

# **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  
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This is a report on the Council Meeting held on Monday 20<sup>th</sup> February.

## **EDUCATION EXPENDITURE UP FOUR TIMES THE RATE OF INFLATION IN BROMLEY THANKS TO THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT**

The annual council tax setting meeting in February provoked the usual fiery debate but one thing that Tory Councillors could not deny was that the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) was going to be £157,314,000 in 2006/07. This represents an increase of 7.5% per pupil and is virtually four times the rate of inflation. This grant has been ring-fenced which means that Tory authorities like Bromley which have spent the money on other services in the past will no longer be able to short change education. Bromley has traditionally been one of the lowest spenders. Bromley schools still do relatively well despite having the miserly Tories as their political masters. The government are also introducing three year budget cycles and at the moment the proposal is for £167 Million for 2007/08 which will give schools more opportunity to plan ahead. This is a 7.1% increase. What a contrast to when the Tories were in power nationally and schools were scrimping and saving and actually having to make teachers redundant and struggling to provide basic items. Of course, schools will always need more money but there is no denying that the resources that Labour are putting in are making a difference.

## **LABOUR CALL FOR MORE REALISTIC SOCIAL SERVICES INVESTMENT**

John Holbrook, Leader of the Labour Group highlighted the need for investment in Social Services in his response to the budget debate. The current year budget is overspent by virtually £1 Million just as we had forecast at this time last year. Bromley has enough reserves to meet this figure. This would have added to our capacity to place adults with learning disabilities in appropriate care setting and enabled us to spend more on recruiting and retaining staff. Bromley currently has vacancy rates in Social Service of well over 20%. It would also have made £200,000 available for funding domiciliary care services across all adult client groups, £100,000 for the voluntary sector and £70,000 for people with mental health problems but as ever the Tories ignored our prudent requests for a more realistic budget which would have helped some of the most vulnerable people in the borough. What is the betting that we will be proved right again this time next year and the Social Services budget will be overspent again by a similar amount?

## **72 MORE POLICE OFFICERS FOR BROMLEY**

In the usual tedious Tory attacks on the Mayor for London, they conveniently forget that Bromley is receiving 42 new police community support officers and 30 new police constables in the 2006/07 Metropolitan Police Authority budget. There is also no doubt that Bromley has received a much better bus service since Ken Livingstone took over at City Hall. Much of this would be under threat if the Tories or Lib Dems were to ever get their hands on the levers of power. The Mayoral/GLA budget also includes a roll out of the Safer Neighbourhood teams to every ward in London a year ahead of the election promise. This will ensure that each ward has a dedicated team of between 4 and 6 officers. Police numbers will now go up to 34,000 from 25,000 in 2000 and are at a record number. The 65p a week increase on an average Band D property will also see 89 extra British Transport Police in London. The north of the borough will also benefit from improvements to Crystal Palace Park and the extension of the East London Line to Crystal Palace. The increase includes 38p per week for the Olympics and as ever the Lib Dems want the Olympics but don't want to pay for them and the Tories just oppose anything proposed by Ken Livingstone.

## **BELLEGGROVE DAY CENTRE TO CLOSE AND CHARGES INTRODUCED?**

The Tories are looking at closing the St Paul's Cray Bellegrave day centre for the elderly and transferring clients to the Elmstead centre in Chislehurst. They are also currently consulting on proposals to charge users up to £8.59 a day at the other OAP day centres across the borough. This is in addition to meals and other services which they currently pay for anyway. They are also looking at introducing a similar charge at the day centres for adults with learning disabilities. A final decision will be made by the Portfolio Holder for Social Care, Health and Housing when he has a meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March. Chris Phillips, Kelsey and Eden Park Councillor gave no hint that he was about to change this policy proposal when he answered public questions at the budget setting meeting. There is a lot of confusion being created out there by this mean minded proposal for the sake of £40,000. Many of the day centres already rely on massive voluntary help and fundraising which goes on. The charges will require more staff to implement them. What a way for Bromley Tories to treat the elderly and vulnerable adults in this borough!

## **LABOUR CALL FOR LAW CENTRE AND PLANNING INVESTMENT**

We have called for some of the £5.7 Million reward money that the council has earned from meeting various government targets to be invested into a borough law centre. £100,000 would be enough to "pump prime" the project. We also called for a similar amount to be invested in the Planning Division as vacancy levels are high and the borough has found it difficult to take enforcement action where developers have infringed planning law due to lack of staff. It is one of those things that you either do properly or don't do at all. The 45 conservation areas in the borough also need maintaining and suffer from a similar lack of personnel. As usual, the Tories ignored our sensible requests for investment in these important areas of council activity.

## **ALL SAINTS SCHOOL TO CLOSE?**

Views are currently being sought on the proposal to close All Saints School in West Wickham in August of next year. The school formerly known as St John Rigby Roman Catholic College has never really recovered from the jailing of its' former headteacher on theft charges. This has severely affected parental confidence in the school and despite extra funding, numbers have not increased significantly. Only 45 children are expected to be admitted in September 2006 when the school could take up to 210.

## **CONTACTING BROMLEY LABOUR GROUP**

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 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. We also have our own website which can be accessed at [www.bromley-labour-group.co.uk](http://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.