

**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 SET TO CLOSE DAY CENTRE FOR THE ELDERLY**

Bromley Tories are set to close a day centre for the elderly in Beckenham Rd, Beckenham. The Rachel Notley centre currently provides day care facilities for 66 users. The decision was made by the new Portfolio holder for Social Care, Health and Housing, Chris Phillips at a meeting in June. The Labour group were refused by the Mayor to move a motion on this subject at the July Council meeting. The reason being that the decision had been called in and will now go to a meeting of the Social Care, Health and Housing Policy Development and Scrutiny committee to be held on Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> July at 7-30pm. Despite the protests of Labour Leader, John Holbrook, it was clear that the Tories did not want any further debate on the matter. The Rachel Notley Centre will be used by the adjacent Mind Centre for those older residents with dementia. Savings expected from this proposal amount to £80,000 a year but the Tories are hardly likely to improve their poor image in Social Services, particularly as they seek to get away from their no star rating. We need to look at best practise elsewhere and see how other boroughs are performing and we need to consult with older people and organisations representing their interests to find out what services they need. We also need to recognise that Bromley has many volunteers who do sterling work for the borough and this sort of decision hardly encourages people to give up their spare time. Current users will be found places at the other day centres in the borough; Melvin Hall in Penge, the Saxon Centre in Orpington, the Bertha James Centre in Bromley and the St Edwards Centre in Mottingham. Former Tory Leaders, Russell Mellor and Michael Tickner both spoke against the proposal at the June meeting and privately many Tories are expressing scepticism over this proposal. It remains to be seen if this is translated into any action at this late stage. Surely the Tories ought to be providing some kind of alternative provision in the Beckenham area? For example, there is a pop in parlour in West Wickham.

**BROMLEY TORIES ATTACK PR AND POSTAL VOTING**

At the July Council Meeting, the Tories came up with two motions attacking the government over proportional representation for the Greater London Authority elections and the full postal ballots held in some regions of the country. Whatever your views on PR, there has hardly been enough time with just two elections based on that system to have any meaningful conclusions drawn. The Tories also need to ask themselves what they have done to increase voter turnout and certainly in Bromley, the answer is nothing. Are residents really wedded to the idea of voting in a polling booth rather than by post?

**SURESTART SCHEME EXPANDS**

The government-funded scheme to improve the life chances of children in the more deprived parts of the borough has been improved further with the news that the Sure Start Penge scheme has expanded to include the whole of the SE20 area. Since the programme began

delivering the health and social care support in March 2002, the scheme has helped over 500 families. The rebuilding of the Groves facility in Woodbine Grove will aid the programme to enable children and families to thrive. This will improve social and emotional development, improve health and the ability to learn. This scheme combined with the government funded Bromley Children's Fund is leading to major improvements in addressing difficult problems across the borough. When did the Tories ever worry about social inclusion?

## NEW SECONDARY SCHOOL ADMISSIONS SYSTEM TO START NEXT YEAR

The secondary school admissions system is set to become fairer and more efficient for children who begin their new education in September 2005. The new system, to be operated by all 33 London boroughs, and the eight local education authorities bordering the capital will operate with parents listing their preferred schools on one form, ranking them in order of preference. The form will be sent to the local education authority (LEA) for the area in which they are resident, where the process will be managed. The nominated school decides whether a place can be offered, applying agreed criteria if there are more applicants than places. On March 1st each year, the LEA will make a single offer to all parents from the places available, taking into account their highest preferences. If parents are unhappy with the school offered, they can appeal for a place directly to any school, which was higher on their list. This will hopefully solve the problems of the "Greenwich judgement" brought in by the last Tory government, which meant that schools could no longer give preference to in borough residents. This led to the bizarre situation of a small number of pupils having to wait well into the Autumn term before being offered a place at secondary school whilst other parents hung on to many offers. The Tories idea of choice soon in effect became schools selecting the pupils rather than the other way round.

## THE STUDIO SAVED

After much debate, the Tories on Bromley finally saw sense and have approved a business plan that will see The Studio in Beckenham re-open as an arts and community venue. John Getgood did a lot of work in bringing this about. A business plan was put together by Prospects Youth Services and local campaigners. Prospects will now lease The Studio from the Council and try to establish the centre as a venue for Bromley Borough and the wider area. This means that the Tories will have to find a new HQ for the new leisure trust, Bromley Mytime.

## BECKENHAM HOSPITAL DEVELOPMENT READY TO START

Planning consent was granted in the Spring for the redevelopment of the Beckenham Hospital site. Work is due to commence shortly. The Bromley Primary Care Trust's application will involve constructing a two storey building, which will include a minor injuries unit, two GP surgeries, dentistry, cardiac, diabetes and footcare departments. The proposed new centre is part of the Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich Local Improvement Finance Trust (LIFT). The NHS LIFT is a national joint venture company able to own property, and rent and lease it to GPs and private sector partners, alongside the national NHS Lift. The Beckenham Hospital scheme is the largest LIFT project in the country. Funds are being made available for a residents parking scheme in an area where parking generally is a major problem. Additional parking will also be made available in the nearby Village Way car park.

## 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](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. You can also use the old snail mail and write to us c/o Bromley Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH. We also need to have more school governors. If you are interested, please contact one of us, or Janet Heathcote at Bromley.