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Dear Members

**Stafford Town Council Working Group**

A meeting of the Stafford Town Council Working Group will be held in the **Craddock Room, Civic Centre, Riverside, Stafford** on **Monday 20 April 2026 at 2.00pm** to deal with the business as set out on the agenda.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "I. Curran".

Head of Law and Governance

# STAFFORD TOWN COUNCIL WORKING GROUP

20 April 2026

Chair - Councillor R Kenney

## AGENDA

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## Membership

Chair - Councillor R Kenney

F Beatty	R Kenney
R P Cooke	D M McNaughton
A P Edgeller	A N Pearce
A T A Godfrey	J M Pert

## Agenda Item A3

# Community Governance Review of Stafford Town

**Committee:** Stafford Town Council Working Group

**Date of Meeting:** 20 April 2026

**Report of:** Head of Law and Governance

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## 1 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To present feedback from the recent public consultation and consider outcomes of the review.

## 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 That Members make recommendations on the following:
- (a) Whether Stafford Town should be parished and whether it should include the existing area of Doxey Parish
  - (b) Whether the area should have a Town Council
  - (c) Whether the area should be warded and, if so, how
  - (d) What the number of Councillors should be for the parish/wards
  - (e) What the name of any new parish/wards should be

## 3 Background

- 3.1 On 2 December 2025, the Council resolved to commence a Community Governance Review of the unparished areas of Stafford Borough and the current parished area of Doxey. The Head of Law and Governance was provided with delegated authority to complete the review, in consultation with the Stafford Town Working Group.
- 3.2 A public consultation on proposals for creating a new town council for Stafford was undertaken between 9 February and 22 March 2026. The results of the consultation are to be considered by the Working Group.

## 4 Report Detail

4.1 The power to review community governance arrangements in its area was devolved to the Council under the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 (the Act).

4.2 A Community Governance Review can consider the creation of new parish councils as well as review arrangements for existing parishes and their respective councils.

4.3 The Council adopted the following terms of reference for the review:

That the area to be reviewed should encompass the unparished area of Stafford Borough and the current parished area of Doxey; and that the review should consider what the boundaries of any new parish should be, what the name of the parish should be, whether any new parish should have a parish council and what electoral arrangements should be introduced for the parish council (including whether it should be warded and the number of councillors)

4.4 Once the terms of reference have been established, the Council must carry out consultation with all local government electors for the area under review and any other person or body which appears to have an interest in the review. A public consultation was carried out between 9 February and 22 March 2026. The consultation report is attached at **Appendix 1**.

4.5 When recommending governance arrangements for Stafford Town it will be important for the Council to consider whether those arrangements reflect the identities and interests of the community in that area and whether they are effective and convenient.

### **Should a Town Council be created across the unparished areas of Stafford Town?**

4.6 The consultation responses showed that **63.6%** were in favour of a Town Council, with **26.7%** against and **9.6%** unsure.

Some of the reasons given for creating a Town Council were:

- local decision making is important
- a Town Council would preserve civic identity
- it is a County Town and needs representation under a unitary system

Some of the comments against included:

- cost concerns around how much the extra precept could be
- affordability and unnecessary spending

- duplication of bureaucracy

**Should the boundary of the proposed Town Council also include the area of Doxey (which currently has a separate parish council)?**

4.7 The consultation responses showed that **46.7%** were in favour of including Doxey, with **40.5%** against and **12.9%** unsure. When focusing on responses from Doxey itself **7.1%** were in favour of including Doxey and **88.8%** against. Some of the reasons for and against included:

- support for Doxey Parish Council
- concerns over losing community identity, representation and funding
- include Doxey as it is part of the Town

**Should the proposed Town Council be warded similarly in accordance with the 12 existing Borough Council ward boundaries?**

4.8 The consultation responses showed that **66.5%** were in favour of this principle, with **17.8%** against and **15.7%** unsure.

