



STAFFORDSHIRE  
**POLICE**

## Barton Parish Council Report

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### Serious Acquisitive Crime

#### Reports of jobs for the Barton area between 01/08/2025 - 31/08/2025

**Blackmail** = 1 report

**Harassment** = 2 reports

The Harassment incidents relate to 1 reply from our Smart Alert about a male approaching women in the village, and 1 report related to ongoing issues between two parties.

### Anti – Social Behaviour

Reports from the 01/08/2025 - 31/08/2025 for **ASB** 2 reports.

The ASB reports relate to 1 report of damage to fences caused by youths, and 1 report of involving neighbours.

## Transport Related

### Reports of jobs for the Barton area between 01/08/2025 - 31/08/2025

***Transport Related*** = 2 reports

The transport related incidents relate to 1 report of a vehicle with a flat tyre, and 1 report a vehicle revving its engine around the village.

## Local Policing Team

PCSO Tim Leathers – [timothy.leathers@staffordshire.police.uk](mailto:timothy.leathers@staffordshire.police.uk)

PCSO Dominka Siwek - [dominika.siwek@staffordshire.police.uk](mailto:dominika.siwek@staffordshire.police.uk)

## SMART ALERT

BE SMART AND KEEP UPDATED – GET FREE, LOCALISED CRIME ALERTS AND COMMUNITY SAFETY ADVICE BY UTILISING THE STAFFORDSHIRE SMART ALERT APP. THIS IS AVAILABLE FREE AND IS AVAILABLE FOR BOTH APPLE AND ANDROID DEVICES. YOU CAN ALSO GET EMAIL ALERTS THROUGH THE FOLLOWING WEBSITE;

[WWW.STAFFORDSHIRESMARTALERT.UK/STAFFS//](http://WWW.STAFFORDSHIRESMARTALERT.UK/STAFFS//)

**August 2025 report**  
**for Cllr Catherine Brown Needwood Forest Division**

**For Parish Councils and Borough Councillors.**

The Community Fund is top of my to-do list. I would be grateful if you would assist in any way possible promoting charities and organisations to come forward to apply. It can be anything from new football kit, the purchase of a defibrillator, mental health/social media workbooks (a charity working with Rangemore School), sports equipment, camping equipment or the purchase of trees (Aviation Lane)

Please continue to let me have your agendas and meeting dates. I hope to attend Newborough PC on Monday 1/9/25, Yoxall and Dunstall PC meetings too this month.

Highways: The current SCC administration have put a 3 month hold on non-emergency repairs to the roads and lanes. This time of year, is usually very suitable for maintenance work as it's better weather than in winter and during summer holidays- so the roads are quieter. I am unsure what impact that this will have on our requested maintenance. Please let me know if there are issues that need resolving and don't appear to be actioned.

Meetings attended:

1. Barton PC War Memorial Bollards. Highways to replace 3 bollards.
2. S106 money for speed reduction, Tatenhill & Rangemore PC. Plan on-going.
3. Aviation Lane play area. I have offered Community Fund money for 3 trees. Awaiting the Branston Town Councils response.
4. Newbold Quarry visit and training with SCC Planning Committee.
5. SCC Civic visit to Cannock Chase Commonwealth and German War Cemeteries resp. including the Bremin/Staffordshire youth event presentations at County Buildings. More to follow.
6. PSCOs Barton & Abbots Bromley briefly. Discussed speeding and anti-social parking. Discussed SLOW signs for Rangemore School.

**Divisional Forum:**

I have had no replies to the offer of a meeting. I plan to continue to attend PC meetings. This will be reviewed in the New Year.

**Parish updates**

**Dunstall:**

1. Resident is concerned about the Home Farm planning application-on going.
2. Yellow lines, Lichfield Road. On-going.
3. A38 near Lichfield Road, Barton. The very late evening road sweeper noise and dust issue. Enquiries are continuing but probably due to a contractor for Highways England.

