By articulating a clear path from current-state finances to the post-reorganisation end-state, and quantifying the value that the change can deliver, this section helps confirm that this proposal is not only achievable, but financially sustainable.

SUMMARY

A summary view of the financial impact of reorganisation is outlined in the below table for the Mid Point Scenario. Further information regarding the estimated recurring savings and one-off implementation costs are outlined in the subsequent sections and the Financial Technical Appendices. (Annex 2). Further information on the financial modelling approach is contained within Annex 3.

Overall, the financial analysis confirms that the modelled option and scenario delivers a positive net financial benefit achieving breakeven after 1.4 years. Given that a new upper tier authority does not need to be stood up, there are no recurring disaggregation and harmonisation costs. Therefore, this results in a net financial impact over 5 years of £92.7 million, representing 6.8% of the combined annual net revenue budget.

SUMMARY - MID POINT	£'MILLION
RECURRING SAVINGS FROM YEAR 3	29.9
CUMULATIVE BENEFIT / (COST) AFTER 5 YEARS	**124.2**
ONE-OFF IMPLEMENTATION COST BY YEAR 3	-31.5
NET IMPACT AFTER 5 YEARS (2032/33)	**92.7**
PAYBACK PERIOD	1.4
ANNUAL RECURRING BENEFIT / (COST) POST TRANSFORMATION FROM YEAR 4	**29.9**

COST & SAVINGS ESTIMATES

This subsection outlines the projected savings from Local Government Reorganisation, based on anticipated efficiencies from service integration, workforce reduction, streamlined governance and shared infrastructure. The Mid Scenario estimates are built from both top-down modelling and local data inputs.

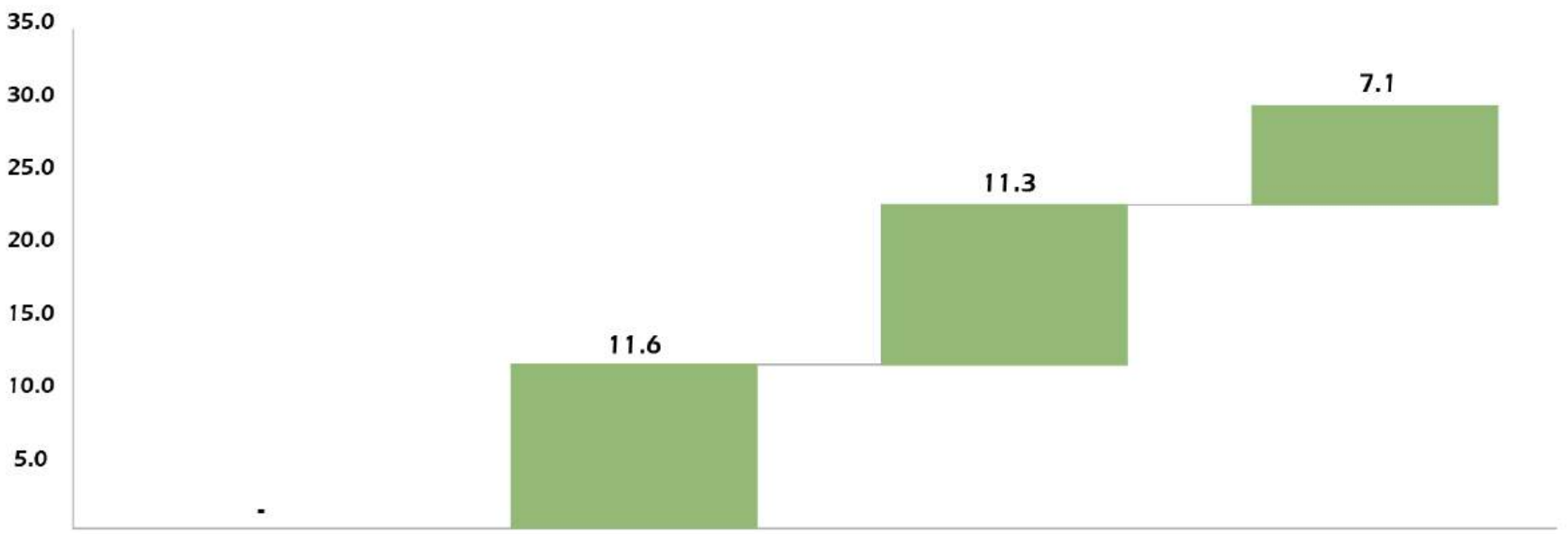
Reorganisation is projected to generate recurring savings of **£29.9 million** (**£19.0 million** in the Base Case and **£40.8 million** in the Stretch Case) annually by Year 3, equivalent to 2.2% of the combined net revenue budget (£1.4 billion). The largest drivers are Service Contract Consolidation (£10.5 million) and Right Sizing the Organisation (£9.0 million). These savings underpin the financial case for change and position the new Councils to achieve a more efficient and sustainable model of delivery.

A summary table breaks down expected recurring savings by category (e.g. staffing, governance, IT, property) from Year 3 (2030/31).

PROJECTED ANNUAL SAVINGS BY CATEGORY			£'MILLION	
	SHADOW YEAR	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
OPTIMISING LEADERSHIP	-	972	1,945	1,945
RIGHT SIZING THE ORGANISATION	-	2,693	6,284	8,977
CENTRALISING CORPORATE SERVICES	-	359	1,077	1,795
SERVICE CONTRACT CONSOLIDATION	-	4,713	8,378	10,473
PROPORTIONATE DEMOCRATIC SERVICES	-	1,197	1,496	1,496
IMPROVED DIGITAL & IT SYSTEMS	-	112	374	748
ASSET & PROPERTY OPTIMISATION	-	658	1,317	1,646
CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT	-	150	299	449
CONSOLIDATING FLEETS & OPTIMISING ROUTES	-	718	1,676	2,394
TOTAL	-	**11,573**	**22,846**	**29,922**

The waterfall chart illustrates the annual savings build up, which are expected to be over a 4-year period.

ANNUAL SAVINGS BUILD-UP (£'MILLION)



IMPLEMENTATION

This subsection sets out the one-off costs required to implement the reorganisation, including programme delivery, systems integration, estates changes, and workforce exit costs. These costs are necessary enablers of the longer-term benefits and have been profiled over the implementation period.

This also includes one-off transition costs associated with redistribution of county upper tier services to the new unitary, including splitting finance or HR systems, creating new organisational structures and establishing democratic and corporate capacity. As such, there is no additional recurring expenditure that is expected.

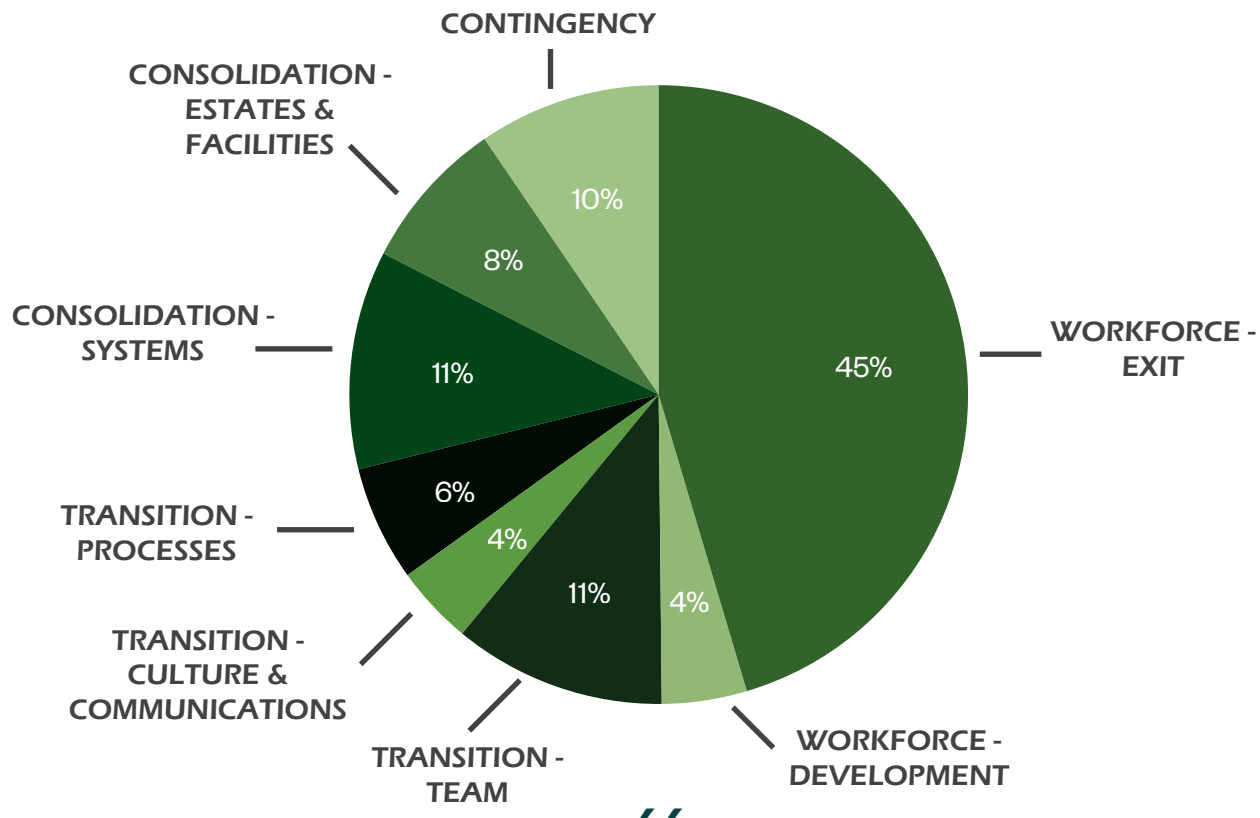
The total estimated implementation cost is **£31.5 million** (**£23.9 million** in the Base Case and **£39.0 million** in the Stretch Case) over a period of 6 years (including 2025/26 Base year, Year -1, Shadow Year and 3 Years post implementation), with the majority incurred in 'Workforce – Exit', 'Consolidation – Systems' and 'Transition – Team'. These costs are essential to unlock recurring efficiencies. The investment is proportionate and supports a positive return on investment over the planning period.

A table of implementation costs by year and category presents the full financial profile.

IMPLEMENTATION & DISAGGREGATION COSTS BY YEAR												£'000	
	BASE YEAR	YEAR -1	SHADOW YEAR	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7	YEAR 8	YEAR 9	YEAR 10	TOTAL
WORKFORCE EXIT	-	-	1,432	2,864	4,295	5,727	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14,318
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	-	-	566	566	283	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,416
TRANSITION TEAM	-	1,731	1,385	346	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,462
TRANSITION CULTURE & COMMUNICATIONS	-	629	504	126	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,259
TRANSITION PROCESSES	-	944	755	189	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1,888
CONSOLIDATION SYSTEMS	-	724	2,171	724	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3,619
CONSOLIDATION ESTATES & FACILITIES	-	-	378	881	1,259	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,518
CONTINGENCY	149	448	598	598	598	598	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,990
TOTAL IMPLEMENTATION COSTS	149	4,476	7,789	6,294	6,435	6,325	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	31,469

The below pie charts show the cost composition, identifying the largest expenditure areas.

