

Stafford Borough Council – Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Survey

Thank you for the opportunity to take part in the survey which is being carried out on the proposals for local government in Staffordshire. Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council does not feel the survey adequately allowed the Parish Council to put forward its concerns on the proposals and for that reason have chosen to offer the following comments.

The challenge arising from the impending Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation is something Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council is deeply concerned about.

Yarnfield and Cold Meece Parish Council believe the priority must be to ensure that whatever the new structure that is created it must have the capacity to respond in a timely manner to ratepayers and the wider community: that democratic representation on the new council is capable of representing the interests of the communities it serves: that resources for the new authority are not so centralised that rural communities find themselves on the margins of service provision.

Stafford Borough Council disagrees with Stoke-on-Trent City Council's proposal to include parts of the Borough in a Northern Unitary authority and the remainder in a Southern Unitary authority. This they consider to be a red-line issue for the Council. The Council favours maintaining the existing borough boundaries and the inclusion of Stafford in the Southern Unitary Authority. The Parish Council would need to understand why Stafford Borough Council is not in favour of splitting the borough across two or more unitary councils and favours maintaining the existing borough boundaries. What is the evidence to support this position?

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”. Stafford Borough Council has gone on record to say, “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.” This commitment seems to be at odds with the inevitable reduction in the number of councillors in the new authority. What evidence is there to show how this will be delivered and what steps are being taken to ensure the democratic arrangements for the new council will be able to deliver on this promise?

This parish council has yet to see compelling evidence to support any of the proposals now being developed by the different local authority factions across Staffordshire. The Parish Council is willing to work with Stafford Borough Council to better understand the various proposals and would again ask that engagement with parish councils is seen as a priority.