

# Public Document Pack

**Date of meeting** Monday, 30th March, 2026  
**Time** 7.00 pm  
**Venue** Astley Room - Castle  
**Contact** Geoff Durham : 01782 742222



**NEWCASTLE  
UNDER LYME**  
**BOROUGH COUNCIL**

Castle House  
Barracks Road  
Newcastle-under-Lyme  
Staffordshire  
ST5 1BL

## **Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Panel**

### **AGENDA**

#### **PART 1 – OPEN AGENDA**

- 1 TO NOTE THAT THE CABINET PANEL WILL BE MADE AVAILABLE TO PUBLIC VIEWING**
- 2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**  
To receive Declarations of Interest from Members on items included on the agenda.
- 3 TERMS OF REFERENCE** (Pages 3 - 10)
- 4 PRESENTATION ON NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME'S PROPOSAL FOR FOUR UNITARY COUNCILS**
- 5 INVITATION FOR MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT TO PRESENT VIEWS ON LGR PROPOSALS FOR STOKE ON TRENT AND STAFFORDSHIRE** (Pages 11 - 26)  
Documents attached:
  - Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's response to the consultation
  - Submission from Adam Jogee MP
  - Letter from Adam Jogee MP
  - Response from the Leader of the Council, Councillor Simon Tagg
- 6 WORK PLAN**
- 7 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**
- 8 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

**Members:** Councillors S Tagg (Leader), Dean, Fear, Fox-Hewitt, Holland and D Jones

**Members of the Council: If you identify any personal training/development requirements from any of the items included in this agenda or through issues raised during the meeting, please bring them to the attention of the Democratic Services Officer at the close of the meeting.**

**Meeting Quorums :- Where the total membership of a committee is 12 Members or less, the quorum will be 3 members....Where the total membership is more than 12 Members, the quorum will be one quarter of the total membership.**

**SUBSTITUTE MEMBER SCHEME (Section B5 – Rule 2 of Constitution)**

The Constitution provides for the appointment of Substitute members to attend Committees. The named Substitutes for this meeting are listed below:-

Substitute Members:

***If you are unable to attend this meeting and wish to appoint a Substitute to attend on your place you need to identify a Substitute member from the list above who is able to attend on your behalf***

Officers will be in attendance prior to the meeting for informal discussions on agenda items.

**NOTE: IF THE FIRE ALARM SOUNDS, PLEASE LEAVE THE BUILDING IMMEDIATELY THROUGH THE FIRE EXIT DOORS.**

**ON EXITING THE BUILDING, PLEASE ASSEMBLE AT THE FRONT OF THE BUILDING BY THE STATUE OF QUEEN VICTORIA. DO NOT RE-ENTER THE BUILDING UNTIL ADVISED TO DO SO.**

## NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL

### CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S REPORT TO LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION CABINET PANEL

30<sup>th</sup> March 2026

**Report Title:** Draft Terms of Reference for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Cabinet Panel

**Submitted by:** Chief Executive

**Portfolios:** One Council, People and Partnerships

**Ward(s) affected:** All

<b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>	<b><u>Key Decision</u></b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>This report sets out the proposed terms of reference for Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Panel, including its key functions and membership, which is required to be adopted for the Panel.</p>			
<b><u>Recommendation</u></b>			
<p><b>That the LGR Cabinet Panel:</b></p> <p><b>1. Reviews and adopts the Terms of Reference set out in Appendix One to this report.</b></p>			
<b><u>Reasons</u></b>			
<p>To ensure effective governance of the LGR Cabinet Panel, a Terms of Reference should be adopted.</p>			

#### **1. Background**

- 1.1** At its meeting of 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026, Cabinet resolved to establish a Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Cabinet Panel to scrutinise the reorganisation process and make recommendations to Cabinet (and, where appropriate to Scrutiny Committees and full Council) in respect of necessary action for the Council in addressing issues arising from this process.
- 1.2** The Panel will gather evidence from a range of stakeholders, including local MPs, to understand how Government policy may impact services for residents. If the LGR process proceeds, the Panel will meet regularly throughout the next phases from summer 2026 onwards.
- 1.3** At that meeting, Cabinet further noted that a terms of reference would be agreed at the first meeting of the LGR Cabinet Panel.

## 2. Issues

- 2.1 The Minister for Local Government & Homelessness has reconfirmed the Government's intention for local government reorganisation to happen at pace, intending for this to be within the lifetime of the current parliament, with all new structures in place by Spring 2028. The Minister has acknowledged that this remains an ambitious timeframe for implementation.
- 2.2 Following the submission deadline for LGR proposals in November 2025, the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) has undertaken a statutory consultation for LGR in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. This process included all five proposals submitted for the county and city, and closed on 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026. This includes the submission endorsed by Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council for four unitary authorities, including a unitary authority on the existing boundaries of the Borough, in the event that LGR proceeds as planned.
- 2.3 Councils have been advised that a decision on the unitary council geographies for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent will be determined before the Parliamentary summer recess, that is by the end of July 2026.
- 2.4 Following this process, MHCLG will commence work on Structural Change Orders for those areas undergoing LGR, with a view to shadow unitary authorities being created by Spring 2027.
- 2.5 The LGR Cabinet Panel will need to meet at a suitable frequency to provide suitable oversight of the LGR process. The Panel will continue until such time as it is deemed its arrangements are no longer required or necessary.

