

BROMLEY LABOUR GROUP NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE LABOUR MEMBERS OF BROMLEY COUNCIL

**CRAY VALLEY WEST WARD:
SUE GIBBENS, JOHN HOLBROOK & COLIN WILLETTS**

**PENGE & CATOR WARD:
PETER FOOKES, JOHN GETGOOD & KAREN ROBERTS**

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BROMLEY TORIES LEADERSHIP CRISIS RUMBLES ON

The crisis of leadership amongst Bromley Tories rumbles on after the row between Tory Leader, Russell Mellor, and David Bartlett, Chief Officer of Bromley Council. One Tory councillor posted a note on a Tory website to see if any other councils had got rid of the post of Chief Executive. Russell Mellor survived a vote of confidence at the last full Council meeting, but many leading Tories refused to back him by making themselves absent from the vote. These included deposed Tory Leader and fellow Copers Cope councillor, Michael Tickner. Tickner is currently the Portfolio holder for Children and Young People. George Taylor, Portfolio holder for the Environment and Shortlands Councillor was another one to absent himself at Mellors hour of need! Mellor has displayed all the attributes of weak leadership and indecisiveness once attributed to John Major! He has made conflicting statements at various meetings and is quickly turning Bromley into a laughing stock. He has refused to heed sensible calls to talk to other Tory leaders elsewhere to try and resolve issues that arise with officers. There are 41 Tory councillors on Bromley and not a leader between them! Labour Leader, John Holbrook, led the call for the full council to express its full support and apologise to David Bartlett, but in a private session, the Tories refused to back him. Labour councillors have also been denied access to documents about this matter which were made available to the whole of the Conservative group. The issues involved will not go away and Mellor is now something of a lame duck leader. He is bound to be challenged for the leadership when it comes up for renewal again in April/May.

BROMLEY STILL DEEMED “WEAK” BY AUDIT COMMISSION

Bromley is still deemed “weak” by the Audit Commission in the annual review of council performance which was announced just before Christmas. This is because despite of improvements in education, environmental services and housing benefits over the last year, Social Services still gives cause for concern and its zero rating means the council cannot be rated better than weak. There have been some improvements in Social Services but the level of resources that the Tories have made available and the continued high numbers of agency staff mean that sustained progress is going to be difficult to achieve. The council has major problems in attracting high quality staff that are going to remain loyal to the organisation over a long period of time.

PALACE PARK AND SPORTS CENTRE TO BE TAKEN OVER BY MAYOR/GLA?

At the time of this report in early January, the Council are currently negotiating with the GLA and Mayor Livingstone about the future of Crystal Palace Park when the Sports England lease runs out at the end of March which will leave the council responsible for the running costs of both the athletics stadium and the indoor National Sports Centre. Discussions are continuing with the London Development Agency (the regeneration arm of the GLA) on the proposal which could also include the whole of the park site itself. The Mayor is personally keen to progress the comprehensive modernisation programme developed by the public sector stakeholder group that also includes the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, the Government Office for London, Sport England and English Heritage. This would relieve the Council of a substantial financial liability and protect London's bid to host the Olympics in 2012 as well as save the annual Grand Prix athletics event at the stadium.

NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL GETS FINAL APPROVAL

Final approval for the new secondary school in Bromley was granted by the School Organisation Committee on December 8th. Work is due to start on site at the time of going to press. The new six form entry, Church of England comprehensive school for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 will be built at the junction of Magpie Hall Lane and Bromley Common and will open in September 2004. A suite of temporary buildings will house the school to start with, with permanent works due to be finally completed in Autumn 2005. As a voluntary aided (church) school, the majority of the development costs (approximately £30 million) will be met by government grant. The total cost to the Council in addition to the provision of the site will be approximately £4.2 million with the Diocese of Rochester contributing £500,000 as the sponsors of the scheme.

MAJOR TESCO PLANNING APPLICATION FOR ORPINGTON

Tesco has submitted a major application for outline planning permission to develop the site of Station Road car park and adjoining land in Orpington. The plans include a retail store, parking for over 900 cars with separate floors for use by shoppers, businesses and residents, 64 housing units and space for a medical facility. Also included in the plans are illustrative design details and a Traffic Impact Assessment. The site in total comprises nearly three acres. This follows Tesco's selection as preferred developer by cross-party Executive agreement in June 2002 and the subsequent signing of a conditional agreement for a 125 year lease in July 2003. The application is likely to be considered by the Development Control Committee in February. The proposal was shown to the public at an exhibition in early December.

ADJUDICATOR DECISION IMMINENT RE DORSET RD SCHOOL

At a packed meeting held in Mottingham on 4th December, the Government appointed schools adjudicator, Louise Kidd, considered the future of Dorset Rd Infant school. She heard short presentations from representatives of the Bromley Education Authority, the school, the local community and parents. A decision is imminent at the time of going to press.

LEISURE TRUST GIVEN GO AHEAD

The Council have voted to transfer its acclaimed sports and recreation services to an independent "not for profit" trust in the new year to benefit local users. The facilities to be transferred by April 2004 will include leisure centres, civic halls, golf courses, play and childcare schemes, and sports and arts development.

CONTACTING BROMLEY LABOUR GROUP/SCHOOL GOVERNORS

We are always happy to take up issues that you raise with us. One of the best ways of doing that is on e mail or through the council website - www.Bromley.gov.uk

You can contact councillors by using the same format eg, Peter.Fookes@Bromley.gov.uk

This is the same for members and officers of the authority as well.

We also need to have more school governors. If you are interested, please contact one of us or Janet Heathcote at Bromley.

A reminder that the main elections this year will probably be on Thursday 10th June for both the European Elections and also the GLA/Mayoral Elections.