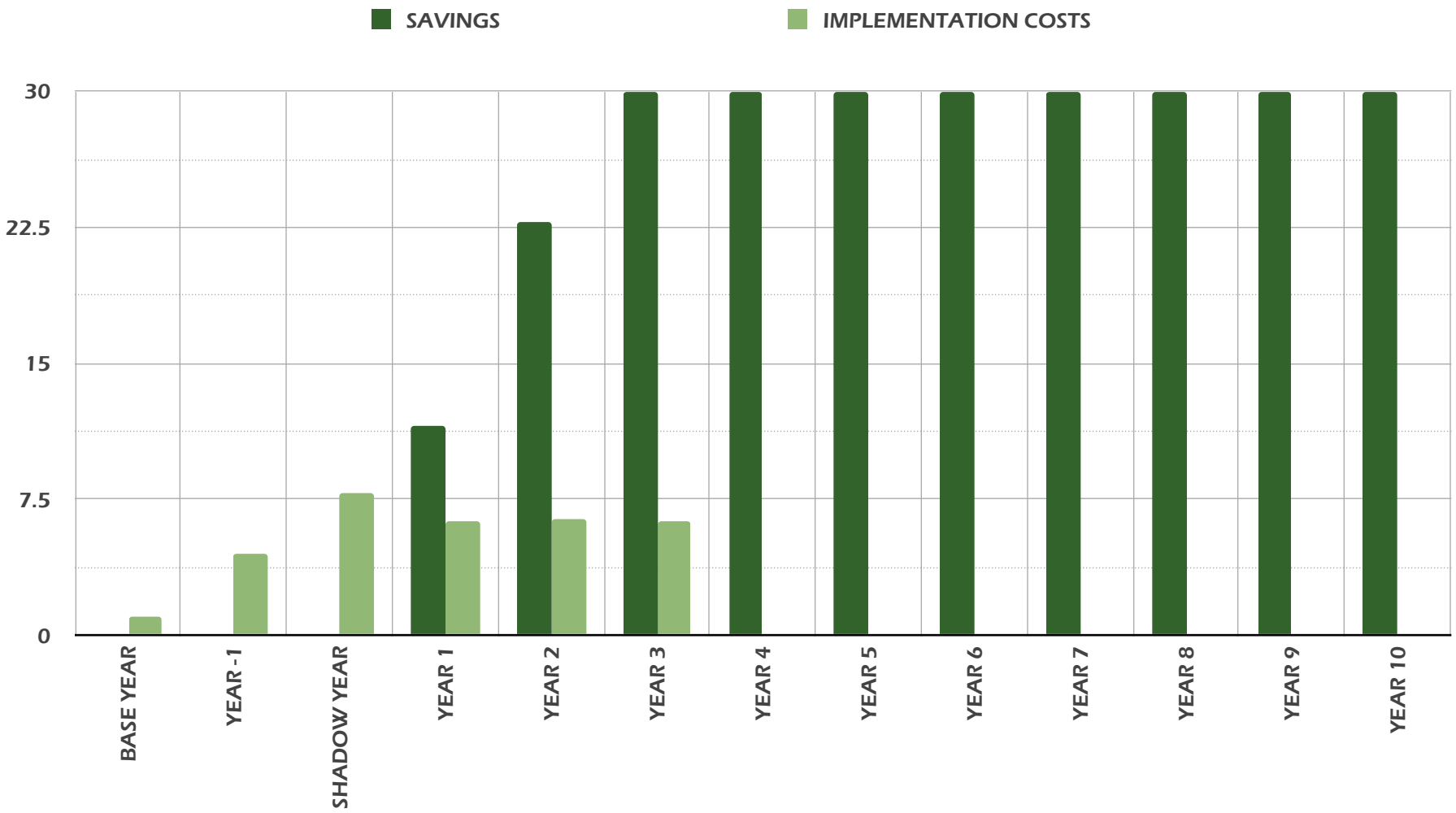
ONE-OFF COSTS BY CATEGORY (£'MILLION)



REDEFINING STAFFORDSHIRE

The below bar chart compares one-off implementation costs against the estimated annual savings.

ONE-OFF COSTS VS ANNUAL SAVINGS (£'MILLION)



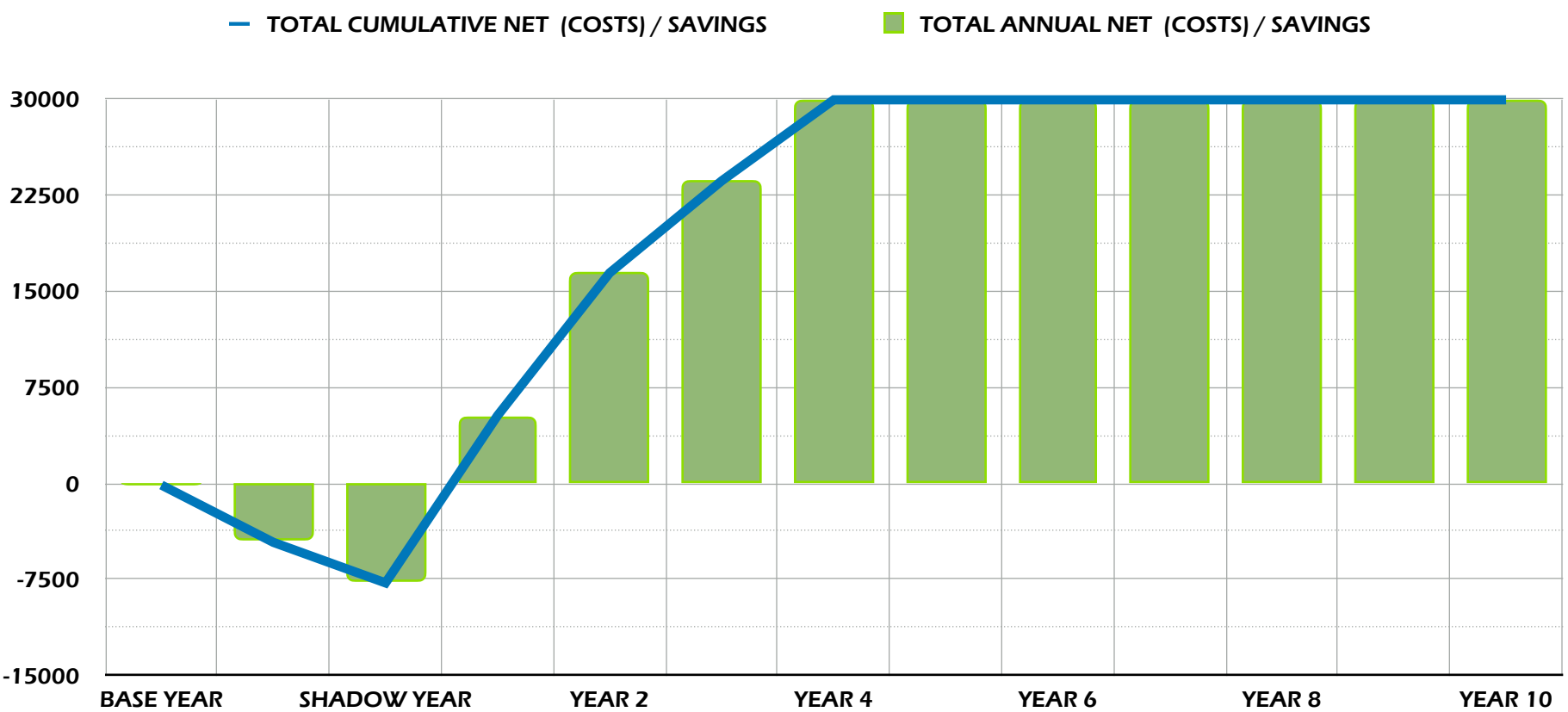
BREAKEVEN ANALYSIS & 10-YEAR OUTLOOK

This subsection provides a breakeven analysis, assessing when cumulative savings from reorganisation outweigh the one-off implementation costs. It also presents a 10-year outlook of the net financial benefit. This forward-looking view demonstrates the long-term value of the option.

The financial analysis indicates that breakeven is achieved in **1.4 years** (**1.7 years** in the Base Case and **1.3 years** in the Stretch Case), after which cumulative net savings exceed implementation costs. By Year 4, the reorganisation delivers a total net financial benefit of **£29.9 million** (**£19.0 million** in the Base Case and **£40.8 million** in the Stretch Case), supporting stronger long-term resilience. These benefits position the new authorities to contribute to future budget gaps and reinvest in public services.

A cumulative net benefit line graph shows the payback trajectory over time, highlighting the breakeven year.

BREAKEVEN POINT - CUMULATIVE SAVINGS VS COSTS (£'MILLION)



The summary tables include yearly savings, costs, and cumulative net benefit.

NET BENEFIT BY YEAR - 10 YEAR PROFILE	BASE YEAR	YEAR -1	SHADOW YEAR	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3	YEAR 4	YEAR 5	YEAR 6	YEAR 7	YEAR 8	YEAR 9	YEAR 10
													£'000
SAVINGS											-		
REORGANISATION & TRANSFORMATION SAVINGS	-	-	-	11,573	22,846	29,922	29,922	29,922	29,922	29,922	29,922	29,922	29,922
COSTS													
IMPLEMENTATION COSTS	149	4,476	7,789	6,294	6,435	6,325	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
TOTAL ANNUAL NET (COSTS) / SAVINGS	**149**	**4,476**	**7,789**	**5,279**	**16,410**	**23,597**	**29,922**	**29,922**	**29,922**	**29,922**	**29,922**	**29,922**	**29,922**

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS & ASSUMPTIONS

GROSS BUDGET GAP OF EXISTING COUNCILS

The financial analysis assumes that all existing Councils (including the County) will manage their ongoing gross budget gaps regardless of Local Government Reorganisation. The forecasted total gross budget gap for all Councils by 2028/29 of **£40.9m** (including the County Council of **£24.2m**), has therefore not been included within the breakeven analysis of transformation. However, there is recognition that if there were any budget gaps post vesting day, the recurring savings projected from this proposal would contribute to closing any future gross budget gaps across the new authority.

A cumulative net benefit line graph shows the payback trajectory over time, highlighting the breakeven year.

RESERVES & FUNDING THE REORGANISATION

Across all the mid and southern districts and the county, by 2027/28, there are forecasted Total Usable Reserves of **£296.2 million**. However, this includes the full value of the County's total usable reserves of **£217.8 million**. Further discussions would need to be held to decide the basis for allocation of County reserves across the new unitaries post reorganisation.

It will be the decision of each new unitary to determine how to use its resources to fund the cost of reorganisation. However, there are sufficient reserves to cover the cost of transition.

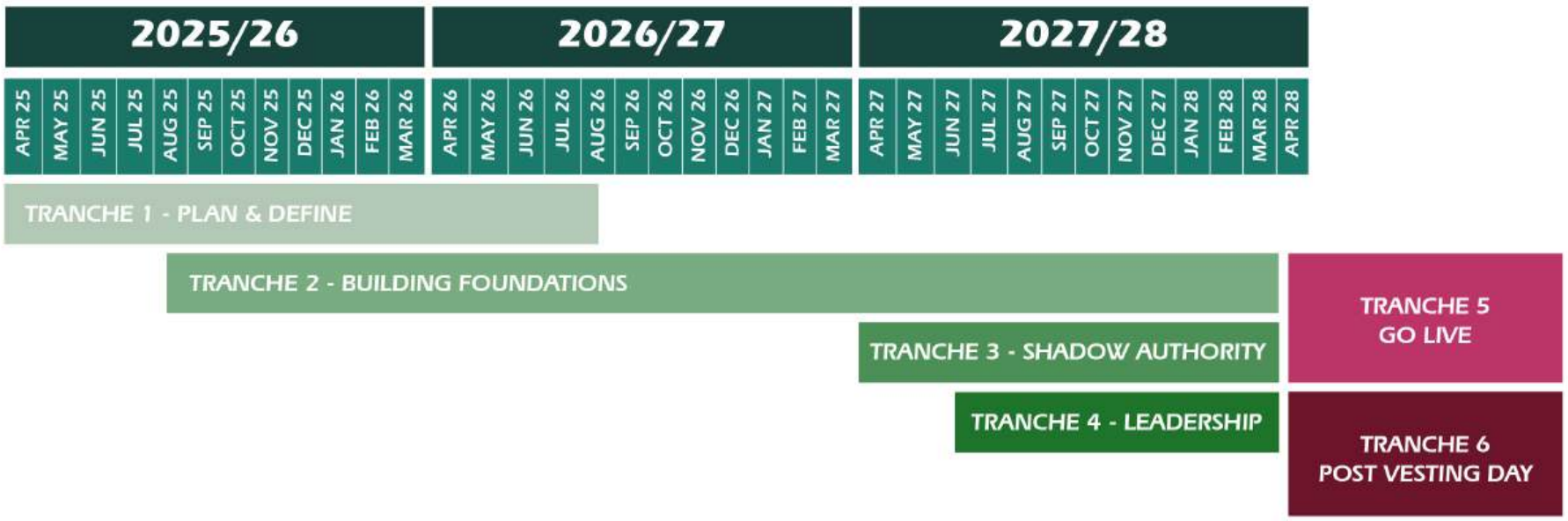
IMPLEMENTATION & DAY ONE READINESS

The implementation of this proposal will involve the aggregation of existing District and Borough services from six Councils and the integration of services from a County Council, noting that this will not require disaggregation. This is a complex undertaking that will require meticulous planning to ensure minimal disruption for residents on Day One.

It is therefore crucially important that the transition of services from the six District and Borough Councils and the County Council is conducted effectively and focused on achieving positive outcomes for residents, with a priority on Day One readiness and a forward look to transformation in the months that follow.

TIMELINE & PHASING PLAN

This graphic provides an overview of the six key tranches for creating the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Unitary Council and summaries their purpose:



TRANCHE 1

PLAN & DEFINE

Prior to any formal decision on the structure of new unitary authorities, Councils will jointly initiate key elements of the LGR programme, which will be delivered through a single, collaborative process involving all participating Councils, with a focus on establishing the foundations necessary for successful transition.