## 3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That the LGR Cabinet Panel reviews and adopts the Terms of Reference set out in Appendix One to this report.

## 4. Reasons

- 4.1 To ensure effective governance of the LGR Cabinet Panel, a Terms of Reference should be adopted.
- 4.2 These terms of reference should be regularly reviewed as the Panel progresses and LGR develops in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

## 5. Options Considered

- 5.1 The effective oversight of the LGR process, at both local and national level can best be supported by the creation of a dedicated Panel, which in turn can make effective recommendations to Cabinet and where appropriate Scrutiny and full Council committees.

## 6. Legal and Statutory Implications

- 6.1 To ensure effective governance of the LGR Cabinet Panel, a Terms of Reference should be adopted.
- 6.2 As the first meeting of the LGR Cabinet Panel is scheduled to take place on 30<sup>th</sup> March which is during the Pre-election period (27<sup>th</sup> March – 7<sup>th</sup> May at 10pm) all members are reminded of the importance of compliance with the applicable rules during this period of increased political conditions, as set out in the link at paragraph 14.2 of this report.

## 7. Equality Impact Assessment

- 7.1 There are no direct equality implications arising from the adoption of terms of reference for the panel.
- 7.2 The potential impacts on equalities are set out in previous Council and Cabinet committee reports, and within the final proposals submitted by the Council to MHCLG.

## 8. Financial and Resource Implications

- 8.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Officer resources will be required to service the LGR Cabinet Panel.
- 8.2 The act of reorganisation brings significant but as yet not fully quantifiable costs. The modelling of the options for investigation sets out forecast financial sustainability arising from revenue generation, transformation benefits and implementation costs. These vary across each option for investigation, but across all options are viewed as more marginal than some comparator area submissions.
- 8.3 As set out in the Local Government Reorganisation report to Cabinet of 8<sup>th</sup> July 2025, the Council has set aside funding for work on reorganisation. For the current financial year, £200,000 has been allocated, with the majority of this funding utilised in the delivery of Newcastle-under-Lyme's LGR proposal. For 2026-2027, £400,000 has been allocated for required work on reorganisation, and £200,000 has been allocated for 2027-2028.

## 9. Major Risks & Mitigation

- 9.1 *Potential risks and mitigation* - Much remains unknown of detail at this stage so mitigation measures cannot yet be fully considered. Potential risks at this stage include staff recruitment and retention, a reduction in service delivery under a larger local authority, a potential 'democratic deficit' as details of local governance arrangements continue to be developed.
- 9.2 *Financial sustainability* – Over recent years, the Council has delivered a balanced budget based on efficiencies across its services and investment in the borough whilst seeking to maintain optimum delivery for residents. It is unknown at what stage in a reorganisation process would restrict spending or borrowing, or whether areas in a much worse financial position would be prioritised over Newcastle.
- 9.3 *Greater spend responsibilities* - A unitary council would have significantly greater spend responsibilities than existing borough and district councils, with

statutory provision taking precedence over non-statutory and discretionary service delivery. |

- 9.4 **Effectiveness of change** – There is a lack of proven success where local government reorganisation has taken place elsewhere in the country to date, and to date the Government has provided limited detail on the business case/benefits of the approach being described in the White Paper. |
- 9.5 **Restructuring and staffing** - The process of local government reorganisation to new councils and the creation of a Strategic Authority would result in changes in employing organisations and structures. TUPE will apply to staff moving between organisations for the same roles as those that they undertake presently. This will be the responsibility of the vesting (new) authority. Following that process, the new authority will conduct an assessment of resource need. |
- 9.6 **Impact across the Borough** - It is likely that implementation of Local Government Reorganisation will have significant impact across the Borough, this initial stage is commencing the development of the outline proposals to be submitted to Government. The Legislation will be subject to an impact assessment. |

**10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**



**11. One Council**

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

**One Commercial Council**

*We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.*

The reorganisation of local government would change the commercial asset holding of councils, for example leisure centres and museums, and decisions would be made on these at a unitary level. |

**One Digital Council**

*We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.*

A new approach to digital delivery will become necessary through LGR, including the mapping of shared service opportunities. |

**One Sustainable Council**

*We will deliver on our commitments to a net zero future and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle*

Newcastle Borough Council has sustainability programme to meet a 2030 target for its scopes 1 and 2 emissions. Other local authorities are at different stages of implementing sustainability approaches. |

**12. Key Decision Information**

12.1 The adoption of terms of reference is not a key decision.

**13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

13.1 Cabinet – Local Government Reorganisation Update Report, 3<sup>rd</sup> February 2026.

**14. List of Appendices**

14.1 Appendix One – Draft Terms of Reference

14.2 Appendix Two – Pre-Election Guidance: [Appendix Two – Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council](#)

**15. Background Papers**

15.1 None

## Appendix One

### Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Panel

#### Terms of Reference (Draft)

##### 1. Purpose

1.1 The Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Panel (“the Panel”) is established to provide focused oversight, scrutiny, and strategic challenge in relation to the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process affecting the Borough.