4.9 The Borough ward boundaries, and councillor numbers, were based upon a previous review conducted by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England in 2015. The boundaries and councillor numbers were designed to achieve electoral fairness across each ward when considering the number of electors within each ward compared to the number of councillors representing them. Wards with higher numbers of electors may require a greater number of councillors to achieve a similar elector to councillor ratio as wards with a lower population. Hence why some wards have two councillors elected and other wards have one. The Council should avoid creating parish wards that overlap Borough Council ward boundaries. The Borough wards are therefore a useful starting point.

4.10 However, it should be borne in mind that Borough Council boundaries are likely to be altered in 2028 if Local Government Reorganisation proceeds as scheduled. Wards of any new principal council may not follow current Borough Council warding and may follow current County Council division boundaries (being based on more comparative larger areas). Even those boundaries may be changed soon after as it is expected that new councils will be subject to an early boundary review by the LGBCE soon after their formation.

- 4.11 It is likely that any future review would consider existing boundaries as a starting point. It is therefore advised that the Stafford Town review does the same. Maps of the existing Stafford Town unparished area, current Stafford Town Borough Wards and current Staffordshire County Divisions covering Stafford town are attached at **Appendix 2**.
- 4.12 If Doxey parish is not to be included in the new Town Council area, consideration will need to be given to the warding of Castletown. This area currently joins with Doxey to form the Doxey and Castletown Borough ward. Latest electorate figures for Castletown are 552. This appears too small a number to warrant it being kept as a single ward within a new Town Council. One option could be to include Castletown within the current Doxey Parish. Another option would be to include the area in an adjoining Town Council ward (Rowley, Forebridge, Common, Holmcroft or Coton).
- 4.13 Another option would be to align Town Council wards with current County Council divisions. There are five County Divisions that cover areas of Stafford Town. Consideration will need to be given to which option reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area and whether the arrangements are effective and convenient. A summary of the options is included at **Appendix 3**.
- 4.14 It is not advised that completely new ward boundaries are created at this stage due to the uncertainty over future ward boundaries of principal councils, the confusion this may cause to electors and the work that would be needed to alter current electoral registers and databases, and polling places, based upon completely new boundaries.

**Should the proposed Town Council have 19 councillors (based upon the number of Borough Councillors currently representing those wards)?**

- 4.15 The consultation responses showed that **42.9%** were in favour of this principle, with **38%** against and **19.1%** unsure.
- 4.16 In considering councillor numbers it will be important to ensure that the overall numbers of councillors is appropriate to the size of the Council, while also ensuring that electorate representation across each ward is fair and comparative. For example, some wards may have a greater number of electors than other wards that warrant a greater number of councillors being elected to represent electors in that ward, while ensuring that one particular ward does not dominate representation on the Council. Numbers of electors and potential electorate ratios to councillors is included in **Appendix 3**.

- 4.17 Guidance issued by the National Association of Local Councils suggested that the minimum number of councillors for any parish should be seven, with up to twenty-five councillors for parishes with electorates over 23,000. There is no obligation to follow this guidance and council size for each parish should be determined on its own merits having regard to population, geography and the pattern of communities. A list of council sizes for all other Stafford Borough parishes is attached at **Appendix 4**.

### **Should the names of the proposed wards reflect the names of the existing Borough Council wards?**

- 4.18 The consultation responses showed that **72.5%** were in favour, with **14.6%** against and **12.9%** unsure. A major factor to consider will obviously be whether the proposed Town Council ward boundaries are likely to be altered significantly from the existing Borough Council wards.
- 4.19 Once recommendations have been agreed in respect of the above factors, consideration will need to be given to further progression of the review and whether any further consultation, or evidence, is required. It is recommended that initial recommendations are published on the Council website for 2 weeks before final recommendations are made.
- 4.20 Once the working group has made its final recommendations, they will need to be published as part of its recommendation to September Council. Full Council will then make a decision on whether to accept the review recommendations and approve an order bringing the new arrangements into effect in time for May 2027 elections. There will need to be work carried out in the period between the Councils review decision and the election of new Town Councillors in May 2027, in order to enable the new council to carry out its functions (e.g. adoption of appropriate standing orders, calculation of initial precept, recruitment of interim proper officer support) and to prepare the Borough Council for new elections.