A central component of this work will be the creation of a Programme Management Office (PMO), responsible for overseeing delivery, maintaining programme-wide oversight, and supporting change management. The PMO will work closely with leadership and managers to implement a structured approach to change, emphasising early and continuous communication, staff engagement, emotional wellbeing, resilience-building, and equipping managers to lead their teams effectively through transition.

Stakeholder engagement will be a core priority during this phase, aimed at raising awareness, fostering cooperation, and building consensus across central and local government.

Throughout this preparatory phase, Councils will maintain open dialogue with elected members, trade unions, and staff to promote transparency and build trust. Integration across Councils will be actively encouraged, with opportunities for cross-organisational collaboration designed to strengthen cohesion and shared purpose. At the same time, careful consideration will be given to workforce capacity to ensure that change is managed responsibly and sustainably.

TRANCHE 2

BUILDING THE FOUNDATIONS

Once a decision has been made regarding the structure of the new Unitary Councils, but prior to the election of Shadow Members or the appointment of senior leadership, focus will shift to establishing the formal governance and implementation framework.

This phase will include the development of a detailed implementation plan and the establishment of a Structural Change Order (SCO), which provides the legal basis for creating the new authorities and sets out interim governance arrangements during the shadow period. These steps will ensure a smooth and legally compliant transition.

Recognising the importance of early workforce planning, Councils will continue to build a comprehensive understanding of current organisational structures and operating models. This will enable the identification of critical roles and the development of a Target Operating Model (TOM) aligned to the needs of the new Council, once confirmation is received from MHCLG.

During this period, formal engagement with staff and trade unions will begin, providing clear information on the rationale for transfer, anticipated timelines, legal implications, and proposed measures to support the workforce.

In parallel, work will progress on key operational areas including ICT infrastructure, procurement arrangements, and contract mapping, with a view to developing a rationalisation plan. Cross-Council workstreams will continue to explore opportunities for service alignment and transformation, ensuring that the new authority is built on a foundation of efficiency, collaboration, and readiness for future delivery. These workstreams are further explored in the next section.

TRANCHE 3

SHADOW AUTHORITY

Shadow authorities for Staffordshire will be established to support a smooth and coordinated transition when changes to local government structures commence. Their primary role will be to prepare the new Unitary Councils to assume full local government responsibilities by Vesting Day in April 2028.

The transition will be governed by a Structural Change Order (SCO), as mentioned above, which will formally create the new authorities and set out interim governance arrangements, including the formation of Joint Committees and a detailed implementation plan. Each existing Council will nominate a balanced representation of members to contribute to the drafting of the SCO and the establishment of Joint Committees. The SCO will define governance protocols during the shadow period, confer necessary powers to the shadow authorities, and outline the timeline for key strategic appointments.

The transition process will include elections in May 2027 to form the Shadow Councils. These bodies will oversee critical activities such as service integration planning and operational transition. This will involve the harmonisation of County services, the consolidation of District and Borough functions, and the alignment of shared services

The organisational and operating model will be refined during this phase to ensure it meets the strategic and operational needs of the new authorities.

Appointments will be made to the position of Chief Executive and Statutory Roles in order to provide clarity, stability, and direction for the workforce. Staff transition planning will focus on retaining talent, fostering a positive organisational culture, and preparing for the legal transfer of employees under TUPE regulations. Ongoing engagement with staff and trade unions will ensure transparency and support throughout the process. Additional priorities will include budget setting for the new Councils, harmonisation of Council tax and business rates, establishment of payroll systems, and the management of data to support IT infrastructure transition. Continued stakeholder engagement will be essential, reinforcing existing partnerships and cultivating new ones to support the long-term success of the new authorities.

TRANCHE 4

LEADERSHIP

This is a critical period focused on establishing the foundational elements for a new Council's successful operation. This involves the strategic recruitment of Tier 2 and Tier 3 management to ensure continuity and drive transformation, alongside comprehensive service planning to unify and design efficient service delivery models. Concurrently, the development of the Draft Council Strategy and Plan and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) will be set in November 2027, which will define the strategic direction and financial framework, supported by the creation of key policies and strategies for a coherent operational environment.

Throughout this period, HR will take on a strategic key role, advising leaders on people-related risks, legal responsibilities, workforce planning and people-centric change management. It is recognised that reorganisation can place additional pressure on HR teams as they must still manage key activities such as payroll, benefits, and employee relations while being a key driver in the change. To manage this, investment will be made in extra support, training and development to ensure the transition can be managed.

TRANCHE 5

GO LIVE

This is dedicated to ensuring a seamless transition for residents and partners, focusing primarily on providing uninterrupted service continuity for all critical services, supported by unified resident access through a single website and well-resourced contact centres.

A comprehensive public communication campaign will be launched to keep everyone informed and engaged, alongside proactive partner engagement to maintain strong collaborative relationships.

Internally, the Council will be committed to staff stability through clear deployment and induction processes, robust HR and payroll readiness, transparent internal communications, and reliable IT systems and digital infrastructure, all designed to foster a cohesive and effective new Council from Day 1. It is important to recognise that the provisions of the TUPE regulations will apply, and staff will automatically join the new Council with their existing terms and conditions.

TRANCHE 6

POST VESTING DAY

The most critical characteristic following Vesting Day is stability; the new Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council will first prioritise the services that affect the most vulnerable, ensuring that these are improved for service users and reach a point of stability prior to exploring opportunities for transformation, rather than rushing wholesale service redesign during the peak of transition and associated impacts.

Following a period of stability, the new Council will embark on a focused transformation journey aimed at securing long-term success and delivering continuous improvement for its communities across the years that follow. Central to this will be the implementation of the Council Strategy and Plan and the integration of services; bringing together teams, standardising procedures, and embedding new governance and leadership structures.

A comprehensive, multi-year transformation programme will guide this work, transitioning from initial mobilisation to a structured delivery model with clear outcomes and performance indicators. Priority areas will include digital innovation, workforce reform, financial sustainability, and enhancing the customer experience, all underpinned by strategic investment and a commitment to service excellence.

A culture of continuous improvement will be embedded across the organisation, driven by robust performance management, active engagement with residents and partners, and a commitment to learning and adaptation. This will be supported by core functions such as finance, legal, ICT, data, and communications, working in concert to strengthen the Council's foundations. At the heart of this transformation is a values-led culture built on honesty, transparency, and trust, guided by the Nolan Principles of public life. The Council will foster unity and inclusivity through shared narratives, cross-organisational collaboration, and clear, engaging communication. Supporting staff through this change, ensuring the right skills are in place, expectations are managed, and innovation is encouraged, will be critical to delivering a resilient and forward-looking organisation.

Finally, although the process for establishing Strategic Authorities is separate to LGR, it should be noted that the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council will need towork with the new Strategic Authority, when formed, and seek to understand how this will be operated, the services that will fall within the SA's remit, and how to work collaboratively in the future.

TRANSITIONAL WORKSTREAMS

Since March 2025, Chief Executives and Leaders from the six District and Borough Councils have worked collaboratively as a Strategic Input Group, supported by five dedicated workstreams comprising representatives from across the Councils. These workstreams have played a pivotal role in shaping the Local Government Reorganisation proposals for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire, and the supporting analysis, ensuring that strategic thinking is informed by operational insight and collective expertise.

This collaborative model will continue throughout the implementation phase, providing the necessary capacity and co-ordination to support the transition from seven separate authorities (including the County Council) into a single, unified Local Authority. Maintaining this structured, cross-Council approach will be critical to delivering a smooth and effective transformation, while preserving institutional knowledge and fostering shared ownership of the change process.

This work will follow the principles set out in Tranche 1 and operate throughout the transition tranches until Vesting Day. It will include the following proposed workstreams, built from the original five that informed this proposal:

LEGAL & GOVERNANCE

- Creating the Constitution for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council;
- Overseeing the electoral changes required to administer elections for the new Council;
- Establishing the relevant governance structures within the Constitution, including executive and non-executive committees;
- Providing guidance on the application of effective governance control measures throughout implementation (through Monitoring Officers)

CONTRACTS & ASSETS

- Overseeing a review of existing contracts and Council assets, mapping these into the new Council;
- Identifying early opportunities for the amalgamation of contracts or deferrals of procurement, where applicable;
- Responsibility for the creation of an assets strategy.

SERVICE DESIGN & OPERATIONS

- Designing a roadmap for the amalgamation and integration of existing District and Borough services, with a view to Day One readiness and longer-term integration;
- Overseeing a review of existing IT infrastructure and data management (in consultation with Legal and Governance workstream) to ensure effective data controls within an appropriate IT environment.

SOCIAL SERVICES TRANSITION

- Overseeing the inheritance of Staffordshire County Council Adult Social Care and Children's Services, led by County Council specialist officers;
- Responsibility for managing alignment with North Staffordshire implementation of social services and associated collaboration;
- Responsibility for ensuring continuity of legal and safe services on Day One of Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council

PEOPLE & WORKFORCE

- Overseeing the overall HR process for the transition, including staff and trade union communication, and mapping of existing staff terms and conditions.

COMMUNICATIONS & ENGAGEMENT

- Responsibility for the resident communication plan, including programming of key messages, milestones and points of engagement;
- Overseeing the engagement programme with stakeholders.

APPROACH TO PROGRAMME MANAGEMENT

Effective and proactive programme management is critical to the successful delivery of this proposal. As part of this, risks will be carefully managed through early identification and assessment across key impact categories: strategic, operational, financial, and reputational. Each risk will be assigned a designated owner responsible for monitoring, mitigation, and escalation, ensuring clear accountability and timely action. To support this, each of the six transitional workstreams will maintain a dedicated workstream-specific risk register, which will feed into a strategic risk management plan overseen by the PMO throughout the implementation of the six implementation tranches.

Once risks are identified within the workstream risk register, the relevant workstream will implement an operational risk mitigation plan that can then escalate to the strategic risk mitigation plan. The approach to mitigations will include the consideration of contingency plans, the integration of controls within delivery workstreams, and regular review of risk status through these forums.

Once risks are captured within the workstream registers, operational mitigation plans will be developed and escalated as necessary to inform the strategic risk management plan. Mitigation actions will include contingency planning, embedded controls within delivery workstreams, and regular reviews. The risk management approach will remain agile and responsive to emerging challenges, supported by real-time data, performance metrics, and clearly defined escalation protocols. A culture of continuous risk awareness will be embedded across all workstreams, reinforced by transparent communication and strong PMO oversight. Through regular reporting and collaborative engagement, risks will be actively managed to enhance resilience, maintain programme momentum, and build stakeholder confidence.

STAFFORD HALF MARATHON, STAFFORD

WHAT DOES DAY ONE SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

Day One, or Vesting Day, marks the formal commencement of the new Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council, representing a significant milestone in Local Government Reorganisation for Staffordshire. It is the point at which legal, operational, and administrative responsibilities transfer from the previous seven Councils (including County Council) to the new Unitary authority. On this day, the new Council assumes full statutory powers, and the foundational governance structures, such as the leadership team, Cabinet and committees, are 'stood up' to ensure readiness for service delivery and decision-making.

Operationally, Day One is when residents and businesses will continue to access services such as waste collection, housing, and planning from a new authority, without major disruption. Behind the scenes, integrated teams will begin working under unified management structures, supported by aligned ICT systems, governance procedures, and communications protocols.

Staff engagement is a central focus of Day One. Clear and consistent messaging will be delivered across the organisation to reinforce the new Council's vision, values, and priorities. Welcome briefings, leadership communications, and team-engagement activities will help foster a sense of unity and shared purpose.

The Council's commitment to transparency and inclusivity will be reflected in its internal communications strategy, ensuring that staff feel informed, supported, and empowered during this period of change from the outset.

Externally, Vesting Day will be marked by public communications that reassure residents and stakeholders of the Council's readiness and ambition. A co-ordinated media and engagement campaign will highlight the priorities of the new authority, including how services are now being delivered, focusing on continuity, stability, and the Council's commitment to its communities.

Ultimately, Vesting Day is both a culmination and a beginning, signalling the end of the intensive preparatory phase and the start of a new chapter for Southern & Mid-Staffordshire. There will no doubt be a tone of reflective sadness as existing Councils cease to exist, particularly for those with decades of experience working for them, but also an excitement for the days ahead.

The day will set the tone for the transformational journey ahead, laying the foundations for a modern, resilient, and resident-focused authority that is equipped to meet the evolving needs of Southern & Mid-Staffordshire.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE NEW COUNCIL

The focus of this proposal is rightly on Day One readiness; ensuring that the new Council is established with the right structures to maintain continuity of services in a safe and legal way, protecting those who are most vulnerable. Whilst this remains the top priority, it is still important to reflect on what comes after Vesting Day, after stability, once the new Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council feels 'normal' for residents, businesses, staff and Members.