**Barton:**

1. SCC Planning Committee visit to Newbold Quarry as part of the training.
2. Informal reconnaissance visits to Walton Bridge/by-pass, Newbold and Barton Quarries with Cllr George.
3. Short Lane. Multiple potholes. On-going. (Cllr Jones)
4. Visited the immensely successful Barton Teddy Bear Festival. Met the volunteers from the library and had a quick catch-up for the second time this month with Cllr Jones.
5. War Memorial area, 3 bollards to be replaced by highways.
6. Extra 'informal' signs discussed with highways & PC chair.
7. Highways manager suggested that any new build S106 money designation for highways must not be ignored when trying to defend the planning applications.
8. Main Street 30min parking bays to remain. After extensive enquires, and to the disappointment of the resident, no further action.
9. Providence Planning Application discussed and reviewed. Still on-going.
10. Barr Green Action Group (BGAG)- culvert/drainage resolution/new grit bin. Await info regarding future issues after heavy rain. On-going.
11. Efflinch Road flooding. Landowner had been contacted regarding ditch emptying in the autumn after bird nesting. On-going.
12. Captain's Lane traffic. Highways to do the speed and volume survey-September.

**Tatenhill & Rangemore:**

1. S106 traffic calming. Meeting 4/8/25. I have received email from concerned resident.

2. Manor Farm, Main Street, Tatenhill flooding. Action required but not booked yet. Road will need to be closed.
3. Highways meeting outside Rangemore School to discuss speed and traffic. Repainting zig-zag outside school, looking at 'SLOW' buddy signs & review of signs at Byrkley junction. A lot of money has been spent on the area following S106 building money.
4. Rangemore Mews awaiting road maintenance so that the mews can update driveway. On-going.

#### **Hoar Cross:**

1. Applying for CF for Defib. On-going.
2. Request to Highways to remove posts and signs from Thorney Lanes. Removal to be instigated.
3. Footpath from HXH entrance to Church. Autumn. On-going.

#### **Yoxall:**

1. Children's home planning application causing significant highways concerns. SCC Development Control contacted. Borough Councillors have been working to resolve residents issues with my support.
2. Potential Lightwood Road housing development discussed at length. On-going awareness.

#### **Abbots Bromley:**

1. Rugeley Turn B5013/4. New signage- poorly placed and one damaged. Ongoing.
2. B5013. Speeding cars/bikes/noise. On-going  
As reported last month, I have organised a B5013 Steering Group meeting in September with David Evans Deputy Police & Crime Commissioner; Cllr Janet Higgins and Cllr Gary Hale's for the neighbouring divisions. 2 highways teams; Colton PC, Blithfield PC & Abbots Bromley PC. This was organised before the very sad death of a pedestrian in August. Data evidence is no longer required as it is proven to be a major issue/s that needs to be resolved I am told. I am therefore extremely hopeful for meaningful action.
3. Highfields Abbots Bromley footpath. I have contacted senior planning officer twice. I have suggested a meeting if not imminently resolved. The same for Friels/ABS development.
4. The Crown. ABPC successfully obtained a summer road closure licence for outdoor seating. Following a huge amount of work to obtain this license to benefit the whole village, The Crown decided not to pursue it. Thank you to ABPC for your support.
5. Footpath over Mires Brook near Cricket pitch needs attention. Reported.

6. Ashbrook Lane/Burton Road after 30mph. Damaged curbs at the narrowest part. On-going.
7. Goose Lane/Seedcroft Lane. One huge pothole had been filled in finally. A number of other road defects are currently not bad enough for any intervention.
8. SID sign designation. Awaiting the authorised site. Delayed by highways.

#### **Newborough:**

1. The bollard at Abbots Bromley end traffic calming has been urgently reviewed. On-going. Trees cut back. Too dark an area. Bollard replacement.
2. Thorney Lanes maintenance work on-going but there is a road hump causing structural damage to a house. I am meeting this week with residents and highways.
3. Attending PC meeting 1/9/25.

