

Campaigners and Councillors raise concerns over plans for Gloucestershire's NHS - PRESS RELEASE

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On Wednesday 22nd March, campaigners from Stroud Against the Cuts [\[i\]](#) handed 775 signed postcards over to Gloucestershire County Councillors. The postcards – which call on councillors to “speak out against the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) as councillors have done elsewhere” – were collected by the group at its week-long campaign hub and exhibition on Stroud High St in February.

[\[ii\]](#)

Councillors from the Labour Party and Liberal Democrats the Green Party's Councillor Sarah Lunnon raised their concerns about the STP, and Ms Lunnon - who was attending her final Full Council Meeting before she steps down in May – formally delivered the stack of 775 postcards to Gloucestershire County Council Leader Mark Hawthorne (Conservative, Quedgeley).

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The 775 postcards were signed by individuals who say they are “deeply concerned” about the £226 million of savings in the plan. Campaigners also raise questions over “a £100m million hole in the capital budget”, saying “The only answers as to how this hole will be filled are hints that the county’s hospital assets will be sold off, or handed over to ‘third party developers’/PFI.”

The number of signed postcards collected in an empty shop in Stroud in one week (775) is higher than the number of responses to Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group’s formal questionnaire for the public, which formed part of its three-month, county-wide “engagement campaign” (638).

[\[iii\]](#)

Stroud Against the Cuts members said the questionnaire was confusing, and that the issues of cuts, potential closures and possible privatisation of services were not communicated.

James Beecher, spokesperson for Stroud Against the Cuts, said: “We don’t know what the feedback to the formal consultation process on the STP looks like yet, but 638 responses to the 6,250 guides the CCG sent out can’t be considered to demonstrate public support for the plans. By contrast, in just a week we were able to collect 775 postcards from deeply concerned people. If we’d collected for longer, or had any budget to collect responses, we know we could have collected signatures from many more than 775 people who do not believe services in Gloucestershire can sustain a further £226 million of cuts, and who are worried about further privatisation of NHS services.

Christine Stockwell of Stroud Against the Cuts added: “In our view the poor response to the consultation reflects the lack of detail in the STP which made it very difficult for people to make meaningful responses because they have not been provided with the detail of changes to services, how they would be reconfigured, whether they would be rationed or cut. The STP was couched in jargon which most members of the public would be unfamiliar with, and it did not give specifics or examples to illustrate what was meant. There was no reasonable basis for

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public to properly assess the proposals.

For a plan that could change the shape of our local NHS so dramatically, this is not good enough.”

Cllr Lesley Williams (Labour, Stonehouse) said: “I am thoroughly concerned about what the STP means for the NHS in Gloucestershire. We are already seeing the effects of seven years of austerity measures, and I am worried about what could happen to all our local NHS services. Councillors have been kept in the dark, as have residents, over the STP, but we will not stop until we know what it means for all of us.”

Cllr Sarah Lunnon (Green, Stroud Central) noted that the UK spends less on healthcare than many other European countries. She continued “rather than looking at ways to reduce even further the amount spent per head via the STP, investing in un-proven IT and reducing local community service, Government, both local and national needs to address the growing issues of social care and life style diseases - so we remain health and are safe and protected when we need help”;. Cllr Lunnon added “The STP is a cloak for hospital closures and service cuts and it is unfortunate that the Chief Executive of Gloucestershire County Council has endorsed this strategy with what appears to be a £100M funding gap - unless of course he knows something which Councillors don't”;

Joe Harris (Liberal Democrat, Cirencester Park) said: “I'm growing increasingly concerned that the STPs will mean cuts to local NHS services such as our community hospitals, we've already seen Cirencester and Stroud Hospital's overnight Minor Injury Units closed. STPs should protect and enhance local services as the NHS adapts to deal with an ageing population.”

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[i] Stroud Against the Cuts is a community group started in November 2010. In 2011-12 it led a successful campaign to prevent community health services in Gloucestershire being handed to a so-called 'social enterprise' outside the NHS. For more information: www.stroudagainstcuts.co.uk

[ii] [Additional photographs from the campaign hub are available on Facebook](#) .

[iii] Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group shared the following recently: "In order to raise public awareness about Gloucestershire's Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP), activity so far has included:

- 6,250 STP short guides have been distributed across the county
- social media stories about STP themes have reached 15,306 people
- there have been 10,749 hits on the STP website

There has also been a 3 month engagement campaign which concluded last Saturday: this included the following:

- there were more than 50 drop-in events / information sessions across the county, giving 1,224 members of the public the opportunity to air their thoughts about the STP
- 638 people completed the STP questionnaire
- social media activity regarding the engagement activity reached 44,146 people

the feedback is currently being analysed with details to follow"

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