

Press Release

**From Councillor Barry Stamp
Liberal Democrat Group Leader
Stafford Borough Council**

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Housing Deal Could Cost Local Tax Payers Over £3Million

A leading Liberal Democrat Borough Councillor has called on the Council's Conservative run cabinet to come clean on the real costs of providing land as part of its new leisure centre scheme.

Speaking at last weeks joint meeting of the Council's Resources, Leisure, and Regeneration Scrutiny Committees, Liberal Democrat Group Leader Barry Stamp said the Council's cabinet were trying to pull the wool over the eyes of local residents when it came to explaining its plans to provide land for low cost housing as part of the leisure centre scheme.

"As we discovered at the last meeting of the Cabinet, the Council as agreed to provide, free of charge, enough land so the developers of the new leisure centre can build 119 affordable homes to fulfil his obligation under current Council planning policies. However the cabinet are unwilling to say exactly where this land is or indeed its real value. Every time I ask I'm told the new centre will not cost the taxpayers of the Borough a penny, but it appears the true value of land the Council is giving away is not being taken into consideration. I would suggest that a simple estimate must value 119 building plots at somewhere around £3million to £4million. I am certainly not against the new leisure centre but I cannot understand why the cabinet do not want local taxpayers to know they are giving away this much extra land as part of the deal. To tell local people the project is not costing them a penny is a downright lie," said Councillor Stamp.

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Notes to Editors.

- i) Stafford Borough Council planning policies require developers of large housing sites to provide 30% affordable houses as part of the development plans.

- ii) The developers of the new leisure centre have negotiated an agreement with the Borough Council which envisages 300 apartments being constructed on the existing Riverside site. Given Council policy this would result in over 100 of these homes being built as affordable homes.

- iii) As part of the negotiations the Council has agreed that any affordable homes required as part of the planning permission can be built off site, and that the Council will provide, free of charge, the land for these homes to be built on. It is the value of this land that Cllr Stamp is arguing is not being included in the project costs.