#### **Wychnor meeting:**

No correspondence.

#### **Branston: Henhurst Hill/Shobnall Road/Rough Close**

1. B5017 Wt restriction formal consultation- on-going.
2. Aviation Lane play area. Offered to purchase 3 trees as part of the Community Fund. Awaiting a response from Town Council.

As always, please get in touch if there is anything not mentioned.

**Barton under Needwood Parish Council - Receipts and Payments Monthly Summary**

2025-26

Receipts	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Total	Budget	Budget Balance
Rents	1,220.00	140.00	110.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,470.00		
Interest	20.48	23.87	25.10	23.38	21.23	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	114.06		
ESBC	41,146.13	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	41,146.13		
LA Other	932.50	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	932.50		
Burial Ground	2,235.00	185.00	3,060.00	1,950.00	480.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	7,910.00	16,000	-8,090
Fishpond	409.00	260.00	130.00	228.00	316.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,343.00	2,500	-1,157
VAT	0.00	0.00	11,143.16	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	11,143.16		
Car Park	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
Other	116.80	0.00	92.18	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	208.98		
Grants/donations	50.00	8,322.08	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	8,372.08		
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>46,129.91</b>	<b>8,930.95</b>	<b>14,560.44</b>	<b>2,201.38</b>	<b>817.23</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>72,639.91</b>		

Payments	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	Total	Budget	Budget Balance
Bank Charges	8.50	34.25	0.00	18.88	18.75	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	80.38		
Salaries	3,682.12	3,806.67	3,464.72	3,806.67	3,807.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	18,567.56		
Lengthsmen	195.40	259.38	195.40	244.46	195.40	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,090.04		
HMRC	0.00	967.25	1,556.57	1,294.44	2,345.34	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,163.60		
Nest Pensions	183.28	0.00	183.28	183.28	183.28	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	733.12		
Admin	1,660.47	1,976.74	1,504.08	854.10	107.99	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	6,103.38		
Donations	0.00	157.50	25.00	40.00	130.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	352.50		
Parks	13,370.37	405.97	2,398.45	1,479.79	1,207.85	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	18,862.43	24,213.00	5,350.57
Burial Ground	20.00	0.00	0.00	366.66	149.65	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	536.31	5,000.00	4,463.69
Allotments	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95.77	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	95.77	2,152.00	2,056.23
Fishpond	425.24	0.00	297.28	394.34	127.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	1,243.86	2,500.00	1,256.14
Capital Exp	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
Maintenance	0.00	32.21	69.21	60.84	82.42	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	244.68		
Car Park	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00		
General payments	360.00	2,690.08	0.00	19.30	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	3,069.38		
Projects	0.00	4,958.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	4,958.00		
PEC	179.99	100.00	0.00	567.38	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	847.37	3,500.00	2,652.63
VAT	2,860.26	1,011.07	509.35	436.07	252.99	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5,069.74		
<b>Total Spend</b>	<b>22,945.63</b>	<b>16,399.12</b>	<b>10,203.34</b>	<b>9,766.21</b>	<b>8,703.82</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>68,018.12</b>		

**Barton under Needwood Parish Council****Bank Reconciliation as per statements at:**

31-Aug-25

Lloyds Business Account	£	2,000.00
Lloyds Commercial Instant Access Saver	£	23,356.70
Unity Trust Bank Instant Access Saver	£	81,156.32
National Savings	£	35,189.06

**Total Bank Balances****£ 141,702.08**Add Credits not on Statement£0.00 **£ 141,702.08**Less unrepresented payments:-

DD 218.54

£218.54 **£ 141,483.54****Opening Balances :-****Bank Statements as at 31st March 2025**

Lloyds Current A/C	£	2,000.00
Lloyds Deposit A/C	£	18,771.11
National Savings	£	81,156.32
Petty Cash	£	35,189.06