1.2 The Panel will review, monitor and evaluate progress, risks, stakeholder impacts and statutory requirements associated with LGR.

1.3 The Panel will support Cabinet by providing findings and recommendations.

##### 2. Objectives

2.1 Scrutinise proposals, models and options arising from the LGR programme.

2.2 Examine impacts on residents, communities, staff and partners.

2.3 Monitor timelines, programme milestones, risk registers and regulatory frameworks.

2.4 Ensure transparency by reviewing programme documentation.

2.5 Provide recommendations to Cabinet.

2.6 Identify and escalate concerns requiring Cabinet attention.

##### 3. Membership

3.1 Membership is held on a cross-party basis, and consists of six (6) elected members, in political balance. This is currently three (3) Conservative; two (2) Labour; and one (1) Reform UK.

3.2 The Leader of the Council, as Chair of Cabinet will act as Chair of the Panel; in the absence of the Leader of the Council, the Deputy Leader of the Council will act as Chair.

3.3 Other Members, Members of Parliament, officers, stakeholders and advisers may attend at the invitation of the Chair, but without voting rights.

##### 4. Quorum

4.1 The quorum shall be three Members including the Chair or Vice-Chair.

##### 5. Frequency of Meetings

5.1 The Panel will meet at least quarterly, or more frequently as required.

##### 6. Responsibilities

6.1 The Panel shall develop a work plan, to include:

6.11 A review of programme documentation including business cases and assessments.

6.12 Taking evidence from decision-makers (such as MPs) and stakeholders

6.13 Scrutiny of governance arrangements for any new authority.

6.14 Monitoring of implications for services, workforce, assets and budgets.

6.15 Ensure alignment with statutory duties.

6.16 Ensure effective engagement with partners and stakeholders.

6.17 Providing Cabinet with clear recommendations for decision.

## **7. Reporting and Accountability**

7.1 The Panel reports directly to Cabinet.

7.2 Summary reports and recommendations will be produced.

7.3 Findings may be shared with Scrutiny Committees.

## **8. Access to Information**

8.1 The Panel may request information from officers and partners.

8.2 Sensitive information will be handled in line with the Council's Constitution and governance policies.

## **9. Review of Terms of Reference**

9.1 Terms will be periodically reviewed and may be amended by the Panel or by Cabinet on advice from the Monitoring Officer.

## **10. Meetings in Public**

10.1 There will be a presumption that Panel meetings will be made available to the public, unless otherwise directed by the Chair in agreement with the Panel.

This page is intentionally left blank

Our ref: GM/Cor15/2603a

Your ref:

Date: 26<sup>th</sup> March 2026



LGR Consultation  
Fry Building 2NE  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
SW1P 4DF

Via email only: [lgrconsultationresponse@communities.gov.uk](mailto:lgrconsultationresponse@communities.gov.uk)

Dear Sirs,

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is responding to the proposal for **four unitary authorities for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent**, as submitted by the Council in November 2025, following cross-party agreement at its full Council meeting of 19<sup>th</sup> November 2025. For the avoidance of doubt, the Council does not support the alternative proposals for Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent currently being consulted upon.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council is located in the county of Staffordshire, with the upper tier authority being Staffordshire County Council. The Borough was established by royal charter in 1173, and celebrated its 850<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2023.

As set out in its Interim Plan of March 2025, and submission in November 2025, the Council's Administration has made clear its strong objection to the principle of Local Government Reorganisation in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent, and that the safeguarding of local decision-making, civic traditions and accountability best lies at the existing district and borough level. It has, however, worked productively to develop a submission that, should LGR proceed, will provide a balanced, credible delivery mechanism for communities, close to local need, whilst recognising both the long history of boundaries and geographies in our region, and the wishes of other authorities around new unitary areas.

*1. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal suggests councils that are based on sensible geographies and economic areas?*

Strongly agree. The creation of four unitary authorities reflects the geography of each of the four proposed authorities, recognising that Staffordshire borders with its expansive geography, some of our communities naturally look to other places – from Mow Cop with its spilt conurbation between Newcastle and Cheshire East, to Madeley at the border with rural

Shropshire and the Westlands bordering Stafford, with Wolstanton and May Bank bordering our neighbours in Stoke-on-Trent, our well-connected place can and should look to have a cohesion with not one geography but exploit and maximise each and every one of its economic links.