## **5 Implications**

### **5.1 Financial**

The Council has budgeted £40,000 for preparatory work needed to allow the new council to operate.

### **5.2 Legal**

As set out in the report.

### **5.3 Human Resources**

Nil

#### **5.4 Risk Management**

If a review is not conducted prior to reorganisation, any subsequent review would fall within the responsibilities of the successor council and subject to its own plans and priorities.

#### **5.5 Equalities and Diversity**

Nil

#### **5.6 Health**

Nil

#### **5.7 Climate Change**

Nil

### **6 Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Consultation Report

Appendix 2 - Plans of Stafford Town unparished area, Stafford Town Borough Wards, 5 Staffordshire County Divisions affected by CGR

Appendix 3 - Warding Options

Appendix 4 - Parish Council sizes in Stafford Borough

### **7 Previous Consideration**

None

### **8 Background Papers**

None

**Contact Officer:** Ian Curran

**Telephone Number:** 01785 619220

**Ward Interest:** Stafford Town wards

**Report Track:** Stafford Town Council Working Group 20 April 2026  
(Only)

## Community Governance Review - Consultation Results

The survey ran between 9 February and 22 March 2026. A letter was sent to all households in the area covered in the consultation. The survey was available online and hard copies were available in libraries and reception at Stafford Borough Council and available on request.

The consultation was promoted through press releases, the website – including dedicated link from homepage - and on social media.

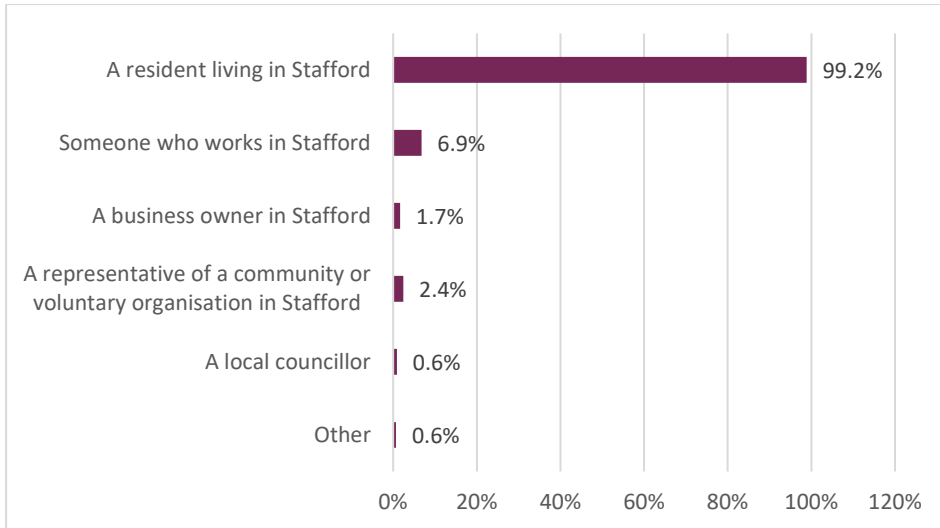
1003 surveys were completed in total with 923 submitted online and 80 paper copies received. However, responses that were anonymous or without an address were not counted in the figures below. Responses received from outside of the area under review also do not count in the figures below. The total amount of responses excluding those mentioned is 876.

Please note AI was used when analysing the themes from the open-ended questions and then checked by an officer.

The results are set out below:

### 1. Are you responding as...?

Answer	Number	Percentage
A resident living in Stafford	868	99.2%
Someone who works in Stafford	60	6.9%
A business owner in Stafford	15	1.7%
A representative of a community or voluntary organisation in Stafford	21	2.4%
A local councillor	5	0.6%
Other	5	0.6%