Parish Council - **Total £ 137,116.49**

<i>Add Receipts to date</i>	£	72,639.91
<i>Less Expenditure to date</i>	£	68,272.86

Total Cash and Investments as at -

**£ 141,483.54****Difference** £ -RFO, S. Rumsby

**Barton under Needwood Parish Council -**

**Schedule of Payments presented to Full Council**  
(invoices and quotations emailed with meeting pack)

04/09/2025

		£	£	£	Allocation
<b>Payee</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Value Gross</b>	<b>VAT</b>	<b>NET</b>	
Salaries total		4,038.98		4,038.98	HR
Nest Pension Scheme		218.54		218.54	HR
HMRC		1,510.89		1,510.89	HR
Lloyds	Bank Charges	18.75		18.75	Admin
Sky mobile	mobile phone and CCTV data	44.00		44.00	Admin & CA&E
JPS	Grounds maintenance Aug	1,413.42	235.57	1,177.85	CA&E
G A Cannell Memorials	Plaques	726.84	121.14	605.70	CA&E BG
Workplace Depot	Hazard tape	21.58	3.60	17.98	Maintenance
BVHMC	Electricity car park annual	1,161.65		1,161.65	Car park
Npower	Electricity CCTV pole	128.11	6.10	122.01	CA&E
SLCC	Annual membership	240.00		240.00	Admin
AJ Fisheries	Pond treatment	67.00		67.00	CA&E Fishpond
				<b>9,223.34</b>	

Highlighted items already paid are contracted, urgent or authorised from committee budgets for ratification

Signed Chairman.....

All matters have been referred to the Planning Committee for a timely response under delegated authority. The Committee meet fortnightly 5pm, in the small meeting room, Barton Village Hall. Please contact the Clerk for dates should you wish to attend any Planning Meetings. Full Council have been sent all applications upon receipt. If any Councillor wishes to input into the planning consultation process, please inform Planning Committee Chairman and the Clerk. A time extension for response will be requested as appropriate. Reports including comments presented to full Council.

Ref No.	Address / Proposal	Proposal	Response Deadline	BPC Planning Committee Meeting Note	Comments submitted to ESBC	ESBC Approval	ESBC Refusal
P/2025/00747	75 Wales Lane:	Demolition of single storey side extension to facilitate the erection of a two storey side extension, erection of single storey rear extension and alterations / replacement of fenestrations to all elevations	28/08/2025	26/08/2025	29/08/2025		
P/2025/00777	66 Church Lane	Erection of single storey rear extension, conversion of garage to form living accommodation, installation of porch canopy and roof lights	05/09/2025	26/08/2025	29/08/2025		
P/2025/00796	Sherholt Cottage West, Dunstall Lane	Conversion of garage and alterations to existing fenestrations	07/09/2025	26/08/2025	no objections		
P/2025/00555	74 Wales Lane	Listed Building Consent for the repointing to the rear elevation, paint stripping from internal timber ground floor ceiling timbers, replastering of walls and ceilings in lime plaster, installation of natural and breathable insulation to first floor ceilings / loft space, secondary glazing to 5no. historic windows on the front elevation				18/08/2025	
P/2025/00730	Apple Tree Cottage, Dunstall Road	All over reduction by up to 2m one Sycamore tree (T1), reduce by 50% one Pear tree (T2)				15/08/2025	
P/2025/00729	80 Station Road	Felling of one Norway Spruce tree (T1)				15/08/2025	
P/2025/00723	15 Efflinch Lane	Widen existing dropped kerb and driveway to the front of the property	11/09/2025	26/08/2025	29/08/2025		
P/2025/00613	63 Sutton Crescent	Pollard one Oak Tree to a height of 3m (TPO 318)				20/08/2025	
P/2025/00780	Park Corner, 83 Main St	Felling of one Cyprus tree				27/08/2025	



