



**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**

**MARCH - APRIL 2004 EDITION – BUDGET SPECIAL**

**TORIES STUMBLE ON AS COUNCIL TAX RISES BY 7%**

The Tories on Bromley Council have kept faith with their leader, Russell Mellor for the time being but many of his potential successors were lining up to deliver their selection speeches at the council tax setting meeting in late February. Opposition councillors are now running a book on his potential replacement! Many Tory members are admitting privately that his year in charge has been a disaster for them. Labour Leader, John Holbrook concentrated on the services that residents were receiving rather than petty party wrangles when he replied to the debate. He welcomed the full passporting on of the 4.4% increase in government grant to the Education budget and obviously the schools themselves. This is twice the rate of inflation. Many Tories were moaning about the fact that we should have had more but conveniently forgot that for many years under a Tory government, this authority had to make “actual cuts” as our Revenue Support Grant (RSG) was reduced and not just in real terms. It is true that some authorities have received extra increases but Bromley cannot argue that it is in greater need than other areas even though we do have pockets of deprivation. The Tory government never gave Bromley special treatment so why should a Labour one?

**TORIES REFUSE TO FUND PROJECTS AS SRB COMES TO AN END**

The more deprived areas of the borough missed out again as the Tories refused to take over funding for some of the projects that were funded in the Crays (£1.7 Million) and Crystal Palace (£14 Million) areas by the government Single Regeneration Budget scheme (SRB). This was despite the fact that Graham Arthur, the Tory Portfolio holder for the Local Economy supported them. Additional contributions (leverage) from partner organisations have generated in excess of £50 Million over the 5 years of the Cray Valley SRB and the 7 years of the Crystal Palace scheme. Officers were proposing a total budget of £300,000 for the next financial year to continue town centre management (TCM) which has been very successful in encouraging businesses to expand and relocate in the more deprived parts of the borough. It has helped reduced crime as 60 businesses in the Penge area are now linked up by radio and can alert each other to potential problems of shoplifting etc. Community Development workers and a Bromley Regeneration fund were also included in that figure. The Tories have promised to look at other ways of funding some of these projects but why should businesses and other organisations be encouraged to contribute when the council will not play its part. Many of our neighbouring boroughs of various political hues have opted to carry on this work, why does Bromley have to be so different?

**JOHN GETGOOD HIGHLIGHTS PROBLEMS OF PUPIL REFERRAL SERVICE**

Penge and Cator Councillor John Getgood highlighted the problems of the Pupil Referral Service in his speech to the council tax-setting meeting. This was a service that Ofsted had identified and was in special measures. This section looks after those pupils who have been excluded from school. Unfortunately there is no sign of these numbers decreasing. Bromley seems very loath to copy good practise from elsewhere e.g. Bexley. This is particularly the case if they are not of the same political hue as us. Ofsted identified the poor accommodation of the service. It is currently

located in units near Ravensbourne School in Hayes Lane, Bromley.

### **BROMLEY RESIDENTS DESERVE BETTER**

Peter Fookes and the rest of the Labour group reminded the Tories that the Council was still classified as “weak” by the Audit Commission and even if that was a bit unfair, then the residents of Bromley deserve and expect a “Rolls Royce service” from the council which they are not receiving. The roads are deteriorating and while Bromley Tories are obsessed with having a low council tax, then there is likely to be little prospect of major improvements in Social Services. Vacancy levels remain high at between 25 and 30% in some sections of the Social Services and Housing Department.

### **TESCO PLANNING APPLICATION FOR ORPINGTON DEFERRED**

Tesco had their application for a major new store in Orpington deferred at the February meeting of the Development Control committee. A further report will go to the next meeting on 20th April. Further consideration is being given to issues concerning the bulk, height and footprint of the development and its impact on Orchard Grove and its frontage on Station Rd. In addition, plans for traffic management and parking are to be reviewed. The scheme also comprises new housing and a health facility and will need to be approved by the Mayor for London and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister.

### **ADJUDICATOR REJECTS DORSET RD SCHOOL CLOSURE**

Schools Adjudicator Louise Kidd has announced her rejection of the proposal to close Dorset Rd Infant School in Mottingham much to the chagrin of Tory councillors and in particular the Portfolio holder; Michael Tickner. He is currently considering his next move at the time of going to press. Louise Kidd highlighted her concerns re the proposal. She felt that the Council was relying on some places being available in schools within Lewisham and Greenwich and that some of these would not be accessible unless parents had their own transport. She also considered that the low intake of pupils (19) in 2003-4 was partly due to the threat of closure and that new housing developments in the area would increase the numbers in future.

### **COUNCIL TAX FIGURES FOR 2004-5**

The figures for 2004/5 are as follows;

BAND A	=	£693.66	BAND E	=	£1271.71
BAND B	=	£809.27	BAND F	=	£1502.93
BAND C	=	£924.88	BAND G	=	£1734.15
BAND D	=	£1040.49	BAND H	=	£2080.98

### **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 email or through the council website – [www.Bromley.gov.uk](http://www.Bromley.gov.uk)

You can contact councillors by using the same format eg, [Peter.Fookes@Bromley.gov.uk](mailto: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.