

Answers from parties contesting the May 4th 2017 Gloucestershire County Council elections. We will continue to publish answers received before the election - we encourage members of the public to contact@stroudagainstcuts.co.uk.

We received answers from the Labour Group, from County Councillor Iain Dobie, GCC Liberal Democrat Group Spokesperson on Health on behalf of the Liberal Democrat Group, and from The Green Party. We have not received any response from either the Conservative Party or UKIP. The answers below are copied in their entirety as recieved. We have not included further information from The Green Party so as to keep the format consistent:

1. Do you support the Sustainability and Transformation Plan for NHS Gloucestershire and if (re-)elected what will you to support/improve/oppose its implementation?

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Labour Group:

"The Labour Group does not support the STP and would look to review it at the earliest time. It is not democratic, and is not representative of how decisions should be made. The Tories have made this Plan in secret, and have purposely excluded Councillors from shaping it."

Liberal Democrat Group:□

"To date, the Gloucestershire STP lacks the detail needed to form a judgement on it. Whilst supporting the general principle of better integration of health and social care, we are

concerned that in practice the STP may - after the May elections - reveal itself as a vehicle for 'rationalisation' of services. For which read cuts, e.g. to maternity services at Cheltenham and Stroud hospitals. ';

Green Party:

'The Sustainability and Transformation Plan is a document of little substance, and nationally the Kings Fund has criticized their development due to their lack of funding, strategy, ambitious timeframes, and lack of consultation. Two glaring examples of issues with the STP in Gloucestershire are: firstly, it has been identified that there is a £100m hole in the plan, with no clarity as to where this money will come from. The fear is the money will come from the closure of hospitals and a reduction in beds, a situation, which, if done before there is greater community capacity, will create an even bigger crisis than we already have. Secondly, the plan mentions 'radical self-care' as a strategy for reducing people's need to use health and social care services – but at the same time the Tory administration at Shire Hall have slashed the budget for public health. The Greens believe in a publicly owned NHS. It belongs to all of us. We built it. And we will oppose the further selling off of the NHS in Gloucestershire.'

2) Do you believe the private sector (including Third Sector) has any role in services traditionally provided by the NHS or GP practices, or in loaning or providing capital?

If not, what will you do if (re-)elected to:

- a) prevent further privatisation of services,**
- b) get non-emergency ambulances, community hospital pharmacies and Out of Hours services back into the NHS,**
- c) prevent the use of PFI in Gloucestershire's NHS?**

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Labour Group:□

'The private sector should have little to no role in the provision of healthcare in the UK. We have seen locally what has happened to services when they are contracted out to the private organisations. Labour would look at all available options to make sure that services are provided by the NHS. We will also fight against any more attempts to further privatise the NHS at a national or local level.'

Liberal Democrat Group:

“The Liberal Democrats believe there may be a subsidiary role for private or Third Sector providers, for example in enabling specialist minor surgery to be delivered more quickly and conveniently under NHS direction. Pharmacies, likewise, might provide more services. However we oppose any privatisations which may threaten the essential viability of a publicly funded and provided health service for all.”

Green Party:

“Whilst we believe that there is a role for voluntary organisations in health and social care, we are opposed to privatisation, and don’t believe the provision of public healthcare should result in private profits. Green Party policy is for healthcare and social care to be free at the point of use. We will support the return of privatised services to the council, and to the NHS. We are committed to transparency in all public contracts: and scrutiny of deals – to make sure they are in the public interest. We have seen the costs of PFI to public services and will oppose any proposal to use the PFI for construction procurement in the county.”

3) Do you believe that health and social care in Gloucestershire have the funds they need? If (re-)elected, what will you do about funding of these services?

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Labour Group:

“Health and Social Care is in dire need of help. It has been savaged by the current Tory administration, with cuts close to £11m this year alone. The Labour Group have a plan that would see the Council deliver home care services, create a joined up relationship with the NHS and provide outstanding care to every resident. We would also fight for a proper funding formula to make sure that health and care services were protected.”

Liberal Democrat Group:

“The Liberal Democrats have campaigned, both nationally and here in Gloucestershire, against Conservative cuts to health and social care. Not only do we as a party propose an increase in funding for both, but we have also proposed - in a motion passed at the last County Council meeting - that there should be a major, national, cross-party, commission to agree a long-term and sustainable solution to the issue of funding for both.”

Green Party:

“Health and Social Care are badly underfunded. As a full-time carer said, “it feels like the drawbridge has been pulled up when it comes to accessing services”. We need better scrutiny of contracts, which the Greens will bring through the open contracting motion. We will put pressure on central government for more money, not just roll over as the Tories are doing. Underfunding health and social care is a false economy – as a society we will always have to pay for it elsewhere. For example, poor social care funding makes for delayed transfer of care, or queues and long waiting times at A&E. There are choices which can be made by the County Council, and the Greens will fund social care instead of white elephant projects such as the incinerator.”

4) Where integration of NHS and Social Care provision is proposed, will you work to:

- a) ensure any service previously provided to all remains so and that there is no extension of means-testing,**
- b) oppose any homogenisation of staff employment that reduces terms and conditions?**

Labour Group:

“Means testing has limited use and should not be a default position. The Labour Group would also commit the County Council to signing up to the Ethical Care Charter, which would not only protect front line services but also boost terms, conditions, and pay for the thousands of healthcare workers.

Liberal Democrat Group:

"Yes."

Green Party:

"The integration of health and social care should be an opportunity to deliver better services: not a cover for cuts. We will make the case for investment in long-term change, not short-term fixes that cost more in the long-run.

We will oppose changes that undermine the security and conditions of the social care and healthcare workforce – as supporting staff is essential to making sure good care can be delivered."

5) Will you work with NHS campaigners in Gloucestershire to prevent closures or privatisation of services traditionally provided by the NHS or GP practices and to oppose cuts and changes that will have negative impacts on patients?

Labour Group:

"The Labour Group have a strong record of fighting and standing up for the NHS across Gloucestershire, and we see no reason why that would change."

Liberal Democrat Group:

"We oppose cuts and privatisations which will have negative effects on patients and will work with those campaigners who think likewise. "

Green Party:

"We will continue to campaign with local residents to prevent cuts to health and social care: and to make sure everyone has access to care and support when they need it."