

Councillor Jonathan Gullis

Our ref:

Your ref:

Date: 21st May 2026



The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and
Local Government

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

By e-mail only: steve.reed.mp@parliament.uk

Dear Secretary of State,

RE: Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council's Position on Local Government Reorganisation

As the newly appointed Leader of Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council, I am writing to make clear this authority's serious objection to the Government's plans for Local Government Reorganisation affecting Staffordshire. I urge you to cancel the process with immediate effect.

Frankly, the position is becoming farcical.

At the very moment local authorities are being asked to spend time, money and officer capacity preparing for the most significant structural upheaval in a generation, the Government is teetering on the edge of collapse. The Labour Party is engulfed in a self-inflicted Westminster psychodrama and, in effect, a de facto leadership challenge to the Prime Minister. In those circumstances, it is simply not credible to expect councils, residents or businesses in Newcastle-under-Lyme to believe that decisions of this scale can be made with any seriousness, certainty or confidence that they will actually be delivered.

Local Government Reorganisation requires political stability, ministerial grip, clear direction and sustained commitment over a number of years. At present, none of those things exists.

The reality is obvious. When the Prime Minister departs office, the country will face months more delay while the Labour Party turns inward yet again to decide who its successor should be. Only after that will local authorities be expected to wait and see whether a new Prime Minister, a new Secretary of State, or a reshuffled ministerial team still supports the same policy, timetable, and model of reorganisation. There is no basis on which to determine the future of local government in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire or anywhere else.

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council should be focused on serving residents, strengthening our communities, supporting economic growth, improving local services and planning responsibly for the borough's long-term future. Instead, we are being asked to spend taxpayer money and officer time on a reorganisation process. This process now looks increasingly unlikely ever to happen.

There is a better and more sensible route. Rather than pursuing disruptive structural upheaval, the Government should focus on devolving more funding, powers and opportunities for local decision-making in Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent. We believe the right way forward is to move without delay to a Mayoral Strategic Authority for our area, enabling stronger collaboration while preserving meaningful local accountability.

Our region has established Mayors to the north in Greater Manchester, to the east in the East Midlands and the south in the West Midlands, with a Mayor of Cheshire and Warrington coming soon. It is vital that a Mayor of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent has both an immediate place at the table and that all Mayors

have an absolute parity of esteem, as all will be passionate advocates for their places. We should be at no disadvantage in being a new entrant to the Mayoral system.

I have been elected to provide good, stable and responsible governance for Newcastle-under-Lyme. I am therefore asking for common sense. Local Government Reorganisation affecting Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire should be cancelled with immediate effect. This would allow Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council to plan properly for our longer-term future. We could focus resources where they are needed, and act in the interests of residents rather than wasting public money preparing for a policy that is increasingly unlikely to be delivered.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jonathan Gullis', written in a cursive style.

Cllr Jonathan Gullis
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