*2. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will be able to deliver the outcomes they describe in the proposal?*

Strongly agree. The proposal sets out a credible and achievable vision for improved service delivery. Newcastle-under-Lyme's strong financial management, advanced Local Plan, and proven track record in delivering high-quality services provide a solid foundation for transition to unitary status. The model supports more responsive, locally focused decision-making.

*3. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils are the right size to be efficient, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks?*

Strongly agree. The proposed unitary councils are of a scale that balances efficiency with local accountability. They are large enough to achieve economies of scale yet small enough to remain connected to their communities. Financial modelling indicates that each unitary would be sustainable and resilient, avoiding the risks associated with creating overly large or financially unstable authorities. The proposal highlights opportunities for increased economies of scale for shared service functions where these make sense, such as IT, data, support functions and procurement, whilst providing individual accountability.

Whilst we firmly support the principle that areas with the greatest need and significant challenges need a funding formula which works in their interests, and that this must be reflected in settlements in the future, this should not in our firm opinion be viewed through the lens of 'one area pays for another'. Residents rightly expect that their funding of local government through council tax, non-domestic rates for the companies they run and work for and through general taxation can clearly be linked to quality service provision at a local level.

In our consideration of options, we are mindful that residents should not be asked to unreasonably contribute to delivery which is distant and disjointed from their localities. If a unitary model is to be imposed, it must be on the basis of a geography which balances advantaged and disadvantaged areas and continues to deliver the very highest possible level of services, locally. This is separate to the equally important goal of using the levers of power, individually and collectively as authorities, to increase wealth creation and retention across our region.

4. *To what extent do you agree or disagree that this proposal will put local government in the area as a whole on a firmer footing, particularly given that some councils in the area are in receipt of exceptional financial support?*

Agree. There remains a risk that areas such as Newcastle would become a lesser priority in a larger unitary council which incorporates Stoke-on-Trent, given the financial pressures on the City Council. The proposal avoids the significant financial risks associated with merging stable councils with those currently reliant on exceptional financial support. By allowing Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Moorlands to merge while enabling other areas to form financially sound unitaries, the model strengthens the overall system without compromising the stability of well-managed authorities.

However, it should be noted that one of the key asks of Government within the proposal, that if LGR proceeds it should be fully funded by Government, reflects that LGR will bring significant, and not yet fully known, costs for local government for many years to come. This will necessarily impact on new authorities' financial health and spending power across several MTFS cycles.

5. *To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposed councils will deliver high quality, sustainable public services?*

Agree. The model supports sustainable service delivery through a combination of local responsiveness and opportunities for shared services where appropriate. Newcastle-under-Lyme's existing strengths in planning, regeneration, culture, waste management and neighbourhood delivery would be preserved and enhanced within a unitary structure. In the establishment of new council structures, we must therefore ensure that we are not reductive – that is, taking existing structures delivered at appropriate scales and fitting them into new structures which may be less effective in obtaining outcomes for our residents, or creating in-built inefficiency. We support the goal set out in the White Paper to identify opportunities to deliver public service reform, including where they will lead to better value for money.

With this goal, we believe that – as we currently work – shared services where they make sense above individual unitary councils should be explored for joining up areas including smart systems and processes to maximise efficiency. This is separate to the manageable geography of a council area, but must be built into future service design.

6. *To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal has been informed by local views and will meet local needs?*

Strongly agree. The proposal reflects extensive engagement with local communities. Residents in Newcastle-under-Lyme have consistently expressed concerns about being subsumed into a

larger North Staffordshire authority. The four-unitary model respects these views and ensures that local needs remain central to governance arrangements. The proposal sets out a clear ambition and vision for the highest quality service delivery to residents, visitors and businesses.

*7. To what extent do you agree or disagree that establishing the councils in this proposal will support devolution arrangements?*

Strongly agree. The proposed structure is explicitly designed to support meaningful devolution within a Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Strategic Authority. Smaller, focused unitaries will be better positioned to contribute effectively to regional strategies in transport, skills, and economic development, ensuring that devolution delivers meaningful benefits, building on a strong foundation of partnership working with universities, colleges, public sector anchor institutions and businesses.

*8. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal enables stronger community engagement and gives the opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment?*

By maintaining strong local identities and ensuring governance remains close to residents, the proposal enhances democratic accountability. The model avoids creating distant, centralised authorities and instead supports meaningful engagement through councils that understand their communities' priorities. If LGR is to proceed, the establishment of genuine local democracy through the establishment and enhancement of town and parish councils will be required to enable local delivery and maintain the heritage and civic traditions of our towns, villages and rural places. These should be carefully considered to ensure that such councils:

- Avoid artificial structures to fill gaps where these are not responsive to locally identified geographies;
- Ensure that parish and town councils have the powers and capacity they need to be self-sustaining and not be dependent upon higher tier authorities for funding for service delivery;
- Do not place undue burdens on residents through precepts which have to fill gaps in provision left by the abolition of district and borough councils.