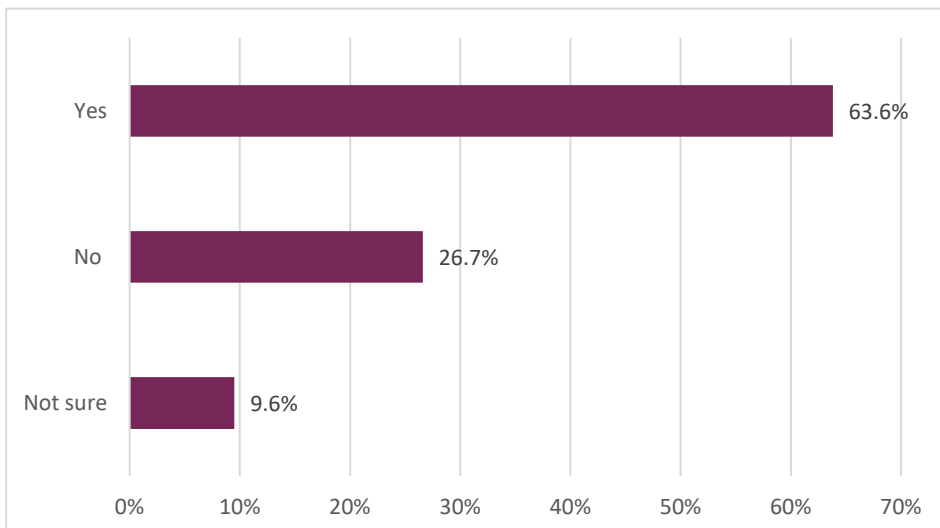


**If other please state: (12 responses received):**

Of these 1 was on behalf of Doxey Parish Council, 5 lived in Doxey, 2 were Parish Councillors from Doxey, 2 were retired, 2 were residents from Stafford.

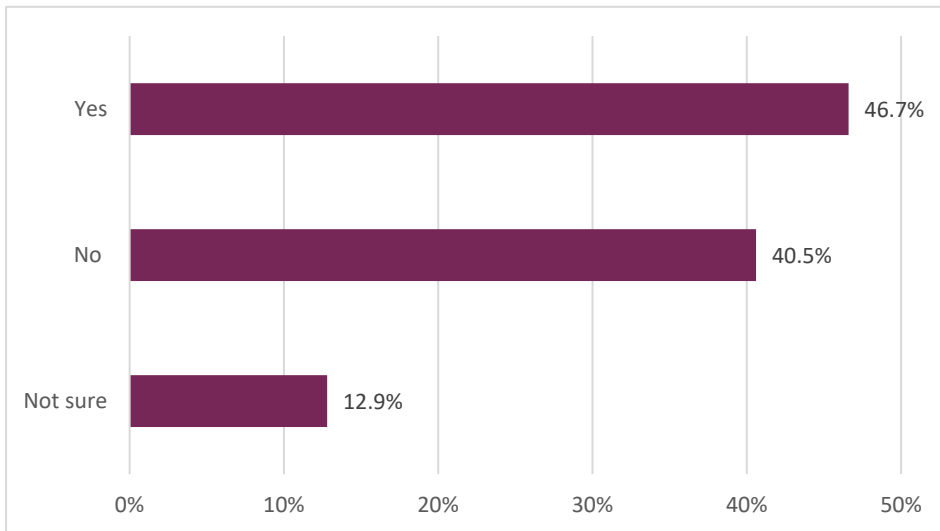
**2. Do you agree that a Town Council should be created across the unparished areas of Stafford Town?**

Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	555	63.6%
No	233	26.7%
Not sure	84	9.6%



**3. Should the boundary of the proposed new Town Council also include the area of Doxey (which currently has a separate parish council)?**

Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	406	46.7%
No	352	40.5%
Not sure	112	12.9%



**4. Is there anything you would like to share about why you chose those options? (360 Responses received)**

The top 5 strongest recurring themes from the responses were:

