

Staffordshire Leaders' Board submits interim plan for council reorganisation

The Staffordshire Leaders' Board has submitted an interim plan on local government reorganisation and devolution to government today (21 March).

The plan sets out early options for how council services could be organised across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent in the future in response to the government's English Devolution White Paper.

Councils in Staffordshire, including Stoke-on-Trent City Council, were asked by Jim McMahon, the Minister for Local Government and English Devolution, to submit outline plans in March, with detailed proposals due in the Autumn.

In brief, the interim plan includes proposals for:

- The creation of a Mayoral Strategic Authority across Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent to unlock investment and decision-making powers that will boost our local economy
- Two unitary authorities to deliver other day-to-day council services, with two main options for the size and shape of these.
 - A new county unitary combining areas currently served by the county council and the eight district and borough councils working alongside Stoke-on-Trent City Council as an existing council working on its current boundaries.
 - Two new unitary councils, one for Northern Staffordshire covering as a minimum the current borough of Newcastle-Under-Lyme, the district of Staffordshire Moorlands and the city of Stoke-on-Trent, and the creation of a complementary Southern Staffordshire unitary covering the district of Lichfield, the district of Cannock Chase, the borough of East Staffordshire, the district of South Staffordshire, the borough of Tamworth and the borough of Stafford.
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 - The new councils would replace the existing county, city, district or borough councils.

The plan recognises that other options may emerge through the process.

It also makes clear to Government the level of resourcing that will be required to develop and then implement detailed proposals and seeks a suitable level of financial support.

Chair of Staffordshire Leaders Board, Councillor Alan White said: "As Leaders, our priority in this process is our residents and businesses.

"There's growing consensus that a Mayoral Strategic Authority will bring extra investment and freedoms to boost our economy further. This is the real prize we're working towards.

"When it comes to the future shape of local councils, there is more work to be done. Councils are hugely complex organisations delivering hundreds of different services. There are significant costs and risks involved in reorganising these – especially for vital services like social care - so we must get this right.

"It is also critical that any proposals are relevant to local communities and support local representation and decision making.

“We’ll be doing detailed work in the months ahead to test our thinking and we’ll follow what the evidence tells us.”

Vice Chair of Staffordshire Leaders Board, Jane Ashworth said: “This is another important step forward.

"Devolution through a Mayoral Strategic Authority means more control over our destiny - with strategic decisions made here rather than in Whitehall.

"The Government sees local government reorganisation as a crucial building block for devolution to work. That means we need unitary councils that make sense in terms of economic geography, financial sustainability and local identity. It also means ensuring that devolved power supports local communities to make the decisions that matter to them”.

Detailed proposals will be submitted to government by 28 November 2025, with opportunity for people to shape these in the coming months as part of community engagement plans.

The government make the final decision on which proposal is taken forward.

The earliest that changes are expected to be fully implemented is 2028.