*9. If you would like to, please use the free text box to explain the answers you have provided to questions 1-8 referring to the question numbers as part of your answer.*

*You may also use the box to provide any other comments you have on the proposal.*

This four-unitary proposal is pragmatic, evidence-based, and sensitive to local identity. It provides a balanced approach that supports financial sustainability, democratic accountability, and effective devolution. Crucially, it protects Newcastle-under-Lyme from being drawn into a financially unstable North Staffordshire model while still contributing to a coherent and functional regional governance structure. Whilst it is recognised that no decisions on areas already

determined by the Secretary of State set a precedent, the proposal for four unitary councils in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent aligns well with areas such as Suffolk and Norfolk, where smaller unitary authorities demonstrate a close link to local geography and community.

*10. This is a proposal that is accompanied by a request that the Secretary of State considers a boundary changes or that affects wider public services. To what extent do you agree or disagree that the proposal sets out a strong public services and financial sustainability justification for boundary change?*

The proposed four-unitary model does not require boundary changes and makes no consequent changes to delivery public and voluntary services which are co-terminus with existing boundaries (such as Staffordshire Police, Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Service and Support Staffordshire). Other anchor institutions, such as universities and colleges, will continue to be supported by their local authorities. We will work with the expanded ICB infrastructure and any changes to Policing to ensure that the strong partnerships in place, particularly through the Newcastle Partnership Board, are maintained.

If you have any questions in respect of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Gordon Mole MIED

**Chief Executive**

**Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council**

**Contacting the Council:** Telephone 01782 717717  
E-mail [customerservices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk) • [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)





Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council Cabinet  
Panel for Local Government Reorganisation

30 March 2026

**Submission from Adam Jogee MP, Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme**

A member of my family had surgery earlier this month, and as Parliament is now in recess for the Holy days of Easter; it's my turn to help with the associated caring responsibilities. As such, it is a matter of regret that I am not able to attend the panel tonight in person.

I am sorry that I wasn't consulted by the District Borough Council about the date of the panel because if I had, I would have been able to make alternative suggestions that would have facilitated my full and active participation. That decision, I'm afraid, lies with others.

Throughout this process, I've made clear to Ministers – including on the floor of the House – that I have concerns both about how this process has been conducted and what it is trying to achieve.

The decision-making process is shaped by the party-political considerations of those leading it in each local authority and therefore considerations are set to the agenda of those people and not with the interests of the community in mind.

That doesn't take away from the fact that the current situation doesn't serve the best interests of my constituents. From the gritting of our roads to the cleaning of the verges along the A500 and from sorting ASB on the A34 into estates in Waterhayes to making our streets safe and secure, it's a constant back and forth and local people pay the price.

I have heard from many local people in Newcastle-under-Lyme who have written to me and shared their views on the current democratic structures that serve us, and the options for change, over the last 12 months or so. I've also encouraged people to feed their thoughts through an online survey on my website.

My approach throughout this process has been, as I told the current Leader of the District Borough Council in September 2025 and again in November 2025, focused on ensuring that the people of Newcastle-under-Lyme have a strong and distinct voice in shaping our future and seizing the opportunities before us, as we learn the lessons of the past.

This community has a unique identity, deep-rooted communities, and a local economy with real potential to grow and develop not least because of where we are located within our United Kingdom. It is vital that decisions about our area are shaped by local people, by those who understand our priorities and share our commitment to fairness, inclusion, and opportunity for all. Local government reorganisation, and any final proposals that may or may not be taken forward, must be about improving accountability, strengthening local democracy and real delivery of the services that local people deserve.

**Constituency Office:**

3 Queens Parade, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 1RW / 01782 653057 / adam.jogee.mp@parliament.uk

Website: [www.adamjogee.com](http://www.adamjogee.com)



**Adam Jogee MP**

Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

My default view is to support a stand-alone Unitary Authority for Newcastle-under-Lyme, it's what my Labour colleagues on the Council called for at a special meeting of Newcastle-under-Lyme District Borough Council in March 2025, and it's what I indicated in my letter of November 2025. I just want the proposals to be realistic, robust and effective.

I would strongly urge, whatever course of action is followed, that the new unitary Council boundaries that cover Newcastle-under-Lyme are headquartered in Newcastle-under-Lyme, whatever the situation. This applies to a stand-alone authority or any other option before us and would help challenge some of the narrative 'articulated' by some political leaders who should know better that this is about 'taking power away from people'. Taking the power away from County Hall in Stafford and bringing it up the A34 is to be welcomed.