The following is a non-exhaustive list of things that the new Council should look to explore once it concludes the period of implementation and transition, as an example:

LONGER TERM REDESIGN OF SERVICE DELIVERY

Moving beyond the period of ensuring continuity of services, into consideration of how services could be better brought together in a way that is cohesive, effective, and financially efficient.

HARMONISING STAFF TERMS & CONDITIONS

Looking to the Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council example where it took six years post-implementation for the staff pay structure to be aligned.

CONSISTENCY OF PHYSICAL & DIGITAL BRANDING

Reviewing all references to old Councils from within the region and ensuring a clearer and consistent branding for the benefit of all residents. Particularly in areas where Council branding pre-1997 review still exists!

ALIGNING HOUSING STOCK MANAGEMENT

Explore the potential to bring together the two HRAs of Cannock Chase and Tamworth into a single, unified approach to managing Council housing stock in the region.

CONCLUSION

This proposal for Local Government Reorganisation in Southern & Mid-Staffordshire sets out a clear, evidence-based case for the creation of a single unitary authority that is financially sustainable, strategically aligned, and responsive to the needs of its communities. Through extensive collaboration, detailed analysis, and meaningful engagement with residents and stakeholders, the preferred model, Option A – one Unitary in the Southern & Mid-Staffordshire, has emerged as the most viable and impactful option. It offers the scale, capacity, and coherency required to deliver high-quality services, unlock economic potential, and strengthen democratic accountability across the region.

This document outlines a comprehensive vision for the new Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council, underpinned by the values of **Establish**, **Economise**, and **Engage**. It details how the Council will operate from Day One, maintain service continuity, and embark on a structured transformation journey that prioritises innovation, inclusion, and continuous improvement. The financial case demonstrates a strong return on investment, with significant recurring savings and a short payback period, reinforcing the long-term sustainability of the proposed structure.

The implementation plan, supported by transitional workstreams and robust risk management approach, ensures that the new authority will be well prepared to navigate the complexities of change. It also recognises the importance of culture, leadership, and staff engagement in shaping a resilient and forward-looking organisation. As the Council moves beyond Vesting Day, it will continue to evolve, adapt, and respond to the needs of its residents, building a legacy of excellence in public service.

Ultimately, this proposal represents a bold and pragmatic step forward for Local Government in Staffordshire, completing the proposal for a North Staffordshire Council. It reflects a shared ambition to create a modern, efficient, and community-focused authority that is equipped to meet the challenges of today and the opportunities of tomorrow, positioning Staffordshire at the forefront of readiness for meeting the Government's devolution agenda and supporting the implementation of Mayoral Strategic Authorities.

The Southern & Mid-Staffordshire Council will be a catalyst for positive change; delivering better outcomes, stronger partnerships, and a renewed sense of place for all.

ST. GEORGES PARK, BURTON UPON TRENT

ANNEX 1 – RESIDENT FEEDBACK SURVEY

Community Engagement Headlines

1

16,756

The recent survey achieved an outstanding level of public engagement, with a total of **16,756 responses** submitted. This figure significantly exceeds the participation rates observed in comparable local authorities, such as **Derby**, which received approximately **7,000 responses**, and **Surrey**, which recorded just over **2,000**. The scale of our response reflects not only the effectiveness of our communication and outreach strategies, but also the high level of public interest and trust in our engagement processes. This exceptional outcome positions us as a sector leader in community engagement and provides a robust evidence base to inform future decision-making.

2

0 cost

It is particularly noteworthy that the delivery of our engagement activity incurred **no external expenditure**, setting us apart from many other local authorities who have relied on paid consultancy support to achieve far lower response rates. Unlike other councils, which engaged external agencies to facilitate their surveys, our approach was entirely managed in-house. This not only demonstrates prudent financial stewardship but also reflects the strength and capability of our internal teams to deliver high-impact engagement without additional cost. The ability to achieve **16,756 responses** with minimal spend on engagement activities underscores our commitment to value for money and operational efficiency.

3

100s of residents spoken to at events

In addition to the exceptional survey response rate, our engagement strategy was further strengthened through direct, face-to-face interaction with residents. Officers attended a wide range of community events, speaking with **hundreds of individuals** across diverse settings. This proactive approach ensured that voices from all parts of the community were heard, including those who may not typically engage through digital channels. By embedding ourselves within local spaces and listening firsthand, we fostered trust, encouraged participation, and demonstrated a genuine commitment to inclusive engagement. This grassroots engagement was delivered entirely in-house, reinforcing our reputation for resourceful and responsive public service.

Our Engagement principles

To meet both democratic expectations and government standards, the community engagement aimed to:

- **Reach across the entire proposed unitary footprint**, ensuring no community is left out.
- **Clearly explain the options and implications**, including benefits, trade-offs, and potential changes to services or governance.
- **Provide opportunities for informed feedback**, not just opinion polling.
- **Be proportionate and robust**, generating data that can withstand scrutiny from government and stakeholders.
- **Be aligned with statutory guidance**, including the Cabinet Office Consultation Principles and MHCLG expectations for LGR proposals.
- **Be independently verifiable**, with transparent reporting of methods, findings, and how feedback influenced decisions

Key principles for messaging - When crafting messages for residents, stakeholders, and partners, we:

1.Lead with local relevance
Framed the reorganisation in terms of what matters to people—local services, representation, identity, and value for money.

2. Clear and concise
Avoided jargon. Used plain English to explain complex governance changes.

3.Balanced optimism with realism
Highlighted opportunities (e.g. efficiency, empowerment, service improvement) while acknowledging challenges and trade-offs.

4.Reinforced continuity and stability
Emphasised that essential services will continue and that the process is about improving—not disrupting—local government.

5.Invited dialogue, not just feedback

Engagement approach

Multi-channel engagement

Engagement was delivered through a blend of digital and in-person methods to maximise reach and accessibility:

1 **Printed surveys**

including tailored formats for accessibility

2 **Online survey**

Easily accessible on computer, tablets and phones

3 **In-person drop-in sessions**

4 **Digital engagement**

through social media, email newsletters, and other online platforms

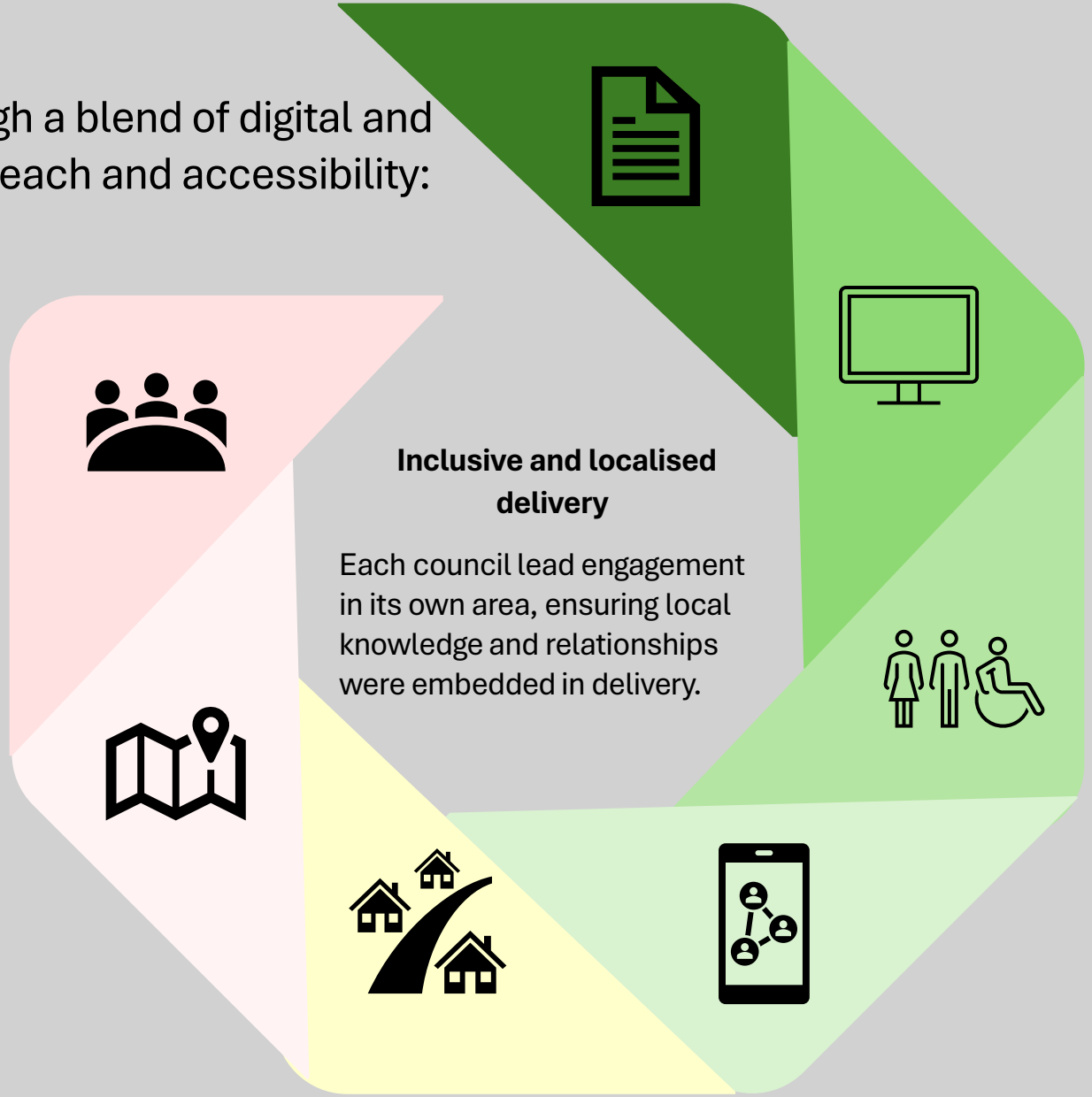
5 **Community outreach**

via local community stakeholders

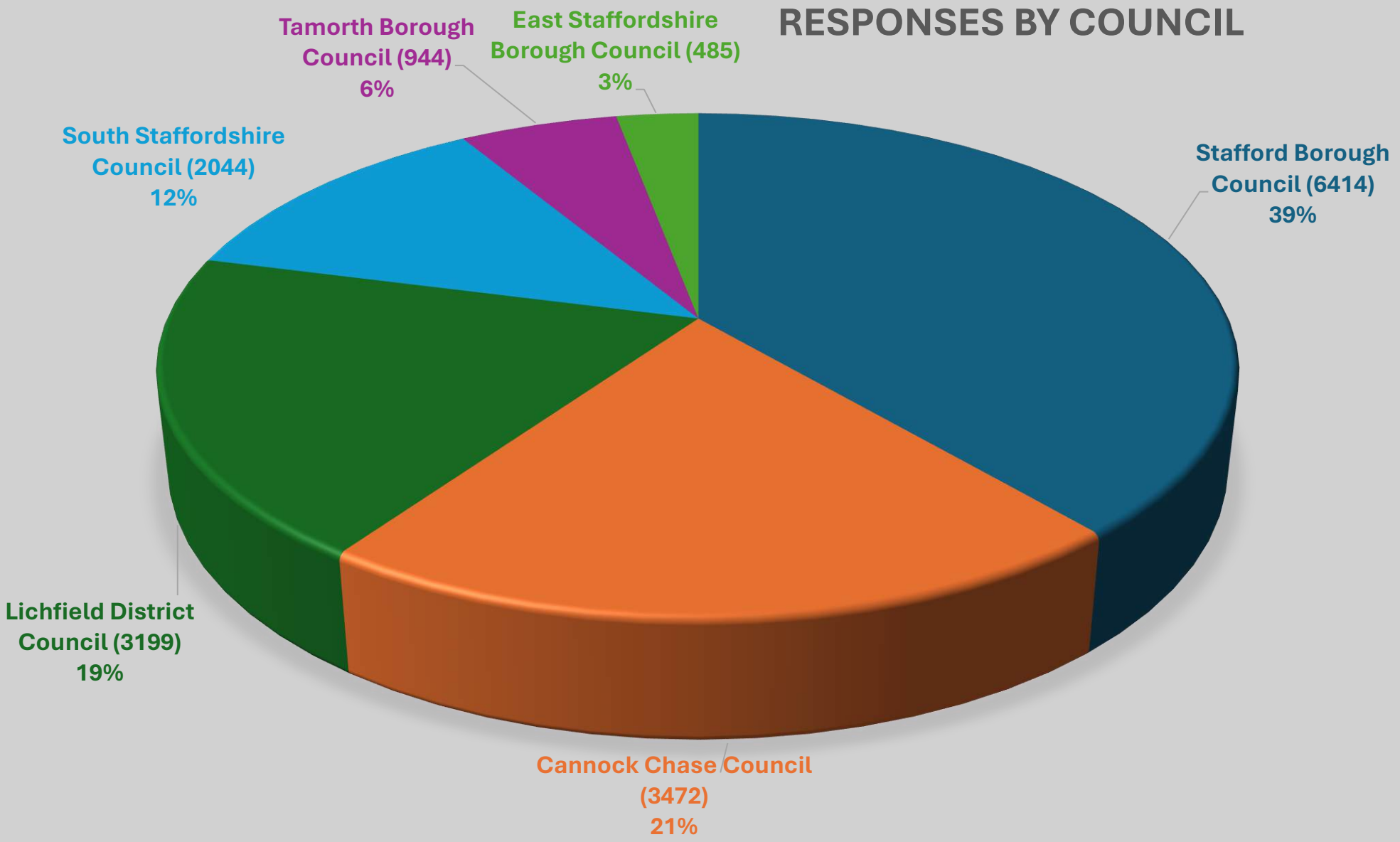
6 **Pop-up events**

with branded materials and council staff to build visibility and trust

7 **Focus groups**



Survey results



Survey reliability and validity

- **Large Sample Size**: **16,756 people** responded to the survey which is considered a strong and reliable sample against the population of **Southern and Mid Staffordshire**, which is **682,775**

- **Confidence Level**: Results are accurate to within **±1.0%** at a **99% confidence level**.

