

Press release

For immediate release

Enough is Enough

Voluntary Sector offer to Oxfordshire County Council: Work with us to plan a way forward

This afternoon, leaders of leading Voluntary Sector organisations campaigning against the proposed 95 Budget Options in Oxfordshire will meet with the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, Councillor Ian Hudspeth, Director for Social and Health Care, John Jackson and the Chief Executive of Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group, David Smith, to discuss a way forward in the face of crippling budget cuts to already pressured services.

The growing alliance, which includes a widening range of voluntary sector services, information and advice services, and registered care providers, is an unprecedented coalition, voicing concerns about proposals to save a further £70m from Oxfordshire County Council's budgets on top of year-on-year cuts. The £70m includes the original 95 Budget Options cuts of £50m, plus a further £20m announced on 8 December.

On the 26 January, the Council's Cabinet will vote on the proposals, a decision which is likely to be rubber-stamped at Full Council on 16 February.

The Budget Options have been prompted by further national government reductions to local government funding under the Local Government Funding Settlement. Despite these changes to future local government funding arrangements, including proposed retention of local business rates, both decisions, if made as expected, will risk causing serious harm to the wellbeing of Oxfordshire's vulnerable residents and Oxfordshire's communities.

The Enough is Enough alliance says that the 95 Budget Options will affect local vulnerable and elderly people in a cumulative and wide-ranging way; from the wider impact of the removal of funding for subsidised buses to the specific halting of funding for exceptionally high-quality and effective voluntary sector service providers, without whom it is simply not possible to provide social care locally.

A vulnerable person may be someone who has a life-long condition from birth, or one which has crept up over a period of months or years, or a life-changing accident which makes yesterday so much different to today or tomorrow. It could be you or me. All of these issues have a ripple effect breaking on family, friends and our Oxfordshire communities.

Eddy McDowall, Chief Executive of Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers said, "The determination of national government to push further cuts down to local government spending will hugely add to existing pressures in our local NHS services. Further cuts are short-term measures that will cost the tax payer many millions more in the medium and longer term and will sink our health services".

Jamie Miller, Chief Executive Officer at Headway Oxfordshire and Chair, Oxfordshire Neurological Alliance said, "Headway Oxfordshire, and our fellow voluntary sector community provision, saves our NHS many millions annually. These cuts will make community services unsustainable causing misery to vulnerable people and adding costs to our more expensive health services".

Paul Cann, Chief Executive, AgeUK Oxfordshire and Action for Carers Oxfordshire said, “The Comprehensive Spending Review on 25 November failed to recognise the parlous situation of care for vulnerable people already. Discussion about these savings proposals are already causing uncertainty and distress for unpaid carers and older people. The Council must realise that cutting support will hinder people staying active and out of hospitals and care homes”.

The Campaign will inform and enable people to tell local Councillors and local MPs of the impact of the cuts on them.

More details of the campaign are at www.oacp.org.uk/enoughisenough .

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NOTES TO EDITORS

The campaign involves the following organisations:

- Action for Carers Oxfordshire
- AgeUK Oxfordshire
- Alzheimer’s Society
- Citizens Advice Oxfordshire
- Elmore Community Services
- Guideposts Trust
- Headway Oxfordshire
- Healthwatch Oxfordshire
- October Club, Wantage
- Oxford Homeless Pathways
- Oxfordshire Association for the Blind
- Oxfordshire Association of Care Providers
- Oxfordshire Family Support Network
- Oxfordshire District Mencap
- Oxfordshire Mind
- South & Vale Carers Centre

More information at www.oacp.org.uk/enoughisenough