I am very concerned by the inadequate and, frankly, incompetent way in which the proposals for such an option have been 'developed' by the current leadership of the District Borough Council. At no stage has the discussion on the future of local government ever been about 'how do we get the best deal for local people?' How do we fix our broken transport network? How can we make sure that we engage with the process properly and maturely; How do we attach the investment?

My concerns were exacerbated by a senior member of the Conservative Party in Staffordshire telling me that the proposals from Newcastle-under-Lyme District Borough Council were and I quote:

*"a political thing. Not serious"*

I hope that's not true because it would be a failure of political leadership and would be taking people for fools.

In September 2025, I asked for a briefing from the District Borough Council about the work that had gone into shaping the District Borough Council's position and proposals, as well as the discussions they had had with neighbouring authorities and strategic partners.

This request was made after a number of residents expressed their concern at the failures of proper and inclusive leadership from the District Borough Council over local government reorganisation and the very confusing and – at times overtly partisan – messaging.

Several long weeks after that request, I joined a call with my two parliamentary neighbours, the Member of Parliament for Stafford and the Member of Parliament for Stoke-on-Trent North and the Leader and Chief Executive of Newcastle-under-Lyme District Borough Council. They presented their proposals, which I believe at the time, cost the taxpayer about £200,000 or so to put together.

Getting this right is important. Let's take Walleys Quarry landfill site – a disgraceful example of profit over people that was allowed to happen for years under a Conservative Party-led District Borough Council, a Conservative Party-led Staffordshire County Council and a Conservative Government in Westminster.

**Constituency Office:**

3 Queens Parade, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 1RW / 01782 653057 / adam.jogee.mp@parliament.uk



My constituents were left suffering with those in power seemingly paralysed by inaction and passing of the buck at every stage. There were more photo opportunities and press releases than many people have had hot dinners. Thankfully after the last General Election things got better and we got the site closed down and chased the operators out of town. A single unitary would have forced those elected to it to do their job properly and not get away with the *'It wasn't my responsibility, it was theirs'* narrative.

Let's take the current structures now and what that means for service delivery for local people. As a Member of Parliament, most of my inbox and casework is related to housing and the local housing provider – Aspire – or it's the work of the District Borough Council and Staffordshire County Council. When I have tried to raise issues in Waterhayes about ASB and how paths down from the A34 could be redesigned to design the ASB out, I get told by the District that they own a third of the path and so it's not their responsibility and so I go to the County and they say they own two thirds of the path and so it's not their responsibility.

It's a nightmare and means those elected to serve as Councillors are more often than not missing in action and its local people who pay the price.

For a moment, let's park my view that a Newcastle only model should be the preference, I was very concerned to listen to the hollow and unimaginative explanations from the Chief Executive and Council Leader in the briefing that took place with my two parliamentary colleagues and me. I asked about how we would make sure older people get the support that they need through our adult social care commitments and what would a single unitary would mean for supporting children with additional needs, as just two examples.

I was told that it would be a case of 'buying in' those services from the neighbouring unitary authorities and thus totally undermining the points about 'local democracy' that has featured in virtually press release or partisan attack on social media.

If we want to make a Newcastle-under-Lyme unitary work, we need to get our act together and put together proposals that are bi-partisan, objective, realistic and honest.

I should like to make a few comments on the proposals as submitted by each of the local authorities in the area and note that most aim to replace the current two-tier system with larger, more effective, unitary authorities with an approximate population of 500,000 or so people.

As with all things in life, each model has its strengths and weaknesses.

#### **Two-unitary "North / South" model**

This model could be viewed as offering the most clarity and clearest geographical balance. It would replace 10 councils with 2, reducing both duplication and governance layers. In my community, rightly, there would be a very strong feeling of concern about any potential dominance by the City of Stoke-on-Trent in a 'North/South' approach and raise some legitimate concerns from some residents about the loss of our local identity.

#### **Constituency Office:**

3 Queens Parade, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 1RW / 01782 653057 / adam.jogee.mp@parliament.uk

Website: [www.adamjogee.com](http://www.adamjogee.com)



A number of people have been in touch with me about their concerns with what happens to local authorities who bring years of debts and accounts in the red to any possible new structures. It's a very fair point and must be addressed by my colleagues in Government at the earliest opportunity and in the strongest terms. If this option was considered, my constituents should not be paying someone else's bill.

There are opportunities, including the integration of health, housing, and social care services as well as real potential for cost savings and a more streamlined approach to service delivery. This model may provide a platform for a future mayoral combined authority should this have support from the people of North Staffordshire.

I am mindful that there is public resistance to "mega councils" and what can be best described as centralisation.

#### **Four-unitary / single-district options**

This option provides for maximum local control and the preservation of local identities. That is important because with this model there remains strong democratic accountability at a local level and would prove to be a pilot for hyper-local governance models. I have always said – all politics is local.