P/2025/00668	Barton Marina, Barton Turn,	Application under Section 73 for a Minor Material Amendment to vary condition 2 (Plans) attached to P/2021/01087 for use of land as proposed Marina car park extension to provide 111 additional parking spaces including 7 disabled bays and 15 Electric vehicle charging points together with new landscaping planting to amend the positioning of the Electric vehicle charging points	28/08/2025
P/2025/00787	Thomas Russell Infants School	Prune up to 1m 1 Lawson Cypress tree (G1), crown lift up to 2.5m 1 Common Yew tree (8), crown lift up to 2.2m 1 Common Lime tree (18), crown lift up to 2.3m and prune adjacent spindle 1 Field Maple (19), remove deadwood from 1 Pedunculate Oak tree (20), crown lift low branches up to 2.3m 1 Common Lime tree (22), clean out crown to remove dead and dysfunctional wood 1 Common Ash tree (23), fell both stems to 1 Spindle tree (28), crown lift low branches up to 2.3m 1 Common Lime tree (30), clean out crown to remove dead and dysfunctional wood including removal of broken branch 1 Horse Chestnut tree (46), prune by up to 1m to clear from structure/wires/buildings 1 Norway Maple tree (55), and crown lift up low branches up to 2.2m 1 Hornbeam tree (58)	01/09/2025

## **Barton under Needwood Parish Council**

### **Notes of the Planning Committee Meeting 26<sup>th</sup> August 2025**

**Present:** Cllrs Lord, Sharkey, Wallace and Roger Bell as co-opted member

**Apologies:** Cllr Hassall, Cllr Young

**Declarations of Interest:** None

**P/2025/00747 75 Wales Lane:** Demolition of single storey side extension to facilitate the erection of a two storey side extension, erection of a single storey rear extension and alterations/replacement of fenestration to all elevations

**Resolved:** *No objections. It would also be nice if the blue butterfly could be kept on the side extension!!!*

**P/2025/00777 66 Church Lane:** Erection of single storey rear extension, conversion of garage to form living accommodation, installation of porch canopy and roof lights

**Resolved:** *No objections in principle, but we would ask that consideration be given to extending the pitch roof on the porch to the façade of the garage. We feel that this would make the design more symmetrical and better integrate the garage conversion.*

**P/2025/00796 Sherholt Cottage West, Dunstall Lane** Conversion of garage and alterations to existing fenestrations

**Resolved :** *No objections*

**P/2025/00723 15 Efflinch Lane** Widen existing dropped kerb and driveway to the front of the property

This proposal envisages extending the dropped kerb by 4.6m to facilitate both a second car on the existing driveway and the paving over of the existing grassed area adjoining the existing driveway.

**Resolved:** *The Parish Council objects to this proposal for the following reasons:*

- *There is an existing problem of surface water drainage on Efflinch Lane. Allowing this proposal and especially the paving over of the grassed area to form a sloped tarmac driveway will just exacerbate the problem by generating even more surface water and at a faster rate of run-off;*
- *It is not clear how the grassed area will be paved, at what gradient, how the change in levels with the adjoining property will be accommodated and whether any retaining wall might be required;*
- *In view of the existing surface water problem, it is requested that, if approved, then any paving material must be permeable;*
- *It is also requested that some form of channel drainage be created on the boundary of the applicant's property, before it reaches the public footpath. Ideally*

***arrangements should be made to retain the surface water on site but if this is not possible then provision should be made to release water into the surface water system on a gradual basis.***

#### **Local Government Reorganisation**

Cllr Sharkey drew the Committee's attention to a survey questionnaire about the proposed reorganization of local government within Staffordshire. Various options of merging existing local authorities are being considered including the merger of East Staffordshire with Lichfield and Tamworth. The deadline for comments is 1<sup>st</sup> September.

