

## Meredeen, Ben

---

**From:** Thomas-Michael Boyle <mikeboyle2000@tiscali.co.uk>  
**Sent:** 19 April 2021 20:52  
**To:** reviews  
**Subject:** South Staffordshire Boundary Review

**Categories:** Submissions

Date: 19 April 2021

Some observations around the Boundary Review for South Staffordshire 2021

The Boundary Commissioners have supplied guidance to members indicating the ratio of councillors to voters in other local authorities ; from this guidance table it would appear that South Staffordshire has an excess number of councillors given its electoral population.

Based upon the information supplied by our council officers there are currently 49 councillors making up South Staffordshire District Council , currently the number of electors per councillor is approximately 1,766. This is considerably less than the ratios shown in the guidance table of seven recently reviewed Authorities , where the ratio of electors to Councillors varies from 2,146 (the lowest) to 3,578 (the highest), and although one of them Chorley, after review comes out at 2,146 the remaining six authorities all come in between 2,298 and 3,578; giving a raw average of 2,652 electors per councillor.

Three of these authorities (Babergh D.C. , Bath N.E. and Somerset, Carlisle City Council) are around the 2,300 mark and three others (Isle of Wight, Pendle B.C. - Windsor and Maidenhead) around the 3,000 mark. It would appear that South Staffordshire is considerably out of line with the examples shown in the guidance table and would require fewer councillors than at present constituted.

### Population by 2027

The Office for National Statistics project the total population of South Staffordshire by 2027 as being 115,095 of which 94, 451 will be aged 18 plus and eligible to register to vote.

### The Ratio of Electors to Adult Population by 2027

In 2021 the total population was 113,10 . The total adult population was 92,887

The local Government Electorate was 85,615, giving a current ratio of 92.171 % Electors to adult population. The predicted whole authority electors in 2027 is calculated by multiplying the estimated adult population by the ratio of electors to adult population.

94,451 adults aged 18 plus, multiplied by 0.92 equals 86,895. Alternatively if we use the current local plan housing allocations and add them into the baseline electorate we arrive at a projected electorate of 87,349 which is not too far away from the Office for National Statistics figure of 86,895.

Assuming a minimum reduction of councillors from 49 to 41 then an electorate of 87,439 would give a ratio of approximately 2,130 electors per councillor. However if we assume a reduction of councillors from 49 to 39 then an electorate of 87,439 would give a ratio of approximately 2, 242 electors per councillor which approximates closer to the majority of ratios shown in the Boundary Commission Chart.

Demographics: the northern part of South Staffordshire District Council area has experienced a steady expansion of population over the past 50 years and is experiencing continuing development which is reflected in its population increase; therefore it would seem logical that the re-allocation of seats follows the population growth and not an archaic geographical contour.

There is in my opinion no great social or demographic intercourse between the southern part of the district and the northern part, except for political alignments; however, there is a strong parochial sense of local identity within the District, the northern villages (small towns really) have an industrial heritage whereas that does not prevail to the same extent elsewhere, where there is a much more rural village sentiment.

Experience.

This is my third term as a District Councillor having served during the periods (2003 - 2007) & (2011 - 2016) and currently, at all times for the same Ward of Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon . I have also served as a Parish Councillor for over thirty years. My ward has a lot of urban problems which often relate to County & Parish Council areas of responsibility, but being a Parish & District Councillor and visible as I live in the ward, I am often the first port of call there is frequently this overlap of interests and responsibilities; as a former County Councillor, for eight years, I find the three tier form of local government to be expensive, inefficient, bureaucratic and wasteful.

As a district councillor I am a member of the following Groups

- 1.) The main Council (meets about six or seven times a year)
- 2.) The overview and Scrutiny Committee (meets about six or seven times a year)
- 3.) The Planning Committee (consisting of 21 councillors) meets about twelve times a year
- 4.) The Standards & Resources Committee ( which meets about six times a year)
- 5.) Additionally there are three Council Challenge Panels which examine areas of interest before bringing them to the Scrutiny Committee for further review.)

I am on the 'Your Council ' Challenge Panel which meets as and when required but normally around four to six times a year; it is currently discussing the proposed council response to the Boundary Commission Review. Of the main committees, the Planning Committee, usually demands most of my attention, prior to the planning meetings councillors receive an agenda and a list of planning applications and reports, the whole document can be well over 150 pages of required reading and scrutiny. The planning process is very thorough but certainly requires a lot of time, effort and concentration from councillors.

Additionally there are a host of e-mails and telephone messages from planning Applicants pleading their case, this absorbs much of my time as a district councillor outside of the

formal Planning meetings, one of which stretched recently to four hours (6p.m. - 10p.m.)

There are also still some site visits to do in order to be fully aware of the implications of an application. Because of the Corona Virus situation these are currently fewer than normal but would be usually once a month and can entail travelling the length of South Staffordshire a return trip of around 44 miles or be just a few hundred yards away. There can be several of these site visits in a day.

The Scrutiny Committee meetings usually last no more than two hours and tend to be rigidly formal in structure, its main function is to give members a chance to hold the executive to account and raise points of concern; whereas the Challenge Panels, being smaller in number and less formal, I find more conducive to debate and progress.

The District is also split into five Localities which group together neighbouring wards and parishes to discuss issues of common interest. These meetings are called as and when required to fit in between or alongside normal council business. They meet with statutory bodies such as Severn Trent Water and discuss local issues of concern.

In South Staffordshire , because of its 'village' composition it is almost obligatory to be involved in Parish Council affairs and this normally demands two parish council meetings a month and attendance at the sub-committees also. Much information filters through to District Councillors from the Parish and all of the four District Councillors in my village of

Cheslyn Hay, are also parish councillors. I also have to attend and report on District Council matters to another parish in my District Ward Saredon Parish.

These meetings are invariably in the evening and can last up to three hours at a time, additionally I have to attend

and deliver reports on council matters to my constituency party once a month. I am often called out to non-planning site visits e.g. to examine waste that has been dumped illegally in my ward. I mention this because these attendances are expected by the electorate, and I am often required to respond at the Parish meetings. So being a District Councillor my area also means giving a commitment to Parish matters which can be very time consuming in an urban parish. My telephone rings at random times and my door is frequently knocked by my electorate and I am required to deal with a variety of issues from blocked sewers to traffic matters , anti- social behaviour, dog fouling , you name it as a district councillor in my area you get it. These mundane matters are often not recorded as a councillors duties but are just as much part of the job as sitting in meetings.

With the advent of technology councils have become remote in dealing with the public, it is often difficult to contact council officers by telephone, constituents are advised to send an e-mail message, which many cannot do, the system distances the council from the public , consequently they are more inclined to contact their local councillor directly. Finally, if I did nothing else but answer repetitive e-mails I could waste hours each day, just sitting in my study responding to electronic mail much of which is non productive despite this I have to filter and read many of them to avoid missing something important.

I have briefly touched upon some of the overlooked duties and responsibilities of being a

District Councillor in this busy urban area, much of the work is unrecorded but a necessary part of local government and demonstrates empathy with the community as well as duty.

However it is also very time consuming.

To conclude:

I have listened to the detailed and protracted discussions expressed through open debate at the District Council and I support their proposal for an eight seat reduction of councillors, but I feel that a ten seat reduction is more realistic.

T.M.Boyle

District Councillor for Cheslyn Hay North & Saredon  
Parish Councillor for Littlewood Ward, Cheslyn Hay.