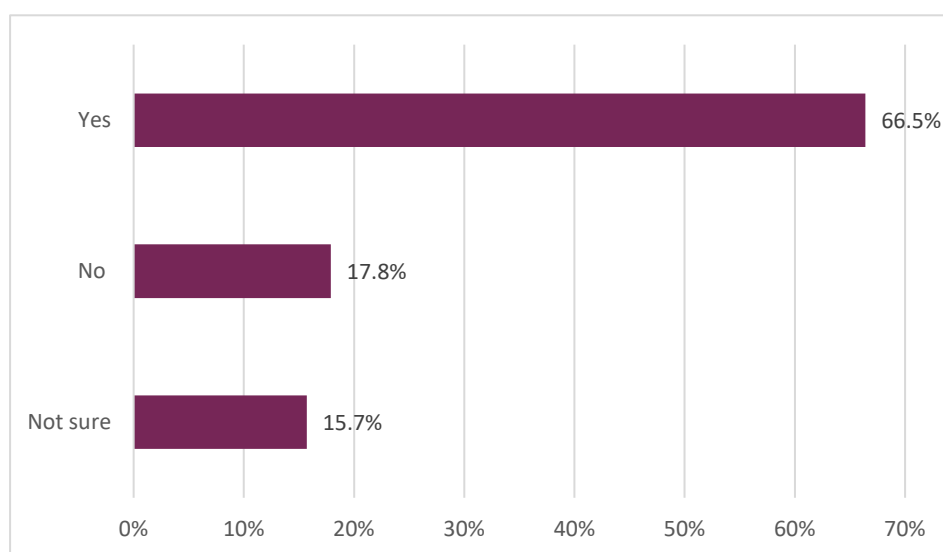
1. Keep Doxey Parish independent - There was strong support of Doxey Parish Council; with concerns around losing identity, representation and funding. (It is worth noting that 33 survey responses under this theme had exactly the same wording) (145)
2. Support for the creation of a Town Council - Local decision making is important, a Town Council would preserve civic identity, it is a County town, need representation under a unitary system (58)
3. Cost concerns/ council tax increase - Worries around how much the extra precept could be, affordability and unnecessary spending, duplication of bureaucracy (39)
4. Opposition to the creation of a Town Council - It is not needed, adds bureaucracy and cost (23)
5. Include Doxey - considered as part of Stafford (18)

Other themes include:

- Doxey should choose for themselves (16)
- Boundary inclusion issues – Questions on whether certain areas should be included or excluded such as Doxey, Creswell etc., dated and confusing map, concerns about future housing developments. (15)
- More information (cost, what it will do and outcome of LGR) is required to make an informed decision (11)

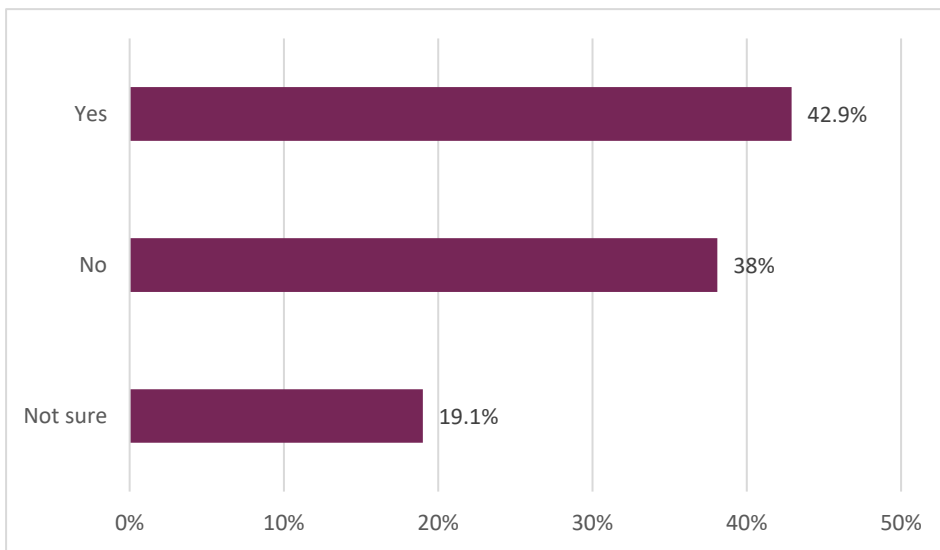
**5. The town area is currently represented by 12 Borough Council wards. Do you agree that the proposed Town Council should be warded similarly in accordance with the 12 existing Borough Council ward boundaries?**

Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	575	66.5%
No	154	17.8%
Not sure	136	15.7%



**6. The town area is currently represented by 19 Borough Councillors across its 12 wards. Do you think that it would be appropriate for the proposed Town Council to have 19 Councillors?**

Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	374	42.9%
No	331	38%
Not sure	167	19.1%



**7. If no, what alternative arrangements should be made? (262 responses received)**

The top 5 strongest recurring themes from the responses were:

1. One councillor per ward - challenging the need for 19 councillors (109)
2. Proportional/logical representation - reflect the population and workload (24)
3. Stay as it is (18)
4. Have a smaller number of councillors - less than we currently have (17)
5. Cost, value for money, efficiency - proposal is too expensive or bureaucratic, effect on tax payer (18)

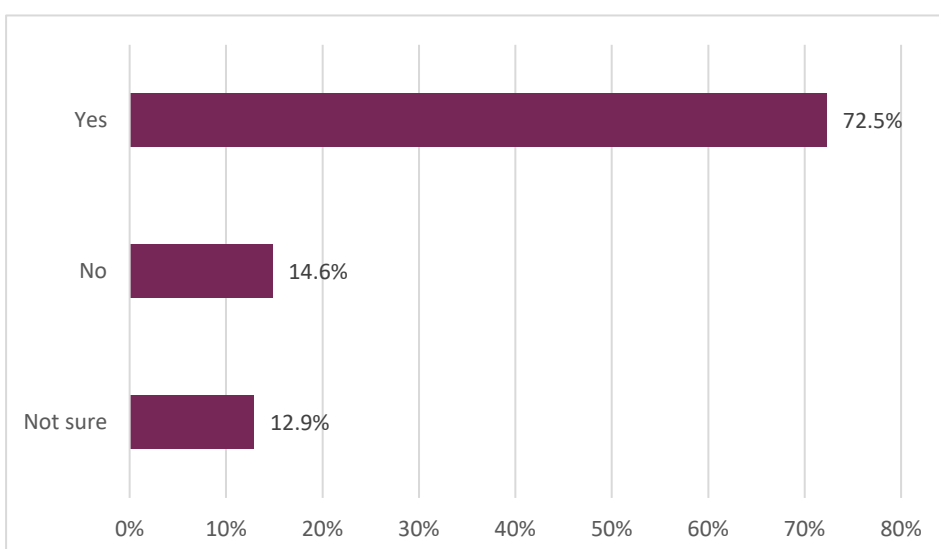
Other themes include:

- Opposition to a town council (14)
- Have more councillors (2 per ward, 20-30) (11)

- Boundary concerns - mention of Doxey, Baswich / Weeping Cross and Wildwood, make sure to include anticipated developments (9)
- Unsure why there is 19 councillors (9)

**8. It is proposed that the names of the 12 wards of the proposed Town Council should match the names of the existing borough wards. Do you agree with this?**

Answer	Number	Percentage
Yes	629	72.5%
No	127	14.6%
Not sure	112	12.9%



**9. Do you have any further comments, concerns or suggestions about the future governance arrangements for the unparished area of Stafford and the area of Doxey? (470 responses received)**

The top 5 strongest recurring themes from the responses were:

1. Keep Doxey Parish independent - success of the current Parish Council, desire to retain autonomy, funding and local decision-making, community identity. (86)
2. Support for creating a Town Council - Local representation, County Town, preserve civic identity (42)
3. Cost/council tax concerns - council tax increases, frustration with current financial pressures, duplication of bureaucracy, unnecessary cost, how will this save money (34)

4. More information is needed to make an informed decision - lack of clarity of cost increase, understand roles and responsibilities, what would be the impact of not having a Town Council (18)
5. Opposition to creating a Town Council - no clear benefits, added bureaucracy, not required as there will be unitary (17)

Other recurring themes were:

- Boundary/inclusion concerns – impact of new housing, map confusion (11)
- Leave as it is (11)
- Include Doxey – feel it is part of the Town (7)

**Option 1:**

Create Town wards based upon current Borough Council ward areas.