***Resolved: (1) Cllr Sharkey will distribute the questionnaire to the rest of the Planning Committee with a view to answering any appropriate questions in order to meet the deadline for comment and then discussing this at the Parish Council meeting on 4<sup>th</sup> September;***

***(2) it was felt that the Parish Council might also better respond in depth to the questionnaire by providing a statement of what the Parish Council would like to see as the outcome of any reorganization – Cllr Sharkey and Roger Bell to draft for comment, again with a view to reporting to the Parish Council and then submitting this to the Chief Executive.***

**Date of Next meeting: Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2025**

# Barton under Needwood Parish Council

## Parish Council Meeting 4<sup>th</sup> September 2025

### Report of the Planning Committee

#### English Devolution

The Borough Council has recently been eliciting responses to an on-line questionnaire regarding proposals for local government reorganization within Staffordshire. This reorganization proposes a merging of 6 existing local authorities – Cannock Chase, East Staffordshire, Lichfield, South Staffordshire, Stafford and Tamworth – into a unitary structure. The confines of the questionnaire are somewhat limiting in terms of what the Parish Council would like to say and, therefore, we have produced this more in-depth report as a means of raising issues about their role in such a reorganization.

#### Strategic and Unitary Authorities

We need to step back a little to try and put this questionnaire into its context. In December 2024, not long after coming into office, the present government produced a White Paper on English Devolution. A White Paper is generally produced as a prelude to legislation. The aim of the White Paper is summed up nicely within the first paragraph of the Executive Summary, ***“England is one of the most centralized countries in the developed world. Devolution across England is fundamental to achieving the change the public expect and deserve: growth, more joined up delivery of public services and politics being done with communities not to them”***. Instead of maybe setting out a range of options as to how this might be achieved, the White Paper is prescriptive in its solution – universal coverage in England of Strategic Authorities. These will be a kind of new regional authority, with the long-term ambition that they will be led by Mayors who will chair the authority and lead strategic planning. The existing situation in London and the West Midlands will provide the model for this arrangement. There is a lot in the White Paper about the role of Mayors and so it looks like the Government is seeing this role as the publicly recognizable figurehead for each Strategic Authority.

Existing below this level will be one or more unitary authorities. The consequence of this reorganization is that the existing two-tier structure will be abandoned in favour of one joined-up authority providing all the services currently run by both district and county. The White Paper notes that unitary councils can lead to better outcomes for residents, save significant money, which can be reinvested in public services, and improve accountability with fewer politicians who are more able to focus on delivering for residents. It also proposes to rebuild local authority workforces and modernize how councils do business.

As far as planning is concerned the government wants to move towards a universal system of strategic planning. All strategic authorities will be required to develop Spatial Development Strategies. Where the strategic authority covers multiple local authorities, members will need to work together to deliver these plans. The White Paper notes that the

government wants to move quickly with the preparation of these plans and where a strategic authority might not be in place then the government will take power through the Planning and Infrastructure Bill to direct defined groups to deliver a strategy. The Spatial Development Strategy is intended as a vehicle for delivering the government's housing targets. Provision will be made for an obligation to apportion an assessment of the housing need across its constituent members, based on the government's national calculation for each district area. Local plans should be in conformity with the Strategic Development Strategies, but, according to the White Paper, local planning authorities should not delay in their preparation of local plans. Spatial Development Strategies will be required to be completed quickly to ensure universal coverage in a reasonable timeframe.

The Government has invited reorganization proposals from local areas and set a deadline for this of November this year. Invariably this means existing districts and boroughs combining in some shape or form to make up the unitary authorities. The rules for this indicate that mergers are to be along existing local authority areas, and the target population is to be 500,000 or thereabouts. And hence there is a current proposal for the merging of these six authorities into a new Southern and Mid Staffordshire unitary authority. This proposal has apparently been developed in parallel with a similar case for a Northern Staffordshire unitary authority. The six authorities' Interim Report acknowledges that the final proposal, in terms of geography of the two new unitaries, will be determined by the need to secure financial stability and how it supports a wider devolution settlement for Staffordshire as a whole. This suggests that the situation is still very fluid and could change as a result of this round of local consultations. In addition, options for the geographical coverage of the Strategic Authority are still being considered.

