

Bassetlaw Protecting our People and Services

Wednesday March 16th saw the successful, Bassetlaw Protecting our People and Services Public Meeting, at The Crossing Church and Centre in Worksop. Some 60 people attended, including the Worksop Guardian and the event was publicised on the day by Trax FM.

There were 10 speakers, representing both voluntary and public sector organisations and service users. Speakers were: John Hunt, Save our Care Homes Campaign; Jon Leighton, Framework Service Manager; John Murrell, Framework Service User; Dave Potts, Labour District Councillor and Valley School Governor; Grace Perry, UNISON; Alan Rhodes, Labour Leader, NCC; Paul Stafford, NCC, Senior Welfare Rights Officer; Bob Mould, Fire Brigades Union; Maddie Benton, Vice President, North Notts College, NUS; and Barry Donlan, Trades Council. Ann Donlan (UCU Retired) Chaired the meeting and read out statements from Alan Meads at County Enterprise Foods and Mandy Green, Head of Services, Nottinghamshire Women's Aid.

John Hunt, spoke passionately about the Care Homes being "fattened up" for privatisation.

Dave Potts, Valley School Governor, spoke of the secrecy involved in the proposed high jacking of the school into an academy and angrily questioned why the Outward Grange personnel were involved in discussions with school staff, when nothing had been decided.

Maddie Benton, Vice President, North Notts College NUS, raised the mounting difficulties faced by students from more modest financial backgrounds, wishing to remain at College. Especially provocative was the withdrawal of the EMA halfway through courses.

Alan Rhodes, Leader of the Labour Group on the County Council raised the issue of the cuts in services not being restored for generations if the Tories got their way. He also spoke of the attitude of Conservative Councillors to the cuts – arrogant and uncaring.

Grace Perry said that the fight to save jobs was the fight to save services. She called on everyone present to join the TUC demonstration on the 26th March.

Audience contributions included Richard Buckwell who pointed out that industrial action would be needed to defend people's jobs and services. Sandy Smith, from Hope, raised the spectre of increasing numbers of alcohol and drugs related referrals at a time when the services were being closed down.

The Bassetlaw Hospital Save Our Services Group, were resplendent in their red T Shirts and they brought the audience to an appalled silence when they described the effects on mothers and babies of proposed changes to maternity provision.

Barry Donlan, Notts Trades Council said the meeting was a successful rejection of attempts to play off one group against another, through divide and rule and the use of spurious consultations to justify cuts. He called on people to defend the post 1945 social welfare settlement. 1984 had shown that there was no future in following the example of the Notts Working Miners. We should follow the example of our fellow workers in the middle east and 'stand like a Tunisian, walk like an Egyptian and fight like a Libyan'.

The meeting ended with the collecting of names and strong interest in forming a group to fight the cuts to services.