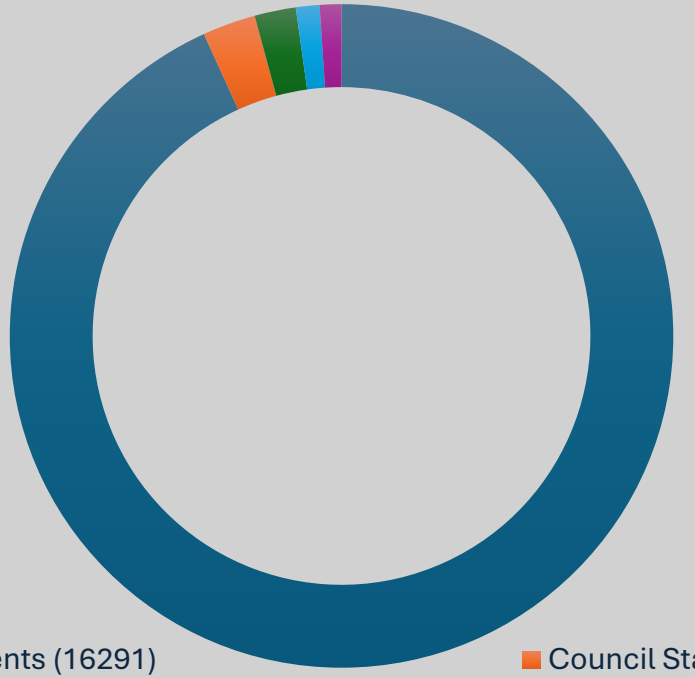
**The Qualtrics methodology has been used to produce these figures. They are industry leading survey sampling organisation*

Sample Size Calculator - Qualtrics

Determining-Sample-Size.pdf

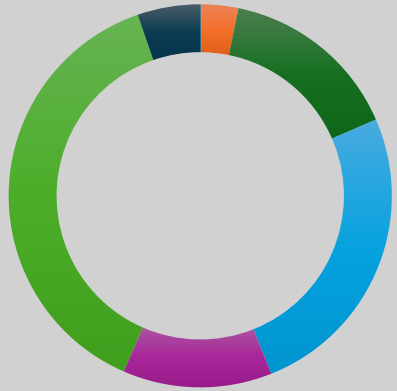
Survey results

Who responded

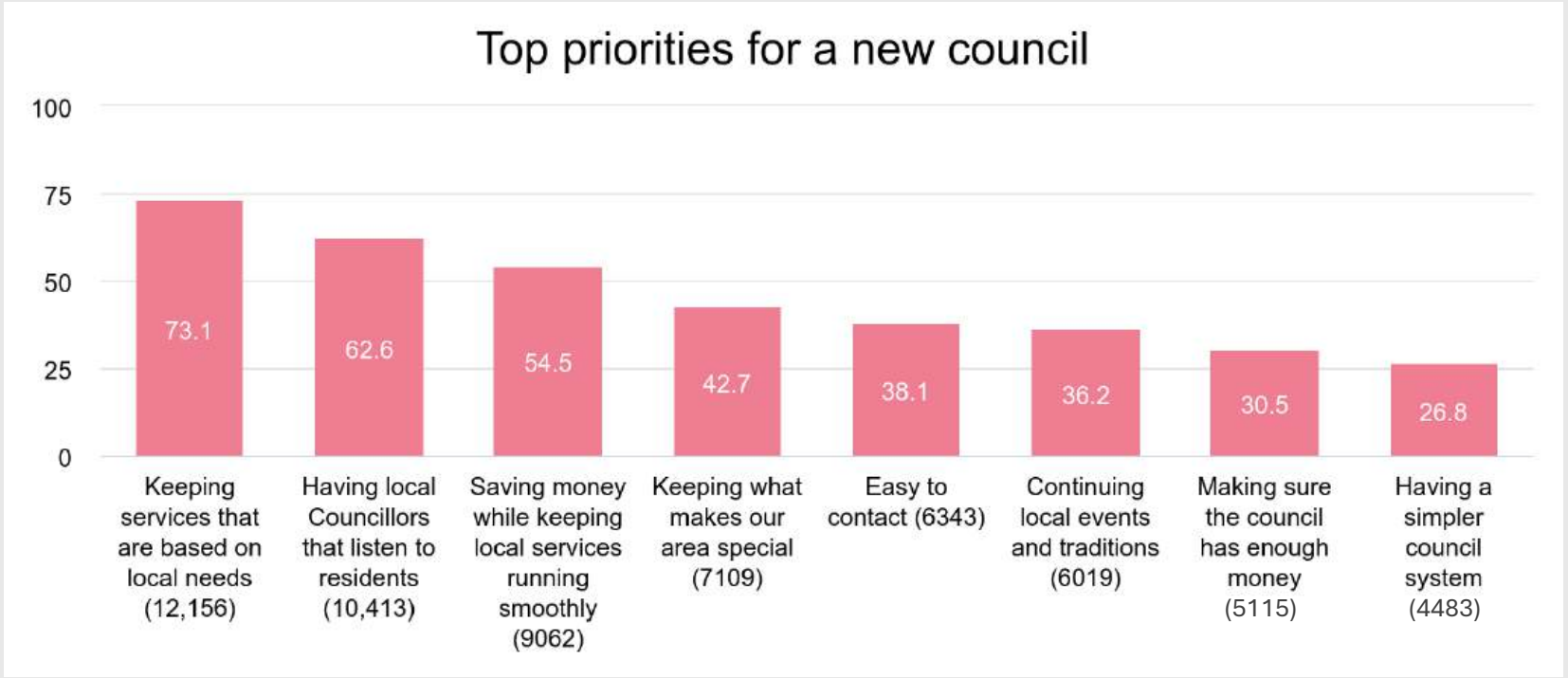


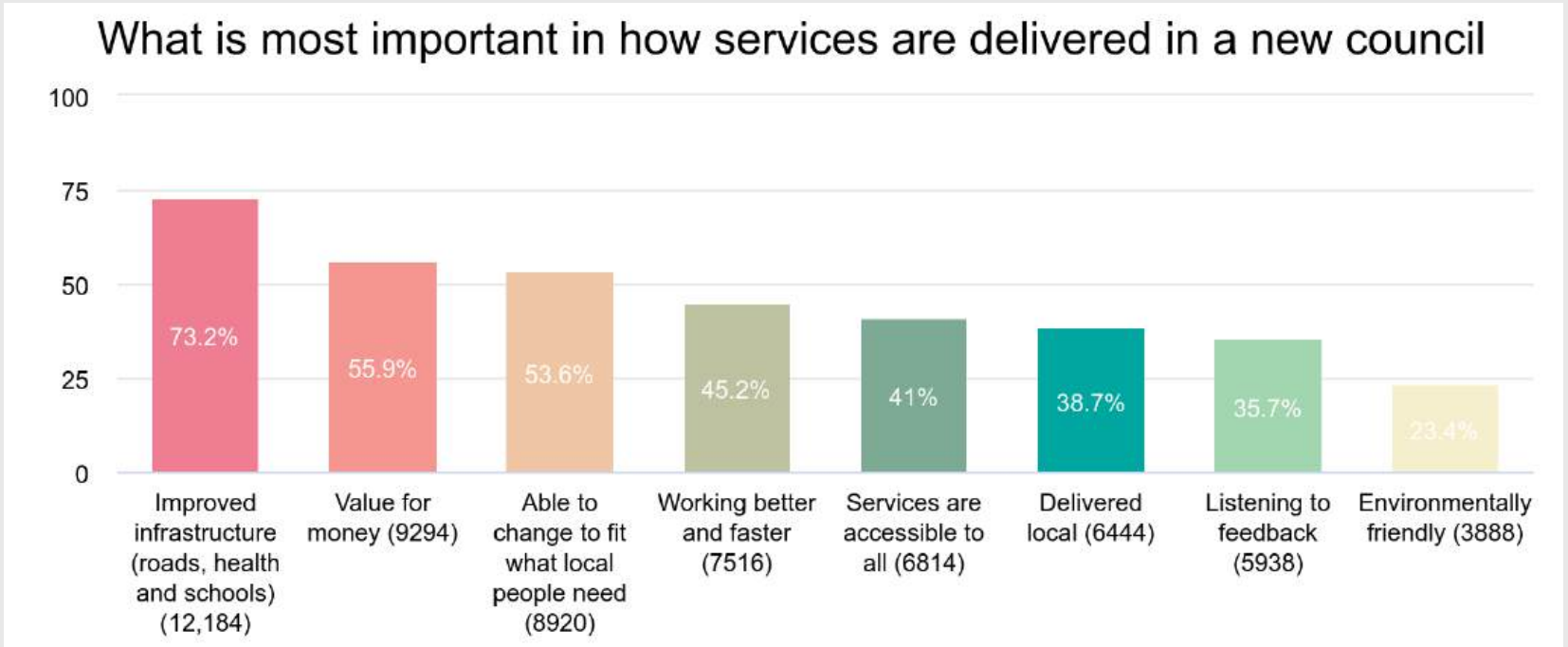
- Residents (16291)
- Council Staff (454)
- Business Owners (355)
- Councillor (208)
- Community group member (192)