It is interesting to note that the Interim Report states that none of the local authorities were actually seeking local government reorganization, but that the southern authorities recognized the opportunities that devolution could bring in terms of powers and resources. The total population of the 6 districts is 674,676.

### **Role of Parish Councils**

So, what are we to make of this Devolution White paper and, by extension, the proposal for a South and Mid Staffs unitary authority? We are the third or first tier of local government, depending on how you view the Parish Council's position in the hierarchy. This will not change within this reorganisation, as there will be a strategic and a unitary authority. No changes are proposed for Parish and Town Councils

Previous governments have made half-hearted attempts at more strategic government – you may remember government offices being set up in the regions from a few years ago. Housing growth targets for each local authority area were decided by an unelected regional agency, not that long ago. Both bodies, however, were subsequently abandoned. Achieving some form of strategic planning at a level lower than central government is laudable and certainly better than the top-down approach to a national assessment of housing growth figures for each local planning authority which we have at the moment.

What may be appropriate in Battersea may not work in Barton and so some form of devolved local government which reflects more local needs and issues is again to be welcomed. If the government means what it says and is serious about devolving powers, then it begs the question of what role does central government play? Does this mean that it will withdraw from national directions and allow the Strategic Authorities to develop their own guidelines which better reflect their areas. In planning, for example, would there still be a need for National Planning Policy guidance? Would this be prepared by the Strategic Authority? Would there still be a need for the backstop of the Secretary of State to call in planning applications, especially if there were a comprehensive system of universal Spatial Development Strategies, which no doubt would have to have some form of approval by central government in any event? It seems to us that the debate still needs to be had between what strategic powers central government will retain and what powers Strategic Authorities will be allowed to exercise.

From the perspective of a Parish Council, we find it very disappointing that the White Paper does not really address the role of Parish and Town Councils. There is perhaps a hint of hypocrisy in the government's laudable aim of wanting to devolve more powers and to get away from the one size fits all mentality, it is doing precisely this by implementing a one size fits all solution of strategic and unitary authorities.

There is also irony in the government's desire to want to ensure that local communities and neighbourhoods have a greater say in their future while at the same time creating local authorities with population of half a million people or more. This will potentially mean that local communities are further distanced from local government. The Councils' Interim Report recognizes that a unitary authority must be delivered in a way, ***"that enables stronger community engagement and delivers genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment"***. The Government Minister, in response to a query about the role of Parish Councils stated, ***"We will rewire the relationship between town and parish councils and principal Local Authorities, strengthening expectations on engagement and community voice"*** (Jim McMahon Minister of State for Local Government and English Devolution 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025). q

These are all fine words, and we are sure that they are well intentioned, but they have to mean something in practice. At present there is not enough detail about how this rewiring will be enacted or indeed how the proposed unitary will deliver genuine empowerment. It seems to us that the reality of this proposed reorganization is that Parish Councils and individual residents will be further removed from contact with their local authority than they are now. Yes, we are sure technology will be embraced to enable a better relationship, but with the best will in the world there is not going to be the same level of representation in a local authority with a 500,000 population as there is in East Staffordshire with a population of 124,000. It will surely be inevitable that local ward members will have larger geographical areas and populations to deal with and so they will not have the same rapport with Parish Councils. They will not be able to attend Parish Council meetings on any regular basis and understand the detail of their needs and, as a consequence, they will begin to lose touch with local people and their concerns. The fear then becomes that particularly rural concerns and issues will be ignored and lose any priority over the perceived greater and ever present need to tackle the most deprived areas.