However, we must be mindful of the risks advancing this cause in the current process, it doesn't meet the approximately 500k population and it could be argued that there is limited financial resilience and service capacity. These issues could be ironed out, but I have serious concerns that the current leadership at the District Borough Council just hasn't done the work or the engagement required.

#### **Two-unitary "East / West" model**

It could be argued that this model balances urban and rural areas differently, potentially reduces the domination of any local authority over another and builds on existing county-wide service integration. However, I consider this to have major issues around transport connectivity and community cohesion.

There is also a risk of artificial boundaries reducing any potential improvements in service delivery and, again, leading to more public confusion over what would be an unfamiliar – uncharted – structure.

#### **"Enhanced North" (parish-splitting) model**

We could argue that this proposal meets the population thresholds more accurately whilst reducing any concerns that the City of Stoke-on-Trent would dominate the future of local government in our area.

However, on balance, this would lead to highly complex boundaries, it would be administratively difficult when it comes to reorganising services across many different communities.

#### **Constituency Office:**

3 Queens Parade, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 1RW / 01782 653057 / adam.jogee.mp@parliament.uk



**Adam Jogee MP**

Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

It would likely lead to public confusion over who, how and what when it comes to the delivery of services nor would it address the concerns about identity. I am also concerned about the legal and operational impacts of splitting communities.

### **Three-unitary model**

There is a valid argument that this offers better local representation than 2-unitary models and reflects distinct southern sub-regions (SW vs SE Staffordshire) whilst still achieving the efficiency gains that have been set out compared to the current system. It may also provide for more a more tailored approach to economic development.

On a reflection point, I regret that the model of developing a local government structure that is more effective and more responsive to the needs of local people has been done this way. In our case, here in Newcastle-under-Lyme, there has been little effort to engage in a serious, respectful conversation about the future and how we ensure that our people get the services and representation that they deserve.

As I have set out to my colleagues, I support a Newcastle-under-Lyme first approach and stand ready to engage with anyone who wants to make it actually work.

Best wishes,

**Adam Jogee MP**

**Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme**

### **Constituency Office:**

3 Queens Parade, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 1RW / 01782 653057 / [adam.jogee.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:adam.jogee.mp@parliament.uk)

Website: [www.adamjogee.com](http://www.adamjogee.com)





**Adam Jogee MP**  
Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Cllr Simon Tagg, Leader of the Council

[sent via email]

4 November 2025

Dear Leader,

**Re: Support for a Stand-Alone Unitary Authority for Newcastle-under-Lyme**  
**Ref: AJ05253**

Re: Support for a Stand-Alone Unitary Authority for Newcastle-under-Lyme

Thank you for your letter regarding the ongoing discussions about local government reorganisation in our county of Staffordshire.

Let me be clear with you, because I'm not sure the message has been heard - my approach remains focused on ensuring that the people of Newcastle-under-Lyme have a strong and distinct voice in shaping our future and seizing the opportunities before us, as we learn the lessons of the past.

My view is that Newcastle-under-Lyme has every reason to consider every single option. This community has a unique identity, deep-rooted communities, and a growing local economy. It is vital that decisions about our area are shaped by local people, by those who understand our priorities and share our commitment to fairness, inclusion, and opportunity for all.

Local government reorganisation must be about improving accountability and strengthening local democracy. As a county councillor, working down at County Hall in Stafford, you'll appreciate the importance of that more than most.

It would be helpful to me, and to all those constituents of mine who have been in touch with me, if you could respond to my letter of the 2nd September 2025. In that letter, I asked for a briefing from you on what work had been done to date on forming the District Borough Council's position and proposals, as well as the discussions you have had with neighbouring authorities and strategic partners.

This request was made after a number of residents expressed their concern at the failures of proper and inclusive leadership from the District Borough Council over local government reorganisation and the very confusing messaging.

I would be grateful if you could respond as a matter of urgency since you seemingly prefer to engage with me in writing. You've seen me in person on a number of occasions in recent months, including outside my home, and made no effort to engage in a serious, respectful conversation about the future and how we ensure that my constituents get the services and representation that they deserve.

Further to this, I do note that Labour councillors at the District Borough Council tabled an amendment to proceedings that proposed a single Newcastle Unitary Authority at a special meeting of Full Council on 19th March 2025. The minutes of that meeting suggest that you and the Conservative Group of Councillors voted against this proposal and instead voted to

**Constituency Office:**

3 Queens Parade, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 1RW / 01782 653057 / adam.jogee.mp@parliament.uk  
Website: [www.adamjogee.com](http://www.adamjogee.com)



**Adam Jogee MP**  
Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme  
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

explore talks in 'merging' Newcastle-under-Lyme with Shropshire or West Staffordshire.

It is a proposal that merits serious consideration, and I welcome your belated support for the proposals from my Labour colleagues on the District Borough Council.

It would be helpful if you could find time to meet with me and my Hon. Friends, the Member of Parliament for Stafford and the Member of Parliament for Stoke-on-Trent North as a matter of urgency. You'll know that all three of us represent council wards in Newcastle-under-Lyme.