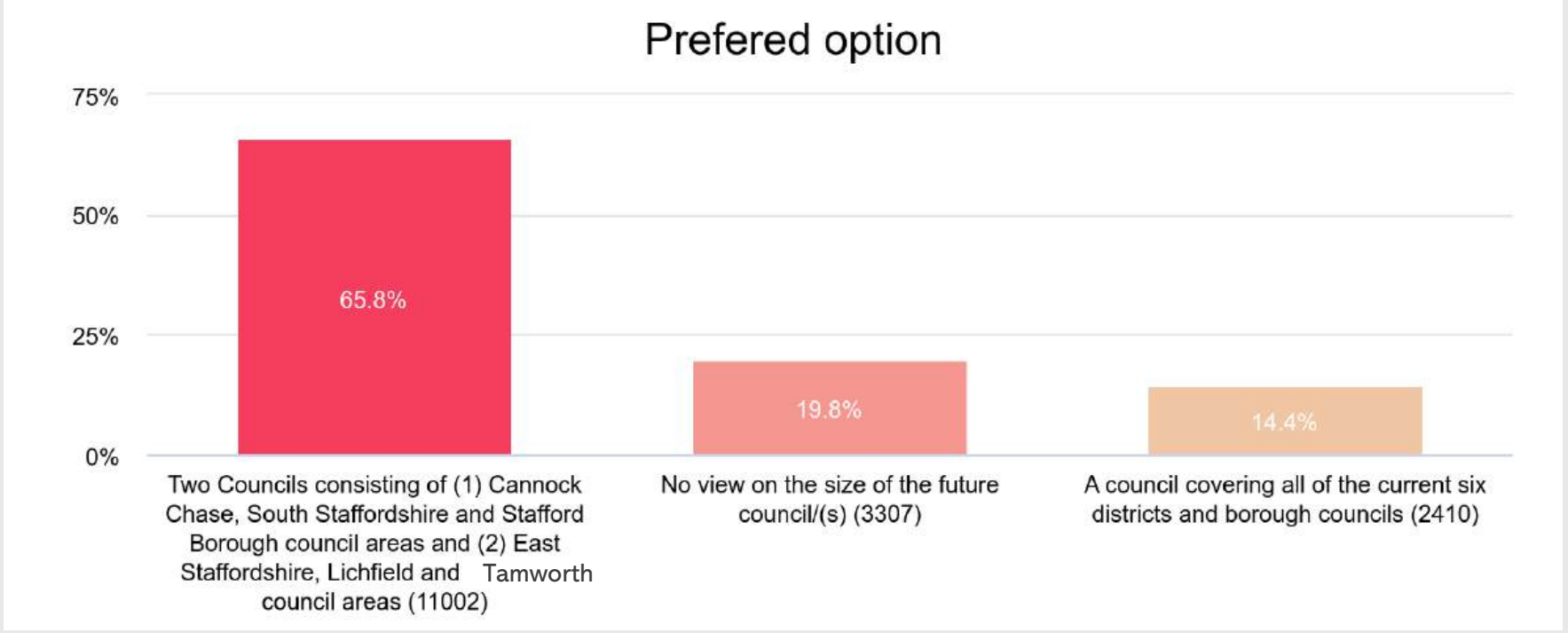
Age of respondents

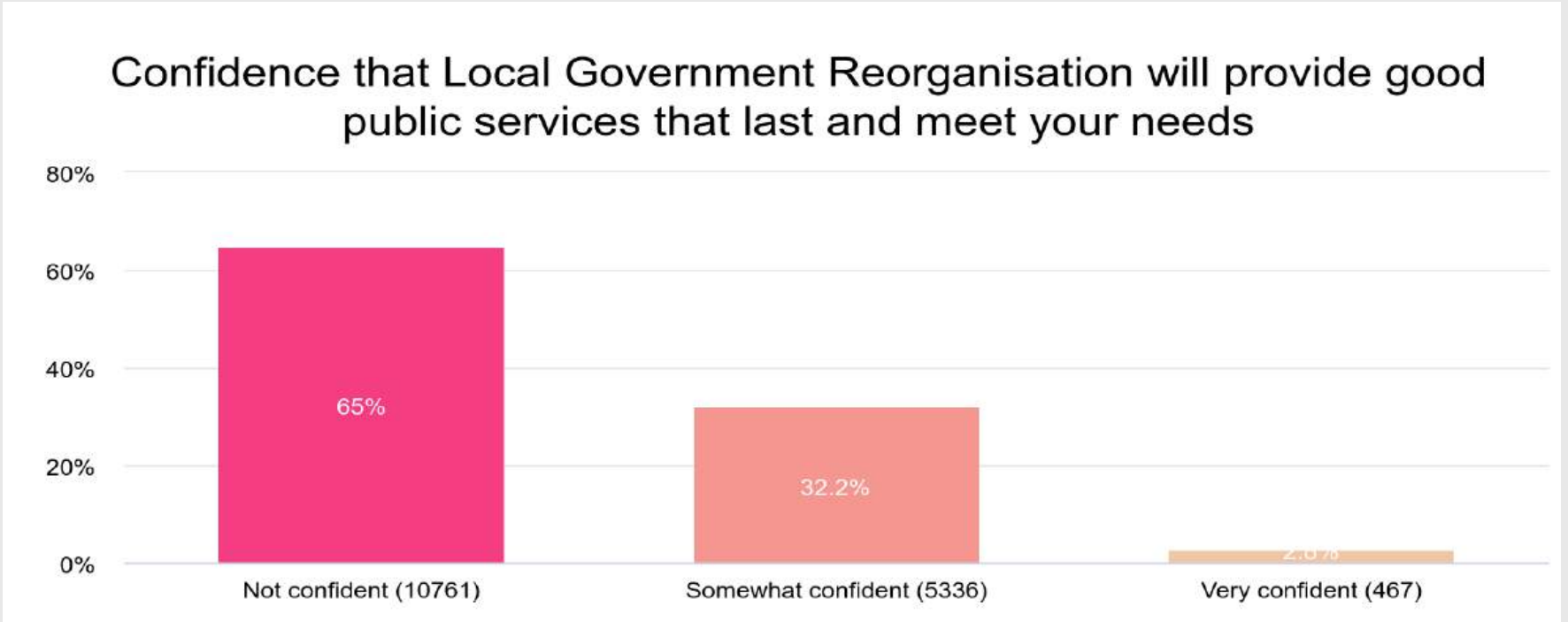


- Under 18 (17)
- 18-30 (522)
- 31-45 (2555)
- 45-59 (4273)
- 60-64 (2104)
- 65 and over (6396)
- Prefer not to say (885)


Top priorities for a new council
100
75
50
25
0
73.1
62.6
54.5
42.7
38.1
36.2
30.5
26.8
Keeping services that are based on local needs (12,156)
Having local Councillors that listen to residents (10,413)
Saving money while keeping local services running smoothly (9062)
Keeping what makes our area special (7109)
Easy to contact (6343)
Continuing local events and traditions (6019)
Making sure the council has enough money (5115)
Having a simpler council system (4483)


What is most important in how services are delivered in a new council
100
75
50
25
0
73.2%
55.9%
53.6%
45.2%
41%
38.7%
35.7%
23.4%
Improved infrastructure (roads, health and schools) (12,184)
Value for money (9294)
Able to change to fit what local people need (8920)
Working better and faster (7516)
Services are accessible to all (6814)
Delivered local (6444)
Listening to feedback (5938)
Environmentally friendly (3888)


Prefered option
75%
50%
25%
0%
65.8%
19.8%
14.4%
Two Councils consisting of (1) Cannock Chase, South Staffordshire and Stafford Borough council areas and (2) East Staffordshire, Lichfield and Tamworth council areas (11002)
No view on the size of the future council/(s) (3307)
A council covering all of the current six districts and borough councils (2410)


Confidence that Local Government Reorganisation will provide good public services that last and meet your needs
80%
60%
40%
20%
0%
65%
32.2%
Not confident (10761)
Somewhat confident (5336)
Very confident (467)

Question 7: What matters most to you in your local area?

Roads and Infrastructure: Every council group emphasized the need for **better roads**, **pothole repairs**, and **improved transport**.

Local Services: Words like *“services”*, *“local”*, and *“better”* were dominant, reflecting a shared desire for **accessible, high-quality public services**.

Community and Town Centres: Many mentioned the importance of **vibrant town centres**, **support for local businesses**, and **community identity**.

Question 9: What concerns do you have about the proposed changes?

Loss of Local Identity: Frequent use of *“local”*, *“areas”*, and *“needs”* shows concern about **losing community focus** in a larger council structure.

Service Dilution and added Bureaucracy: Respondents worry that **services will become less responsive** and **inefficient**, especially in rural or smaller areas.

Question 10: What opportunities do you see in the proposed changes?

Efficiency and Cost Savings: Common terms include *“money”*, *“opportunity”*, *“better”*, and *“more”*, indicating hopes for **streamlined services** and **financial benefits**.

Improved Services: Many see potential for **joined-up services**, **modernisation**, and **better resource allocation**.

Local Empowerment: Some respondents envision **stronger local engagement** and **more strategic planning**.

Open Ended Feedback

Key differences by council

This analysis was done by AI and confirmed by officers

Cannock Chase Council

Q7: Emphasizes **road conditions**, **local services**, and **community needs**.

Q9: Worries about **being overshadowed** in a larger structure and **fair distribution of services**.

Q10: Sees potential for **cost savings** and **more efficient councils**, but with reservations.

East Staffordshire Borough Council

Q7: Prioritises **social care, roads,** and **resident needs.**

Q9: Worries about **being too large** and **losing local responsiveness**

Q10: Sees opportunities for **better services,** but wants **local focus maintained.**

Lichfield District Council

Q7: Highlights **roads**, **tr ansport**, and **planning** as key issues.

Q9: Strong concern about **losing local voice**, especially for **Lichfield-specific needs**.

Q10: Sees **opportuniti es for integration**, but wants **local identity preserved**.

Open Ended Feedback

Key differences by council

This analysis was done by AI and confirmed by officers

Tamworth Borough Council

Q7: Strong focus on **Tamworth-specific issues**, especially the **town centre**, **roads**, and **local pride**.

Q9: Concerns about **Tamworth losing influence** in a larger council and **service quality**.

Q10: Optimism about **local improvements** and **better services**, but cautious about **representation**

South Staffordshire Council

Q7: Focus on **bus services**, **road repairs**, and **rural service access**.

Q9: Concerned about **fairness**, especially for **rural areas**.

Q10: Interested in **opportunities**, but cautious about **implementation**.

Stafford Borough Council

Q7: Very high concern for **roadworks**, **town centre regeneration**, and **service quality**.

Q9: Fears about **bureaucracy**, **service dilution**, and **loss of local control**.

Q10: Optimistic about **efficiency**, **cost savings**, and **strategic opportunities**.

ANNEX 2 –
FINANCIAL TECHNICAL APPENDICES

This section provides the comprehensive technical evidence base that underpins the financial analysis presented in earlier sections of the proposal. It consolidates all supporting data, calculations, and assumptions used in constructing the financial model for the assessed local government reorganisation options, ensuring that the analysis is both transparent and auditable. The content here has been developed in close collaboration with finance teams from each existing council, reflecting shared understanding of local data and a jointly agreed methodology.

The purpose of this section is to serve as the detailed reference layer that supports the narrative and conclusions reached in the main body of this document. Each appendix clearly documents its source data, allocation approach, assumptions, and any material judgement applied in the modelling process. This ensures a clear audit trail from base data through to headline findings.

To support clarity and usability, the section is structured into four technical appendices, each aligned with a core element of the financial analysis:

- **Appendix A – Methodology and Assumption Log**: Captures the overarching modelling approach, data sources, macro assumptions, and the engagement steps taken to validate inputs with local finance leads.

- **Appendix B – Savings Assumptions**: Sets out the savings estimates in full, including baseline costs, percentage reductions, and rationale by category, as well as the modelling behind the base and high scenarios.

- **Appendix C – Implementation Cost Breakdown**: Breaks down one-off transition costs by year and type, with cost drivers and any contingency assumptions clearly noted.

- **Appendix D** – **Other Considerations:** Consideration of other financial factors alongside the impact of transformation.

Each section is structured for ease of navigation and aligned to the relevant sections of the main report. Where appropriate, appendices are supplemented with footnotes, citations, and version tracking to ensure reproducibility and clarity for external reviewers, auditors, and government stakeholders.

This section acts as the technical foundation upon which the financial case is built. It allows readers, particularly finance professionals, Section 151 Officers, and programme sponsors, to interrogate the detail behind each modelling decision and to have confidence in the robustness, transparency, and evidential basis of the conclusions drawn.

Appendix A – Methodology and Assumption Log:

The phased model has been prepared in three sections – assumptions, calculations and outputs. The outputs include the calculation of payback period, individual year impact of LGR and a cumulative impact of LGR. These outputs help in assessing the viability of the LGR options being assessed.

The model is based on the following two key assumptions:

1. Savings
2. One-off implementation costs

The phased model projects the above across thirteen years, including three pre-implementation years (*Base Year, Year -1* and *Shadow Year)* and ten post-implementation years.

The model is, however, based on 2025/26 prices and does not include any adjustment for future inflation for both costs as well as savings. The phased model also does not include the impact of any Council Tax Harmonisation due to uncertainty of implementation.

The inputs as well as outputs have been prepared and validated with Section 151 officers. These reflect the best estimates as of the writing of this case.

Appendix B – Savings Assumptions:

The overall savings assumptions have been prepared using a mix of top down and bottom-up savings approaches, as outlined below.

Top-down approach:

The overall savings assumptions for the current reorganisation have been calculated based on the outlined savings of unitary authorities as outlined within previous local government reorganisation documentation. These included 14 previous cases for change across England ranging from cases submitted between 2009 and 2023. The data included Base Case and Stretch Case savings.

For each individual previous case, an average savings per population base was calculated for Base Case and Stretch Case savings, with the average of these reflecting the Mid Case savings. These were subsequently indexed up from the relevant transition year (per the previous case for change) to April 2025 prices. A simple arithmetic average of indexed savings per population base informed the overall average indexed saving per population, which was used to calculate the total ‘top-down’ savings. The savings were reduced by 5% to reflect the erosion of benefits of having two unitaries (Northern Staffordshire and Southern and Mid Staffordshire).

The top-down savings were split into underlying savings categories (as reflected in table below) using a percentage allocation mix based on internal discussions and experience.