The Parish Council's current engagement with both East Staffs and the County Council is a bit hit and miss. Sometimes both the County and Borough Councils can be very receptive, and we have generally had a good relationship with the local ward members. But at other times, we can be waiting several months for responses to correspondence. Simple queries can go unanswered and for a Parish Council which takes its duties seriously this can be very frustrating. We appreciate that local government has suffered for more than a decade from government cutbacks. We know that, again using the planning department as an example, East Staffs is short staffed, and only have the use of a conservation officer for one day a week, as an example. This is really unacceptable and so if English Devolution is going to mean anything and the government is going to live up to the White Paper's ambitions then what is proposed must be better than what it is now. The government's proposed Unitary Authorities must tackle the issues of capacity, staffing levels and accountability. It must set up structures so that the voice of rural areas within these large unitary authorities is not lost and it must ensure that the community voice is genuinely engaged, and that the role of Parish Councils is clearly defined and responded to.

In general terms, however, the notion of a joined up and fully staffed and resourced unitary authority is to be welcomed. Again, from a planning standpoint it will be refreshing to think that we may be able to discuss transport issues within the wider context of the needs of the village.

We have no strong views about which local authorities East Staffs should merge with. The Parish now falls within the Lichfield parliamentary constituency so some allegiances with Lichfield may already exist. We would just like a large unitary authority to be staffed to an appropriate level to be able to respond to queries and deal efficiently and effectively with Parish Councils and local residents. Burton does have strong historical and geographical links with Swadlincote and South Derbyshire – the Drakelow housing development was always seen as an extension to Burton, for example. So, it is perhaps unfortunate that the option of merging with South Derbyshire does not appear to have been considered, notwithstanding any complications of crossing not just a county but also a regional boundary.

The Parish Council in 2024 undertook a survey of local residents and so we feel we have a reasonable up to date idea of the village's concerns and issues. The Parish Council has also recently commented on a planning application for 70 houses in the village. Through this process we have become aware of local capacity issues. We know that both the Infant and the Junior schools are more or less at capacity. We were also told that the Barton Family Practice would have difficulty in coping with the demand generated by an additional 70 houses. This application has also highlighted the local problems regarding the capacity of the sewage works and the drainage system. Whilst the public utilities and NHS fall outside the scope of local government, as such, we would hope that a more forward-looking unitary authority covering such a large area and population would be able to work jointly with these responsible bodies, so as to ensure capacity issues are at least recognized and that appropriate arrangements are made to improve the infrastructure.

As far as the survey is concerned, we can perhaps highlight a list of issues:-

- Blocked highway drains and potential flood risk;

- The need to ensure local businesses continue to thrive and the village centre remains robust and sustainable;
- Potholes!!
- Through traffic and parking;
- The mobile signal;
- Need for increased police presence to deal with anti-social behaviour;
- Re-open Barton and Walton railway station.

No doubt these sorts of concerns will be common to most parishes and areas within a combined unitary authority. We set them out so that you can see that there will be a need for joined up thinking not just within the authority itself but also with the appropriate outside bodies.

### **Recommendation**

**That this report be submitted to the Chief Executive of East Staffordshire Borough Council as representing the views of the Parish Council on the government's White Paper on Devolution and the proposed Southern and mid Staffordshire Unitary Authority**

Barton under Needwood Parish Council/August 2025



## CORRESPONDENCE & COMMUNICATIONS

### GENERAL

1. Neighbours of Rhosyn Farm with concerns about planning enforcement *Clerk responded 11/8*
2. Yoxall Parish Council – Invitation to meeting with Robert Pritchard, SPCA on LGR – 13/9/25, 7pm, Yoxall Village Hall
3. Resident report of anti-social/criminal damage behaviour at Ash Tree pocket park; *Clerk arranging for removal of fly-tipped items; highlighting ongoing issues to PCSO and asking the resident to report all incidents to the police*
4. Resident concerns re traffic safety on Wales Lane during road closure/diversion for Barton Festival – *Clerk responded signposting to Barton Festival Committee, Cllr Brown and police*
5. Neighbour adjacent allotments reporting unauthorised tree work – *Clerk responded*

### SPCA/NALC

6. Newsletters and training opportunities- forwarded to all Cllrs;