Ward	Electorate	Cllr No	Electorate per Cllr
Holmcroft	5461	2	2731
Common	2955	1	2955
Coton	4989	2	2495
Littleworth	4342	2	2171
Forebridge	3049	1	3049
Baswich	4911	2	2456
Weeping Cross and Wildwood	4711	2	2356
Penkside	2485	1	2485
Manor	5178	2	2589
Highfields and Western Downs	4662	2	2331
Rowley	3622	1	3622
Doxey / Castletown	2228/552	1	2780
<b>Total</b>	<b>49145</b>	<b>19</b>	

Current electorate to councillor ratios range between 2171 to 3622. If Castletown is split from Doxey and joined with an existing neighbouring ward, the following numbers of ward councillors would be needed to remain closest to that same range:

Coton and Castletown	5541	2	2771
Holmcroft and Castletown	6013	2	3007
Rowley and Castletown	4174	2 (1 extra)	2087
Forebridge and Castletown	3601	1	3601
Common and Castletown	3507	1	3507

**Option 2:**

Create Town wards based upon current County Divisions:

Electorate figures for County Divisions so far as they fall within the CGR area:

- Stafford North (includes whole of Holmcroft and Common and some Coton)  
**10,194**

- Stafford West and Rural (includes whole of Rowley and whole of Doxey Parish) **3,622** without Doxey, **5,850** with Doxey
- Stafford Central (includes whole of Littleworth and Forebridge, Castletown and most of Coton) **11,154**
- Stafford South West (includes whole of Highfields/Western Downs and Manor and most of Penkside) **11,533**
- Stafford South East (includes whole of Baswich and Weeping Cross/Wildwood and some of Penkside) **10,414**
- **Total = 46,917 (49,145 with Doxey)**

If Stafford West and Rural is kept separate, potential electorate equality could be achieved by:

Stafford North	3	3398
Stafford West and Rural (with Doxey)	1 (2)	3622 (2925)
Stafford Central	3	3718
Stafford South West	3	3844
Stafford South East	3	3471
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 (14)</b>	

### Option 3:

Add Castletown to existing Doxey Parish. This would create an overall electorate of **2780** for Doxey Parish. Stafford Town electorate would reduce to **46364** and overall number of councillors to 18. Consideration would need to be given to whether Doxey should remain unwarded, whether 9 councillors remained appropriate and whether the parish name should remain as Doxey.

## Number of councillors compared with electorate for each parish in Stafford Borough

Parish Council	Electorate	Councillors
Adbaston	419	7
Barlaston (warded)	2240	11
Berkswich	1565	10
Bradley	391	7
Brocton	870	7
Chebsey	433	7
Church Eaton	553	7
Colwich	3893	14
Creswell	1670	5
Doxey	2255	9
Eccleshall (warded)	4662	15
Forton	235	7
Fulford (warded)	4707	17
Gnosall (warded)	4988	16
Haughton	866	7
High Offley	792	7
Hilderstone	476	7
Hixon	1667	8
Hopton and Coton	1568	7
Hyde Lea	384	5
Ingestre	155	3
Tixall	194	4

<b>Parish Council</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
Milwich	351	7
Fradswell	158	2
Norbury	349	7
Ranton	316	5
Salt and Enson	313	7
Sandon and Burston	275	7
Seighford (warded)	1524	8
Standon	618	7
Stone Rural	1315	10
Stowe by Chartley	341	7
Swynnerton	3179	9
Weston	843	7
Gayton	131	2
Whitgreave	162	5
Yarnfield and Cold Meece	1600	7

**Number of councillors for Stone Town Council (including their wards):**

<b>Parish Council</b>	<b>Electorate</b>	<b>Councillors</b>
<b>Stone Town Council</b>	13543	18
St Michaels	3496	5
Stonefield	4298	5
Walton North	2351	3
Walton South	3398	5