

# **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 TO GAIN 72 EXTRA POLICE OFFICERS**

Bromley borough is to gain 72 extra police officers over the next 18 months as a result of a recent announcement by Sir Ian Blair, the Met Commissioner. 42 will be Police Community Support Officers and 30 ordinary police officers. There is currently a service review being carried out by the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS). Bromley has received the highest increase of officers along with Croydon and Harrow in London. There will be a complete rollout of Safer Neighbourhood Teams (SNTs) across the whole of London in the next financial year, 2006-2007. The first ones in Bromley were in Penge & Cator ward, Biggin Hill, Copers Cope, Cray Valley East, and Hayes & Coney Hall. SNTs comprise one Sergeant, two Constables and four Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) in Bromley with the aim that these officers will be permanently based in a particular ward and develop good strong local community links. Neighbourhood panels are also being established in each ward with representatives from the local community meeting on a regular basis to discuss issues of concern and determine local priorities. Eventually older police stations in the borough could be replaced by a presence in local shopping parades for these new SNTs taking policing closer to the people. Bromley Tories have often talked a good game on crime but fail to deliver. They have failed to support Neighbourhood Watch in the borough and a recent damning report into the youth service means that they have done little to avert young people from getting into crime in the first place. Crime generally is falling but there is still a public perception that that is not the case with the media very good at "hying up" specific cases. Bromley is still a very safe place to live even though there are small pockets of areas in the borough that still need attention due to anti-social behaviour.

## **TESCO EXPANSION PLAN AT BECKENHAM STORE**

Proposals for the expansion of the Elmers End Tesco store in Beckenham were agreed at the October meeting meeting of the Development Control Committee after being deferred at the end of August management. The proposal will see a £2 million investment in a new transport interchange for buses at the site near the border with Croydon. This will link in with the existing train and tram station. The store has been operational since June 1995. The scheme will see an increase in car parking spaces from 393 to 564 and will mean the store would sell white goods for the first time. Labour councillors in conjunction with officers have successfully argued that as part of the agreement Tesco should fund more town centre management initiatives in surrounding areas, particularly Beckenham and Penge.

## **CIVIL PARTNERSHIP DEBATE ENDS IN A TIE BUT TORIES RELENT**

Government proposals to allow same sex couples to celebrate their partnership have finally been agreed by the Executive of Bromley Council at a meeting on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> October. This followed a debate at the full Council meeting in September which ended at a tied vote of 21 all. All political parties had a “free vote” on the issue. The Civil Partnership Act comes into effect from 5<sup>th</sup> December and as you may have read in the local and national media, Bromley Tories have been prevaricating on making a decision on this. There was plenty of Tory bigotry on display during the debate.

## **BROMLEY TORIES TOTALLY UNREALISTIC ON HOUSING**

The Tories have completely rejected the report from the government inspector into Bromley’s proposed Unitary Development Plan (UDP) on housing issues. They seem to want to “man the barricades” and prevent any form of development within the borough. We are not saying that green belt land should be built on but we do have to be flexible in allowing some development in the more leafy areas of the borough, particularly on brown field sites. There is much more call these days for smaller properties, particularly with the large increase in single person households and OAPs. If we are not more realistic, we will probably find targets being imposed by government and nobody would want that. John Holbrook moved an amendment on this at the September meeting, seconded by Peter Fookes, but as ever the Tories were not listening.

## **OFSTED SLATES YOUTH SERVICES**

The Ofsted inspection of the Youth Service took place in June and was very critical of the service being provided to our young people. It described the service as being inadequate with ten recommendations being made for improvements. The service is currently provided under contract by Prospects Services Limited.

The inspectors noted that local authority expenditure on the service was low when compared to national and statistical neighbours. Another false economy from Bromley Tories. The report highlighted the strong commitment of youth workers to young people’s development and their knowledge and also the fact that generally there was a good relationship between staff and youngsters. However, the attendance of young people was poor and their level of achievement was unsatisfactory. There was also no overall coherent training programme for staff and many of the buildings were in a poor state of repair. The inspectors noted that despite some recent improvements that the contract monitoring framework has not been effective enough. This is not the only service in Bromley where this applies. They also highlighted the fact that child protection needed strengthening as a matter of priority and that there was no vision and targets for the service. A draft action plan has been produced with John Getgood highlighting the problems that this service is facing despite the best efforts of staff.

## **SEN PROVISION SEES CLOSURE OF WOODBROOK SCHOOL APPROVED**

The reconfiguration of the Special Educational Needs (SEN) service was agreed at the October meeting of the Council Executive. The proposal will see the closure of Woodbrook School in Beckenham with pupils moving to a new £3.9 Million Rectory Paddock School in Orpington. John Getgood argued the point that it was not fair that pupils with disabilities should be expected to travel from the north to the south of the borough. Alternative use for the Woodbrook site in Hayne Road has not yet been determined.

## **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 e.g., [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 Council (main switchboard (020) 8464 3333).