Saving Name	Description	Rationale and Assumptions	% of Total Savings
Optimising Leadership	Reviewing the number of managerial roles to eliminate duplication and enhance operational efficiency, by merging similar responsibilities into fewer and more impactful positions.	Assumes a single senior leadership team for each new unitary replaces multiple councils' executives (Chief Execs, Directors, S151s, Monitoring Officers). Assumes no significant delays from legal/TUPE or governance negotiations.	7%
Right Sizing the Organisation	Determining the right size of the organisation, proportionate to the services that are being delivered, offset by the costs of new technology and upskilling individuals. Reducing overall workforce through role consolidation and automation.	Assumes c. 3% of workforce (primarily back-office/admin roles) reduced through consolidation, automation and voluntary redundancy. Realisation depends on culture change, system integration and union engagement.	30%
Centralising Corporate Services	Consolidating back-office functions, such as Human Resources (HR), Finance and Information Technology (IT) to streamline operations, enhance efficiencies and unlock savings.	Merger of finance, HR, payroll, legal and comms into centralised functions for each new unitary. Requires effective digital systems, unified policies and process harmonisation.	6%
Service Contract Consolidation	Understanding current and joint service arrangements between Councils, and what savings (or costs) may be	Assumes merging of contracts (waste, highways, care) and renegotiation over time. Dependent on contract cycles, procurement	35%

	incurred on consolidation. Determining the optimum sourcing arrangements for contracts that are either currently outsourced or could be outsourced. This will need to consider both financial and operational efficiency and will consider existing arrangements with third parties.	capacity and provider cooperation.	
Proportionate Democratic Services	Reviewing the costs of democratic services (elections, committee support, etc.) to be proportionate to the new authorities. Reducing the number of councillors and governance costs (e.g. committees, elections).	Assumes reduction in number of councillors and associated committee and democratic support costs. Assumes new governance models implemented immediately post-reorganisation.	5%
Improved Digital & IT Systems	Implementing unified digital platforms, automating repetitive tasks, streamlining workflows, and eliminating manual processes, can lead to significant time and cost savings. Unified platforms and systems rationalisation reduce licensing, support, and admin overheads.	Streamlining systems and licenses, introducing self-service platforms, rationalising IT estate. Dependent on investment in digital infrastructure and culture shift to online services.	3%
Asset & Property Optimisation	Reviewing property portfolio to ensure alignment with the council's overall	Release of surplus office space, lease terminations, or revenue from letting/disposals.	6%

	objectives and community needs.	Contingent on lease terms, capital receipt strategy and local market conditions.	
Customer Engagement	Enhancing customer contact facilities, determining the needs of citizens in the new authorities and developing proportionate customer contact centres, where appropriate including self-service through digital channels, to improve customer engagement, satisfaction and drive operational efficiencies and cost savings.	Channel shift to digital, contact centre consolidation, and automation of transactions. Assumes digital access for residents, workforce reskilling, and strong comms.	2%
Consolidating Fleets & Optimising Routes	Exploring consolidation of fleets and any route efficiencies, to reduce costs and minimise environmental impact. Reducing fleet size and improving vehicle routing to lower transport costs.	Integration of transport assets across services (e.g. waste, social care, facilities). Benefits depend on fleet management tools, depot locations and service redesign.	8%
Total			**100%**

Savings by category as calculated from the top-down approach was subsequently compared with the savings calculated using the bottom-up approach.

Bottom-up approach:

To estimate the potential savings using the bottom-up approach, an overall spend against each of the savings' categories (as per above table) was identified and a corresponding high-level saving against spend (in percentage terms) was made against each of the categories.

The total savings were then aligned across the bottom-up and top-down approaches to ensure a realistic savings assumption by category. The alignment continued to assume a 5% saving erosion due to Staffordshire's local government reorganisation migrating to two new unitaries. The savings were then allocated to individual unitaries based on the unitary's share of total population.

No savings from LGR have been assumed to be realised in Base Year and Shadow Year. However, they start to ramp up in Year 1 and build up to be fully realised per annum by Year 3. The savings have then been phased based on expected realisation as per the below table:

	Shadow Year	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**
Optimising Leadership		50%	50%	
Right Sizing the Organisation		30%	40%	30%
Centralising Corporate Services		20%	40%	40%
Service Contract Consolidation		45%	35%	20%
Proportionate Democratic Services		80%	20%	
Improved Digital & IT Systems		15%	35%	50%
Asset & Property Optimisation		40%	40%	20%
Customer Engagement		33%	33%	33%
Consolidating Fleets & Optimising Routes		30%	40%	30%

Appendix C – Implementation Cost Breakdown:

The overall implementation cost assumptions have been prepared using a top-down approach only, based on the implementation costs as outlined within previous case for change documentation. These included the same previous cases for change used to inform the top-down savings assumptions, to ensure consistency. The data included Base Case and Stretch Case implementation costs.

These were calculated as one-off implementation costs.

One-off implementation costs:

For each individual previous case, an average one-off implementation cost per population base was calculated for both the Base Case and Stretch Case, with the average of the two informing the Mid Case. These were subsequently indexed up from the relevant transition year (per the previous case for change) to April 2025 prices. A simple arithmetic average of indexed one-off implementation cost per population base informed the overall average indexed one-off implementation per population.

The final figure was then apportioned across the cost categories underpinning the one-off implementation costs (see below table).

Category	Description	Rationale and Assumptions	% of Total Costs
Workforce - Exit	Compensation paid to employees as a result of restructuring/redundancies, including redundancy payments, pension strain, TUPE, salary harmonisation, and other contract termination fees.	Redundancy and termination costs reflect staff length of service.	46%
Workforce - Development	Additional costs to upskill and reskill employees to adapt to new roles and responsibilities.	Cost allowed for retraining through redeployment of workforce.	5%
Transition - Team	Implementation programme team including Legal, Contract Negotiation, Project and Programme Management, and specialist support.	A significant transition team required for each unitary authority. Includes legal, HR, project support, public consultation. Some benchmarks include change management and creation of new councils.	11%
Transition - Culture and Communications	Costs to develop communications, branding, training, and public information in relation to new authorities. This should inform the public, stakeholders, and employees of proposed changes and address concerns.	Cost allowed for other culture and comms change. Includes all rebranding, change, and engagement.	4%
Transition - Processes	Work required to harmonise processes and facilitate effective service transition. This includes specific constitutional changes and developments, democratic transition, and new policies and procedures.	Cost allowed for efforts to harmonise processes and procedures as part of the transition.	6%

Consolidation - Systems	Alignment of systems and digital infrastructure, including merging systems, data migration, commonality of cyber security, and training for new systems.	Costs reflect previous examples of system implementation. Some benchmarks do not include allowance for ERP and data migration, cleansing and interface development.	12%
Consolidation - Estates and Facilities	Reconfiguration of buildings, costs of disposal, and termination fees on leases.	Some benchmarks do not include capital receipts, which can be used to fund, for example transformation or regeneration.	8%
Contingency	Additional 10% contingency to allow for prudence in estimates.	Standard across Cases to build out contingency.	10%
Total			**100%**

One-off implementation costs have been assumed to start ramping-up from Base Year and build up by Year 3. These have then been phased as per the below table:

	Base Year	**Year -1**	**Shadow Year**	**Year 1**	**Year 2**	**Year 3**
Workforce - Exit			10%	20%	30%	40%
Workforce - Development			40%	40%	20%	
Transition - Team		50%	40%	10%		
Transition - Culture and Communications		50%	40%	10%		
Transition - Processes		50%	40%	10%		
Consolidation - Systems		20%	60%	20%		
Consolidation - Estates and Facilities			15%	35%	50%	
Contingency	5%	15%	20%	20%	20%	20%

Appendix D – Other Considerations

Impact of Fair Funding 2.0 on Gross Budget Gap

The financial analysis assumes that all existing councils (including the County) will manage their ongoing gross budget gaps regardless of local government reorganisation. The forecasted total gross budget gap for all councils by 2028/29 of **£40.9m** (including the County Council of **£24.2m**), has therefore not been included within the breakeven analysis of transformation. However, there is recognition that Fair Funding 2.0 may have an impact on councils' financial positions.

The table below outlines the anticipated impact of Fair Funding 2.0 in the year 2028/29.

FY28/29, £m	Gross Budget Gap	Fair Funding Impact (FF)	Gross Budget Gap after FF
Mid and South Staffordshire	16.7	-0.5	16.2
Staffordshire County	24.2	0.4	24.6
Total	40.9	-0.1	40.8

Dedicated Schools Grants

The financial analysis assumes that all existing councils will manage their Dedicated Schools Grants (DSG) positions regardless of local government reorganisation, therefore DSG surplus or deficits (if any) have not been included within the breakeven analysis of transformation. It will be the decision of each new authority to determine how to use its resources to fund the cost of reorganisation against any funding pressures observed from DSG.

ANNEX 3 - FINANCIAL MODELLING

LGR Southern and Mid Staffordshire

21 October 2025

FINANCE METHODOLOGY

One-off Implementation Costs

1. **Top-Down Modelling:**
   - Estimates the one-off transition costs of moving to a new unitary model
   - Calculations are based on the level of costs identified and incurred in comparable local government reorganisation programmes, adjusted for the respective sizes of the Councils on a population basis

→

- Based on 14 comparable Cases for Change
- Projected one-off costs of implementation per capita
- Cost per capita indexed to April 2025
- Cost applied to each proposed unitary based on population
- Total costs split into cost levers based on previous cases for change and experience delivering change programmes

2. **Bottom-Up / Localisation:**
   - Total implementation costs and its apportionment between each cost lever updated to be aligned with Staffordshire

→

- Updated based on experience of consultants
- Updated based on working sessions held with Section 151s
- Feedback from Chief Executives and Leaders

Step 1

Identified the key categories of implementation costs:

1. Workforce;
2. Transition;
3. Consolidation;
4. Contingency (10%).

Step 2

Collated the 'total implementation cost' on a base and a stretch case, from similar unitary cases for change.

Calculate the estimated implementation cost per capita.

Step 3

Applied the percentage of implementation costs per population head for the base and stretch case to the total population of the proposed unitary authorities. Applying an uplift for total costs for multiple authorities due to diseconomies of scale.

Step 4

Apportioned costs (from step 3) to the total estimated costs per category (calculated in Step 1).

Step 5

Implementation costs assessed by Section 151s and Chief Executives to apply localisation based on Staffordshire.

FINANCE METHODOLOGY

Recurring Disaggregation Costs

1. **Top-Down Modelling:**
   - Estimate the additional recurring expenditure that results from dividing upper tier (i.e. county level) services into new upper tier authorities. County data is a key source of information driving this calculation.
   - These costs are essential to understand the full financial implications of structural change and need to be considered alongside implementation costs.

→

- Methodology uses national benchmarking data, public reports, and local government budget data to calculate likely uplifts in service costs based on the number and scale of new authorities created
- Recurring disaggregation costs have been estimated as a percentage uplift on core service budgets (Adults, Childrens, Place and Corporate Services)
- Service budgets split into costs levers (e.g. management, ICT)

2. **Bottom-Up / Localisation:**
   - Total disaggregation costs and apportionment between each cost lever updated to be aligned with Staffordshire

→

- Cost lever breakdown of service budget obtained from county
- Updated based on working sessions held with Section 151s
- Feedback from Chief Executives and Leaders

Step 1

Identify core service categories where disaggregation will drive cost increases:

- Adult Social Care
- Children's Social Care
- Public Health
- Place services
- Corporate/Support Services

Step 2

Establish baseline budgets for these services.

Then, apply a base-case and stretch-case percentage uplift to each category based on research and benchmarking.

These reflect the range of inefficiencies anticipated in multi-unitary models.

Step 3

Apply the percentage uplifts from Step 2 to the total baseline service budgets to calculate recurring disaggregation cost per year.

The percentages used are scaled based on the number of new authorities.

This reflects increasing diseconomies of scale and overhead duplication.

Step 4

Combine uplifted costs across all categories to calculate the total estimated annual disaggregation cost.

Step 5

Disaggregation costs assessed by Section 151s and Chief Executives to apply localisation based on Staffordshire.

