

BROMLEY LABOUR GROUP NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE LABOUR MEMBERS OF BROMLEY COUNCIL

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This is a report on the Council Meeting held on Monday 28th November.

CHILDREN'S CENTRES - LABOUR DELIVERS

The Government requires all neighbourhoods to have a Children's Centre by 2010 as part of the Every Child Matters agenda. The target is to be met through a phased approach. Phase 1 Children's centres are being delivered at James Dixon School in Anerley, Blenheim Community and Children's Centre in Orpington and Community Vision in Penge. These centres must, in the first instance, serve children and families in areas of deprivation but they will be rolled out across the borough to make sure that all areas are covered. The centres will provide integrated early learning and childcare for 0 to 5 years olds for a minimum of 5 days a week, 48 weeks a year, 10 hours a day. There will also be support for childminders, early identification of children with special needs and disabilities with inclusive services and support for their families. Information will also be provided on nutrition, antenatal support, parenting and access to targeted services, eg, speech and language therapy. This is part of a revolution in childcare which will take time to deliver with long-term results but when did Bromley Tories ever invest in anything like this? It is not that long ago since they were the worst providers of childcare facilities in the country. Indeed you had to be harming your child before you received any access to services. This is part of a holistic approach to childcare with the aim of ending child poverty. Obviously Bromley is not an area of major deprivation but there are issues that need addressing to give children the right start in life.

BROMLEY TORIES ATTACK GOVERNMENT OVER FUNDING

The Tories in Bromley have been bleating on about extra money from the government for services. It is true that Bromley have received less of an increase than other boroughs but they are still far more than we ever received from the last Conservative government when actual cuts in services were made rather than some schemes having to be deferred to future years. **Bromley have received an increase of over 25 % in real terms since 1997 in its revenue support grant.** We are happy to support calls for more money for the borough but we do have to be realistic. Bromley are sitting on reserves of some £50 Million with more to come from the new Tesco development in Orpington. The Tories are also forgetting that Bromley will be getting 72 extra police officers next year. Details of the amount of support all councils will receive during the next financial year are eagerly awaited as we go to press.

SOCIAL SERVICES BUDGET OVERSPENT

Bromley Tories always overspend on the Social Services budget as highlighted in a council question by Labour leader; John Holbrook. We pointed out to them that the budget was too low and that they should have a contingency for those areas where it is difficult to predict demand, eg, children's placements and looked after children. Tory Portfolio holder for Social Services and Housing, Chris Phillips admitted that the budget was overspent by £1.1 Million.

LICENSING LAWS COME INTO EFFECT

The new licensing laws came into being with effect from the last Thursday in November. Despite some of the media hysteria on this subject, no new applications for 24 hour licensing have been asked for in Bromley. Most pubs have asked for an hour or two extra at weekends/bank holidays etc. The new laws also give residents the power to take action against those premises, which are causing a nuisance, which was not the case before as magistrates held sway. The Labour group have called on the council to publish details of individual licensed premises opening hours via the council website. The Council's licensing team can be contacted on (020) 8313 4218.

PLANS FOR RAVENSBOURNE COLLEGE SITE REJECTED

The proposal for 229 dwellings on the Ravensbourne College site in Walden Rd, Chislehurst were firmly rejected by Bromley Tories at the last meeting of the Development Control Committee. Opposition members voted in favour of the proposal, which would have seen extra community facilities, eg, new scout hut and health provision in the Elmstead area.

PRIMARY SCHOOLS DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The Council are currently undertaking a review of primary school provision in the borough. One aim of the exercise is to try and consolidate schools into single or double forms of entry and not have 1 and ½, i.e., 45 pupils being admitted each year. There are also concerns about very small schools given the high unit costs.

BROMLEY TORIES FAIL TO SUPPORT NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

The Tories on Bromley are always bleating on about crime but they have failed to support the near 500 or so neighbourhood watch co-ordinators in the borough. Tory Portfolio holder, Neil Reddin admitted as such in response to a council question. Staff sickness had contributed to the problem but we should not be relying on one member of staff to keep our eyes and ears on the ground informed of what is happening locally.

LABOUR GAIN EXTRA STREET SWEEPING IN BECKENHAM AREA

Thanks to the efforts of John Getgood, the residents of Beckenham and Penge are to get extra street cleaning. Tory Portfolio holder, George Taylor was forced to admit at a recent meeting that the service was not good enough and was very patchy. This was borne out by the fact that only 40% of Beckenham residents were happy with the service in a recent survey. They were much higher in the rest of the borough.

SEASONS GREETINGS FROM BROMLEY LABOUR GROUP

We would like to wish you the compliments of the season and all the best for 2006. Lets hope that we have many more Labour councillors elected in May 2006! 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 have our own website which can be accessed at www.bromley-labour-group.co.uk. 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.