

Press Release

From Barry Stamp

**Liberal Democrat Prospective Parliamentary Candidate
Stafford Constituency**

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Lib Dem Blasts Stafford Conservatives Over Bethany Project Closure Call

Stafford's would be Liberal Democrat MP has today criticised his Conservative opposite number for what he describes as unhelpful comment about the towns' Bethany Project.

Barry Stamp said that the call for the closure of Bethany Project hostel in Newport Road showed clearly the hard-line rightwing thinking that currently ran through the Conservative Party.

“Over the years the Bethany Project has faced growing criticism over the way it runs it's hostel for the homeless in Stafford. While I agree that the present building is an eyesore and some of its residents do cause problems I firmly believe it provides a valuable service to the town. Only a few months ago the National Housing Federation published figures that showed over 1600 people were homeless in Stafford Borough. While many of these on the waiting lists with the Borough Council and Housing Associations across the area, many fall through the net because they do not qualify for public sector housing. As a Councillor I recently had to deal with an enquiry from a single man, who through marriage breakdown and redundancy found himself homeless. He approached the Borough Council only to be told they could not help and he was referred by them to the Bethany Project. If the Newport Road hostel was closed down where would he go!” said Barry Stamp.

“Closing down the Bethany Project is not the answer, as it will only result in more homeless people being thrown onto the streets of Stafford. It is naïve to think that should the hostel close there will be less crime in the towns or Victoria Park will not be used by drug takers! I believe that it would be more beneficial for politicians, of whatever political persuasion, to work with the trustees and the management of the Bethany Project to find ways of improving the situation rather than jumping on the bandwagon of fear and recrimination. One has to remember the Bethany Project do not own the current building, which is earmarked for demolition next year and are currently trying to raise funds to buy land on which to build a brand new hostel in partnership with a housing association. Stafford really does have a homeless problem, and closing down the Bethany Project will not make it go away. I will be

writing to Stafford Conservatives asking them to reconsider their position on this matter, and will be asking them to meet with me and a representative of the Labour Party in Stafford to explore how we can all work together to ensure the homeless in Stafford are adequately provided for, ” added Barry Stamp.

Further details from Barry Stamp
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Notes to Editors

- i) In November 2004 Donal Hughes reported to Stafford Borough Council Housing Scrutiny Committee that the Bethany Project claims 80% of its clients are from Stafford Borough and 60% are under 25.
- ii) Barry Stamp, intends to arrange a visit in the next few weeks to the Bethany Project to meet with David Brown, its Chief Officer to discuss the future of homeless provision within the town.
- iii) A photo opportunity with Barry Stamp outside the Bethany Project can be arranged.