FINANCE METHODOLOGY

Recurring Savings

1. **Top-Down Modelling:**
   - Estimates the annual high-level savings potential from efficiencies that can be unlocked through reorganisation
   - Calculations are based on the savings identified in comparable local government reorganisation programmes, adjusted for the respective sizes of the Councils on a population basis

→

- Based on 14 comparable Cases for Change
- Projected annual savings per capita post reorganisation
- Savings per capita indexed to April 2025
- Savings applied to each proposed unitary based on population
- Savings split into savings levers based on previous cases for change and experience delivering change programmes

2. **Bottom-Up / Localisation:**
   - Total savings and its apportionment between each savings lever updated to be aligned with Staffordshire

→

- Updated based on experience of consultants
- Updated based on working sessions held with Section 151s
- Feedback from Chief Executives and Leaders

Step 1

Defined the savings categories based on evidence from previous LGR cases and known cost drivers, i.e.:

- Workforce & Leadership;
- Democratic services & Governance;
- Support services;
- Fleet & Estates;
- Procurement;
- Digital & Service Improvement.
- Customer Engagement &Wider Transformation

Step 2

Applied savings percentage ranges to relevant baseline spend.

These were drawn from national modelling and detailed case studies (e.g. Somerset, Cumbria, Dorset).

Each percentage reflects low and high scenarios.

Scaling factor applied to total savings to reflect the number of new Unitary authorities as splitting into more authorities will dilute benefit realisation.

Step 3

Calculated savings values using both base and stretch scenarios.

The relevant service budget was multiplied by the benchmark % for each savings category.

This resulted in a savings value per category, which was totalled across all levers.

Step 4

Summed the total savings across all categories, to give a range of estimated annual savings.
These figures can be used to inform:
– Payback period calculations
– Net savings after implementation costs
– Scenario testing between options.

Step 5

Recurring savings assessed by Section 151s and Chief Executives to apply localisation based on Staffordshire.

Item No. 9.121

Appendix 2

Summary of the Government's proposals

Devolution

The White Paper sets out that the Government's goal is for there to be "universal coverage in England of Strategic Authorities (SAs) - which should be a number of councils working together, covering areas that people recognise and work in". It states that Strategic Authorities are intended to reduce duplication and give cities and regions a bigger voice, while utilising economies of scale.

Strategic Authorities should have a combined population of 1.5 million or above. However, in some places smaller authorities may be necessary.

The Strategic Authorities will either be:

- **Foundation SAs** - a Strategic Authority without a Mayor which has fewer powers.
- **Mayoral SAs** - a Strategic Authority with a Mayor. This model unlocks further devolution, has more powers and an Integrated Settlement.

The Government's "strong preference" is for partnerships that bring more than one Local Authority together over a large geography and for these authorities to have an elected mayor. They state that the move to Strategic Authorities will be ideally done collaboratively and in partnership with areas, but the Government will also legislate for a ministerial directive which will allow the creation of Strategic Authorities where local leaders have not been able to make progress.

When agreeing Strategic Authority geographies, the Government will consider the following principles. It is acknowledged that it will not be possible to meet all the principles in all situations and the government will work with areas to find an optimal outcome:

- Scale: Strategic Authorities should be of comparable size to existing institutions. The default assumption is for them to have a combined population of 1.5 million or above, but they accept that in some places, smaller authorities may be necessary.
- No 'devolution islands': Geographies must not create devolution 'islands' by leaving areas which are too small to go it alone or which do not have natural partners - at least to the level of Foundation Strategic Authorities, with an ambition to move to a mayoral model.
- Delivery: Geographies should ensure the effective delivery of key functions including Spatial Development Strategies, Local Transport Plans and Get Britain Working Plans.
- Economies: Strategic Authorities must cover sensible economic geographies with a particular focus on functional economic areas, reflecting current and potential travel-to-work patterns and local labour markets. It is likely that where travel to work areas are small and fragmented, Strategic Authorities will cover multiple travel to work areas.
- Contiguity: Any proposed geography must be contiguous across its constituent councils.
- Alignment: The Government will seek to promote alignment between devolution boundaries and other public sector boundaries.

- Identity: A vital element of successful devolution is the ability for local residents to engage with and hold their devolved institutions to account - and local identity plays a key role in this.

The Strategic Authorities will provide the framework for:

- Transport and local infrastructure
- Skills and employment support
- Housing and strategic planning
- Economic development and regeneration
- Environment and climate change
- Health, wellbeing and public service reform
- Public safety

Local Government Reorganisation (LGR)

The White Paper announces that government will facilitate a programme of reorganisation for two-tier local government areas. Delivery will be phased, taking account of where LGR can unlock devolution and where areas want to proceed at pace.

New unitaries are to be delivered in April 2027 (first wave) and 2028 (all remaining two-tier council areas), with shadow elections taking place earlier. The paper sets out that reorganisation should not delay devolution and devolution plans should complement LGR.

The Government's priorities for LGR are:

- New councils should be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks. For most areas government believes this will mean creating councils with a population of 500,000 or more. There may be exceptions to ensure new structures make sense for an area, agreed on a case-by-case basis.
- All two-tier areas and smaller or failing unitaries are to develop proposals for reorganisation.
- High quality and sustainable public services to citizens and communities should be prioritised.
- New councils should take a proactive and innovative approach to neighbourhood involvement and community governance to empower residents.
- All councils in an area should collaborate on developing unitary proposals in the best interests of a whole area, rather than producing competing proposals.
- Councils should work with government to bring about changes as swiftly as possible.
- Governance models for local authorities to best support decision-making.

Allocation of Seats to Committees and Other Bodies 2025-26

Committee: Council

Date of Meeting: 5 November 2025

Report of: Chief Executive

Portfolio: Leader of the Council

1 Purpose of Report

1.1 For Council to determine the allocation of seats for each Political Groups duly constituted, on its committees and other bodies, for the remainder of the 2025-26 municipal year, following the formation of a Reform UK Group on the Council.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That the allocation of seats for each Political Group on the Council's committees and other bodies, as set out in appendix 1, be confirmed.

Reasons for Recommendations

2.2 Council is required to confirm the allocation of seats to each Political Group in order that updated appointment of members to committees and other bodies can be subsequently considered under item 10 of the agenda for today's meeting.

3 Key Issues

3.1 Councillors R. Craddock and P. Jones have recently formed as the Reform UK Group on the Council, and as such, it has been necessary to review the allocation of seats to committees, sub-committees, and other bodies as established by Council to ensure the allocations are proportionate to the membership of each Political Group.

4 Relationship to Corporate Priorities

4.1 The Council, through its democratic process, supports the Council's corporate priorities.

5 Report Detail

5.1 The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (and associated regulations since) requires the Council to allocate seats to each constituted political group represented on the Council in accordance with the political balance rules.

5.2 Council is required to consider the allocation of seats to each political group in relation to the Council's committees and other bodies, to give effect to, and reflect, so far as reasonably practicable, the political balance of the Members of the Council.

5.3 The number of seats on each Council committee is fixed at the start of the municipal year and remains fixed for that year. In the event of any changes to party membership or a vacancy occurring during the year, the size of committees would not change; the only change being the allocation of seats to political parties in accordance with the political balance rules.

5.4 Following the election of Councillor P. Jones as a Reform UK councillor at the Hednesford Green Heath by-election held in August 2025 and Councillor Craddock recently resigning from the Conservative Group, formal notification was received by the Chief Executive in October 2025 that Councillors Craddock and P. Jones wished to constitute themselves as the Reform UK Group on the Council.

As a result, the overall political composition of the Council has changed as follows since the Annual Council Meeting (when the allocation of seats for the current year was previously determined):

Political Party	Political composition as at Annual Council - 21 May 2025	Political composition as at Council - 5 November 2025
Labour	19	19
Conservatives	11	10
Greens	5	5
Reform UK	0	2
Vacant	1	0

5.5 These changes affected the overall allocation of seats to committees etc. as detailed in report appendix 1. Under item 11 the meeting agenda, Council will be asked to approve proposed changes to membership of committees as a result of the allocations being amended.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial

None.

6.2 Legal

The Council has a duty under Section 15(3) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 ('the Act') to "determine the allocation to the different political groups into which the members of the authority are divided of all the seats which fall to be filled by appointments made from time to time by that authority…".

Sections 15(4) and (5) of the Act place a further duty upon the Council, in performing its obligations under subsection (3) above, to determine the allocation to different political groups of seats on Committees and Other Bodies, to give effect, so far as reasonably practicable, to the following principles:

(a) That not all the seats are allocated to the same political group.

(b) That the majority of the seats are allocated to a particular political group if the number of persons belonging to that group is a majority of the authority's membership,

(c) Subject to paragraphs (a) and (b) above, that the number of seats on the ordinary committees of the Council as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the Council; and

(d) Subject to paragraphs (a) to (c) above, that the number of seats which are allocated to each political group bears the same proportion to the number of all the seats on Committees and Other Bodies as is borne by the number of members of that group to the membership of the Council.

6.3 Human Resources

None.

6.4 Risk Management

None.

6.5 Equalities and Diversity

None.

6.6 Health

None.

6.7 Climate Change

None.

7 Appendices

Appendix 1: Political balance calculation as at 5 November 2025.

8 Previous Consideration

None.

9 Background Papers

None.

Contact Officer: Matt Berry

Telephone Number: 01543 464 589

Report Track: Council: 05/11/25

Item No. 10.4

Appendix 1

Political Balance / Allocation of Seats on Committees etc.

For Council Meeting on 5 November 2025

Committee	Seats	Labour (19)	Conservatives (10)	Green (5)	Reform UK (2)	Total
		Proposed	**Proposed**	**Proposed**		
Council	***36***	***19***	***10***	***5***	***2***	***36***
All Committees:	**73**	39	20	10	4	**73**
Planning Control*	**13**	7	3	2	1	**13**
Licensing & Public Protection*	**10**	6	3	1	0	**10**
Audit & Governance	**6**	4	2	0	0	**6**
Standards	**6**	4	2	0	0	**6**
Investigatory & Disciplinary Committee	**5**	3	1	1	0	**5**
Scrutiny Committees:						
Economic Prosperity*	**11**	6	3	1	1	**11**
Health, Wellbeing & The Community*	**11**	6	3	2	0	**11**
Responsible Council*	**11**	6	3	2	0	**11**
Actual Seat Allocation		**42**	**20**	**9**	**2**	**73**
Other Bodies:						
Trade Union Consultative Forum**	**6**	4	1	1	0	**6**
Appeals & Complaints Panel**	**5**	3	1	1	0	**5**
Joint Appointments Committee**	**3**	2	1	0	0	**3**
Constitution Working Group**	**6**	4	1	1	0	**6**
Total:	**20**	**13**	**4**	**3**	**0**	**20**

**These committees shall have named substitutes of one councillor from each political group.*

***Although not a Council committee, political balance calculation applies.*

Motion 1 - Enhancing Transparency Through Recording and Broadcasting of Public Meetings

Submitted by Councillor Paul Jones:

“This Council recognises the importance of openness, transparency, and public engagement in local democracy. In an era of digital accessibility, it is essential that residents of Cannock Chase can observe and participate in Council proceedings, regardless of physical attendance.

Therefore, this Council resolves to:

1. Implement the recording and broadcasting (including livestreaming) of all public meetings of the Full Council, Cabinet, and Committees as soon as practicably possible.

2. Ensure compliance with all relevant legislation, including the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014, the Data Protection Act 2018, GDPR, and the Human Rights Act 1998.

3. Request that the Chief Executive bring forward a report to Cabinet within 8 weeks, outlining:

    - Technical and financial requirements for recording and livestreaming.

    - Options for archiving and publishing recordings on the Council’s website.

    - Necessary updates to the Council’s Constitution and Section 40 Protocol.

    - Measures to safeguard privacy and data protection.

4. Ensure that archived recordings of public meetings shall be retained and made publicly accessible for a minimum of 12 months from the date of publication, unless otherwise required by law or Council policy.

This motion is grounded in the Nolan Principles of Public Life, which guide all those who serve the public:

- Selflessness: Acting solely in the public interest.

- Integrity: Avoiding improper influence.

- Objectivity: Making decisions impartially and fairly.

- Accountability: Being answerable to the public.

- Openness: Being transparent about decisions and actions.

- Honesty: Being truthful.

- Leadership: Promoting and exemplifying these principles.

By adopting this motion, the Council affirms its commitment to these principles and to making public meetings more accessible, inclusive, and accountable to the people of Cannock Chase.

Following the Chief Executive's confirmation of receipt, and in line with the Council's resolution from September 2020 regarding the provenance of submitted Motions, please find below the statement to be appended to the end of my Motion.

I appreciate the opportunity to ensure procedural consistency and transparency, particularly in light of the earlier resolution which, while approved, has not yet been routinely applied. I trust this will support the integrity of Council proceedings and set a clear precedent for future submissions.

In accordance with the resolution passed by full Council in September 2020, I confirm that this Motion is original and comprises my own work with research. Where external sources have informed its content, appropriate references have been cited to acknowledge their provenance.