I will continue to raise this issue in Parliament with Ministers and relevant stakeholders to ensure Newcastle-under-Lyme's interests are properly represented at every stage of the process.

Can you please ask your office to send through dates for a meeting with my colleagues and I to take place as a matter of urgency?

I am writing on behalf of my constituent, Cllr Simon Tagg, Leader, Newcastle-under-Lyme District Borough Council, Castle House, Barracks Road, Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, ST5 1BL who recently contacted me regarding

Sincerely,

**Adam Jogee MP**  
**Member of Parliament for Newcastle-under-Lyme**

**Constituency Office:**

3 Queens Parade, Newcastle-under-Lyme, ST5 1RW / 01782 653057 / adam.jogee.mp@parliament.uk  
Website: www.adamjogee.com

Councillor Simon Tagg, Leader



Our ref:

Your ref: AJ05253

Date: 7 November 2025

Adam Jogee MP

By e-mail only: [adam.jogee.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:adam.jogee.mp@parliament.uk)

Castle House  
Barracks Road  
Newcastle-under-Lyme  
Staffordshire  
ST5 1BL

Dear Adam

### **Local Government Reorganisation: A Unitary Council for Newcastle-under-Lyme**

Thank you for your correspondence of 4th November 2025, in response to my letter of 22nd October 2025, which set out our work to date on Forced Local Government Reorganisation (FLGR) and the intention of the Council to submit a proposal for a single unitary council for Newcastle-under-Lyme.

I am not sure whether you had intended for your correspondence to have been received prior to the consideration of our Cabinet report on Tuesday as it was sent after I had commenced proceedings for that meeting. I note that a further letter, with amendments, was issued later on Tuesday afternoon.

Turning to the substance of your points, I welcome your request for a meeting regarding the Council's plans. I am happy to meet with you, as I have consistently sought your support for preserving the Borough since January, and again in March, May, and July. In the meantime, I have met with Leigh Ingham MP and David Williams MP who cover part of the Borough to discuss our desire to retain the current two-tier system, as well as our ongoing options appraisal and proposals. While their views may differ due to constituency boundaries, I appreciated the opportunity to share our approach.

In your letter of 2nd September 2025, you advised that your office would contact my secretary for a date to meet. We cannot find any record of this approach but remain happy to meet at this stage. You have further noted that I passed over an opportunity to discuss the matter with you when I was leafleting in Basford, as I have done regularly since 2003 in this area, and saw you getting into your car.

I am very mindful that all politicians have a right to a private life and it would not have been appropriate to 'doorstep' you in that situation, particularly after you had raised concerns about myself and other councillors having visited your town centre advertised office to deliver a letter about FLGR in an act you described as 'intimidation', and for which we had given prior notice.

As you will have seen in the Cabinet report, we have set out the extensive work undertaken and engagement with strategic partners and key stakeholders.

On the matter of support for our proposals, I am pleased that you share my approach to have looked at a range of potential options, when you noted that you are of the view that "*Newcastle-under-Lyme has every reason to consider every single option*".

---

Contacting the Council: Telephone 01782 717717  
E-mail [customerservices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](mailto:customerservices@newcastle-staffs.gov.uk) \* [www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk)

The investigation of a single unitary for Newcastle was one of a number of options for investigation which our full Council supported looking into in March, with feedback from MHCLG provided in June. We have continued to work with our appointed consultants on analysing and shaping an appropriate preferred model. I am of the strong view that to have only considered one option would not have been a prudent approach given the variables in your government's guidance, which has continued to shift and change since the submission of interim plans.

You make reference to the amendment by your Labour colleagues which was little more than game playing, but the minutes of the Council Meeting, the reports on the agenda and public statement on the council's website prior to the meeting show that I put forward the proposal to investigate a Newcastle Unitary.

However, I am unclear whether you now support the specific proposal for a single unitary authority based on the existing Borough boundaries. This proposal reflects the wishes of Newcastle's residents and has cross-party support locally. Over 9,000 residents have signed our petition opposing a merger with Stoke-on-Trent, as proposed by your Labour colleagues in Stoke. In light of your comments, **it would be extremely helpful if you could provide a letter of support for this proposal.**

As FLGR progresses following our submission at the end of November, I expect that Ministers and civil servants may contact you to discuss Newcastle-under-Lyme's proposal. This will be an ideal opportunity for you to stand up for our Borough and make clear that a merger with Stoke-on-Trent is not acceptable.

To conclude, I remain firmly of the belief that Forced Local Government Reorganisation offers no discernible benefit to the people of Newcastle-under-Lyme. I urge you to join me in campaigning for the preservation of our well-run and effective historic Borough Council.

**Once again, I ask if your office can please contact my secretary to arrange a meeting on this important subject.**

Yours sincerely

Councillor Simon Tagg  
Leader