

150 volunteers

Address to BANES Council meeting 14/11/13

- Introduce self
- Thank Council for the opportunity to address.

We are protesting against an extraordinary proposal by the Council to reduce funding for local advice services by £225000 or 55%.

•This first appeared in the Council's budget last February when a much smaller cut was proposed. Many of you may not have been aware of it even as the detail was buried deep in the finance report papers.

We believe the current decision has been based on misconceptions and poor evidence and minimal consultation and it is clear that until tonight the Council has never even had the opportunity to discuss the proposal.

•Tried to negotiate and suggest alternative approaches. These were all rebuffed leaving us with no choice but to raise our petition and appeal to the Full Council

•So far 4500 have signed our petition calling on the Council to reconsider its decision demonstrating an enormous strength of local opposition to Cllr Allen's decision made on your behalf.

• It is clear that the Council is out of tune with local opinion.

How has the decision been justified?

The Council says that :-

- 1.It cannot afford to fund what it describes as "generalist advice". It wishes to see more services more closely directed to the most vulnerable. The inference is that the CAB does n't do that.
2. There is duplication as other advice agencies doing the same job.
3. The CAB has large reserves that could help absorb the cut

I will deal with these in order.

Services already directed to those that need them

CAB sees around 8000 people a year from throughout BANES. Or expressed another way 1 in 10 of the local electorate.

Overwhelmingly those clients have multiple problems relating to debt, employment, benefits & housing. It is rare that our clients present with a single simple issue.

An independent analysis of our work by the University of Bath shows that 59% of clients have an income of below the poverty line. 30% have annual incomes of under £7500.

We are the only Nationally backed externally audited organisation providing advice on multiple issues that also gives a single independent point of access.

So what do we want you to do tonight.

We want you to:-

- Stop the tender process**
- Restore the budget to a realistic level for the future.**
- Agree to rethink your approach and examine the future strategy for advice and customer access**

Ask a cross party group of Councillors to look at the details and report back to the Council before any changes are made.

Conclusion

•As your local CAB - here in the City since 1939 - we are fighting for the restoration of the budget so that a proper job can be done at this critical time.

We are fighting for the poor and vulnerable clients we see every working day who are also your constituents.

•We need your help and support to help us do the job properly.

Thank you.