

Address in support of the Motion to recognize World Cancer Day

Cancers are now pervading every section of British society, with more than 50% of the UK population likely to be diagnosed with a malignant disease at some point in their lives, and one quarter of all UK deaths already being cancer-related. Data from the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group collected for 2012 show that 4,364 new cases of cancer, including 930 new cases of skin cancer, were reported within the OCCG area and 1,566 cancer deaths. Oxfordshire has a higher than average number of cases of breast cancer and skin cancer, and a growing population of cancer survivors. And while survival is the outcome we are all working towards, and hoping for, it brings its own problems. Cancers represent not only a serious threat to life but also to the financial security and emotional stability of affected families, resulting in social welfare costs that may ultimately have to be borne by Council departments.

As of the end of 2010, around 20,600 people in the OCCG area were living with cancer, some up to 20 years after their original diagnosis. National trends indicate that Oxford is facing not only a 16% increase in the annual number of new cases by 2025 and a 20% increase in the annual number of cancer deaths but also almost a doubling of its cancer survivor community over the next 15 years. The number of cancer survivors is expected to rise to 40,000 by 2030. It is very proper, therefore, for the City Council to consider practical ways by which it can work with others to help protect the population it serves from this increased threat to their lives.

Oxford, like every other British city, faces severe financial challenges, but it enjoys one unique advantage - its reputation - and we should be marshalling this in the fight against cancer. Oxford can boast world class scientific research talent with an established network of almost 500 cancer researchers, nurses and clinicians; a vigorous voluntary sector and a highly regarded hospice movement, but these strengths largely go unrecorded as features of Oxford life; features that could measurably enhance the city's national and international reputation and attract inward investment.

The 4th of February has been designated by the World Health Organisation as 'World Cancer Day' and has become the occasion for awareness raising and fundraising events by cancer charities throughout the UK. Although both sectors demonstrably do good work, all too often the Third sector and the Public sector operate in busy 'silos' that are distant from each other and they can easily miss opportunities to combine together to launch initiatives addressing the needs of disadvantaged or hard to reach sections of the community. Official recognition is a cost efficient way of building a year long platform for dialogue with the voluntary sector.

The following charities are supporting the Motion for the official recognition of World Cancer Day: Cancer Research UK Oxford Centre; CLIC Sargent; Helen and Douglas House; the International Network for Cancer Treatment and Research UK; Katherine House Hospice; Macmillan Cancer Support; Maggie's Centre, Marie Curie Cancer; Sobell House Hospice; Sue Ryder Hospices. Being the first UK City Council to recognise World Cancer Day and to bring together these different charities as equal partners in a Town Hall event on February 4th offers three benefits:

1. It will provide the catalyst for greater engagement with the charities that can lead to the development of innovative, cost-efficient strategies to improve cancer prevention, early detection, treatment and the support of cancer patients and their carers.

2. It will send a clear message to the citizens of Oxfordshire that members of this City Council, irrespective of their party differences, are resolved to stand together, shoulder to shoulder, in the fight against cancer.
3. It will promote the wider recognition of Oxford's enduring talent for innovation, research and effective community care.

Members of the City Council, you will recognise that you alone have the authority to grant official recognition to World Cancer Day and that this is no empty political gesture but the necessary prerequisite for combined action against a genuine threat. The threat posed by cancer has now spread to every corner of Oxford and the surrounding towns and villages. It has even entered this Chamber. We must fight back but the more fragmented our strategies, the less effective they will be. The fight against cancer demands both solidarity and harmony.

In the memory of those we have lost and all those still living who we cherish most dearly, let World Cancer Day 4th February 2016 be the day that this Council and these charities raise their standards in alliance and begin to turn the tide in this long war against malignant disease.

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