

## **SPECIAL COUNCIL**

THURSDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER 2014, 6.30 PM  
LANCASTRIAN SUITE, TOWN HALL, CHORLEY

The following information is being tabled at the above meeting of the Council.

- 5 **Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026: Gypsy and Traveller and Travelling Showpeople : Proposed Allocation** (Pages 142 - 143)

Additional information requested (enclosed).

- 6 **Developing a Proposal for Unitary Status** (Pages 144 - 145)

Letter from DCLG in respect of the Unitary Status proposal (enclosed).

GARY HALL  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

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Dear Councillor

I have received requests from Cowling residents to clarify the position and assumption in relation to the costs per site of any development, particularly in relation to the highways element of costs, which is set out below:

Site	Estimated Cost of Development	Estimated Value	Opportunity	Total
1. Cowling Farm	£560,000 or up to £1,060,000	£300,000		£860,000 or up to £1,360,000
2. Yarrow Bridge	£590,000	£150,000 (commercial use) £6,000 (Green Belt land)		Up to £740,000
3. Cabbage Hall Fields	£520,000	£230,000 (low cost housing)		£750,000
4. Westhoughton Road	£480,000	£96,000 (commercial use) £6,000 (Green Belt land)		Up to £576,000
5. Ackhurst Road	£480,000	£500,000		£980,000
6. Northgate Drive	£480,000	£200,000 (low cost housing)		£680,000
7. Haworth Road (previously named Crosse Hall Lane)	£380,000	£160,000 (residential)		£540,000
8. Harrison's Farm	£600,000	£10,000 (Safeguarded land)		£610,000
9. Hut Lane	£300,000	£3,000 (Green Belt land)		£303,000

#### **Explanatory Note**

The costs for Cowling now include a minimum cost of highways provision up to 25m of road. This is, of course, based on a predetermination of the location of the development within the site. In addition, if the car park was used as access, the spaces would need to be replaced at a cost of circa £30k. The total cost could of course be increased if the length of road required is much longer. However, the analysis now offers members more of a comparison against other sites of the potential cost on as a like for like basis as can be determined at this stage.

In respect of Yarrow Bridge, the assumption is that a road would be required through the site as due to the nature of the site, any development could only take place at the rear of the site and the as so a sum of £60k has been allocated for this together with a further £50k for river contamination protection works.

I have again, for comparison purposes, added in an approximate cost for Ackhurst Road. I have amortised the current rental value as the Council would be required to buy out the current landowner and using this methodology I would anticipate the Council having to pay circa £500k.

The amended analysis shows that the cost differential including the opportunity cost do start to converge for many of the sites, but this is of course based on a number of assumptions, particularly in relation to the potential road layout at Cowling. The figures are shown gross of any grant assistance the Council may get from the Government as until a final proposition is determined it is not possible to estimate any assistance that may be forthcoming. In my comments in the main report I make the point that the site determination should be made on planning grounds. Therefore the financial aspects, whilst important, should not be the overriding factor determining the site to be allocated.

Gary Hall  
Chief Executive  
4 September 2014

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Our Ref: ER/KH/020471/14

01 SEP 2014

Councillor Matthew Crow  
Chorley Borough Council

By e-mail [matthew.crow@chorley.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.crow@chorley.gov.uk)

Thank you for your e-mail of 22 July to the Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP seeking advice on the decision of Chorley Council to conduct a referendum on whether to establish itself as a unitary authority. I have been asked to reply as Minister for Local Government and apologise for the delay in doing so.

I do not think it is correct to say that the Secretary of State encouraged the council to hold a referendum. This is entirely a matter for the council but it would do so in the knowledge of the Government's position on reorganising local government which is that, whilst we do not see unitary authorities themselves as a bad thing, given the precarious state of public finances the Government is of the view that now is not the time to undertake resource intensive and disruptive restructuring of local government. We believe that it is just not sensible to disrupt and distract local government from the core task of devolving and providing services in a cost efficient and effective way for the benefit of citizens – especially when such a change is bound to be controversial. Frankly we do not believe that the solution to the problems of local government lies in unitary restructuring at this present time.

Instead, we believe local authorities should be working collaboratively together across boundaries; there is great potential for more locally-led joint working and sharing of services in local government and between different local public services. Such sharing could be delivered immediately, without complex unitary restructuring or permission from Whitehall.

Nevertheless, as stated in the Government's response to the Heseltine review published in March 2013, where local authorities wish to pursue unitary status, "the Government will not stand in the way of areas that would like to voluntarily adopt this approach where this would unambiguously result in greater efficiencies". However, this would require all the affected councils to agree; in the circumstances I would suggest that, given the impact such a change might have on Lancashire county council, their views would be an important consideration in any proposals for change put to the Secretary of State.

I am afraid we cannot give advice on the type of question that might be used in a referendum were one to be held. Section 116 of the Local Government Act 2003 provides a power that enables local authorities to conduct an advisory poll or referendum. There is no obligation on a local authority to hold such a poll, nor any requirement to act in accordance with the result of such a poll. The extent of this power is broadly drawn, allowing authorities to hold a poll on any matter relating to the services for which it is responsible. The process to be followed and the organisation of such local referendums are entirely at the discretion of the council. I would suggest however that any question ought to be neutrally expressed – the Electoral Commission might be able to provide advice on suitable wording.

KRIS HOPKINS MP

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