

BROMLEY LABOUR GROUP NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE LABOUR MEMBERS OF BROMLEY COUNCIL

CRAY VALLEY WEST WARD
COLIN WILLETTS

PENGE & CATOR WARD
PETER FOOKES, JOHN GETGOOD, & KAREN ROBERTS

MAY - JUNE 2006

BROMLEY & CHISLEHURST FACING PARLIAMENTARY BY-ELECTION

The results of the local government elections were overshadowed by the sad news of the sudden death of Eric Forth MP in Bromley/Chislehurst. He had represented the constituency since 1997 and had previously served as a minister in the days when we had a Tory government. A date for the by-election and candidates are not known at the time of going to press. Traditionally this has always been a strong Tory seat but with by-elections, who knows?

JOHN HOLBROOK AND SUE GIBBENS

On what was clearly a very disappointing night for the party, we were very sorry to lose both John Holbrook and Sue Gibbens in Cray Valley West ward on local election night. Both seats went to the Tories. John served as a Councillor for St Mary Cray for sixteen years and then four in Cray Valley West and was previously Co-Leader of the council and served as Mayor for 2001/02. Many of his political opponents also generously acknowledged the work that John has done over that long period of time and were sorry about the result! He has also raised thousands of pounds for third world charities by selling books at the former Orpington Labour Party HQ. Sue Gibbens served in Cray Valley West since 2002 and has taken up many local concerns of residents since then. Hopefully in better political circumstances in 2010, they and others will be back to form a much larger Bromley Labour group.

TORIES GAIN SEATS MAINLY AT THE EXPENSE OF THE LIB DEMS

The main winners with nine gains on election night in Bromley were the Tories. Apart from our two losses in Cray Valley West, they gained seven other seats in the borough. They regained their former seat in Kelsey and Eden Park from Rod Reed who had gone Independent after being fed up with the lack of progress on local issues in Beckenham from the Tory group. They also took two seats in Biggin Hill, three in Orpington and one in Clock House from the Liberal Democrats who had a disastrous night which saw their group decimated with the loss of some very able councillors. The final figures in Bromley are Tories 49 (+9), Lib Dems 7 (-6), and Labour 4 (-2). The count was centralised for the first time in the borough at the Walnuts Leisure Centre in Orpington. Turnout generally was slightly up on the last time that these elections were fought in 2002.

JOHN GETGOOD TAKES OVER LEADERSHIP OF THE LABOUR GROUP

Penge and Cator Councillor John Getgood has taken over the leadership mantle of the Labour group from John Holbrook and will also be the Labour representative on the Executive which is the main decision making body of the council. He was previously the deputy leader. Peter Fookes will remain as group secretary and takes over the deputy leadership from John Getgood, with Karen Roberts being chair and whip of the four strong group. Colin Willetts will continue to fiercely defend the interests of Cray Valley West residents.

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CARR RETAINS TORY LEADERSHIP

Stephen Carr from Bromley Common and Keston ward retains the Tory leadership for a third year running while the other portfolio positions are in a musical chairs situation. Graham Arthur (Hayes and Coney Hall) moves from Children and Young People to Adult and Community Services. He is replaced by Ernest Noad (Shortlands). Colin Smith (Plaistow and Sundridge) moves from Resources to Environment and Leisure. He is replaced by Neil Reddin (Hayes and Coney Hall). Feisty Shortlands councillor George Taylor moves from Environment to the newly named Public Protection and Safety. Colin Bloom (Bickley) and potential by-election candidate stays as Local Economy Portfolio Holder. Chris Gaster (Crystal Palace) remains as the sole Lib Dem representative on the Executive with David McBride (Cray Valley East) continuing as group leader.

All these portfolio holders will have scrutiny committees, which will continue to be chaired by the Tories. The main one is Executive and Resources, which will be run by former Council Leader Russell Mellor (Copers Cope).

NEW MAYOR APPOINTED

Charles Joel from Farnborough and Crofton ward was elected Mayor of Bromley at the annual Council meeting in May. He was elected to the council in 2002. He takes over from Joan Wykes (Chislehurst), who retired as a Councillor at the local elections. Bromley Sparks and Deaf Access will be the mayoral charity. Councillor Joel has appointed Tony Owen of Petts Wood and Knoll as his Deputy Mayor.

ALL SAINTS SCHOOL TO CLOSE?

The Council's executive approved the proposal to close All Saints Catholic School after 70 per cent of respondents during a consultation agreed this was the best course of action. Falling pupil numbers and a rising budget deficit mean it would be unsustainable to keep the West Wickham school open and maintain a viable curriculum. Fifty per cent of pupils are from the neighbouring borough of Croydon. It is proposed to close All Saints in August 2007 with a managed transfer of pupils to other schools. The school has never really recovered from the gaoling of a previous head for theft. Officers stressed that the decision does not reflect the standard of teaching at the school and existing parents were happy with the commitment shown by them and they stressed that their children were happy there. It is proposed that pupils in Years 10 and 11 will complete their education at All Saints, those in Year 9 will transfer to other schools in September this year, and Years 7 and 8 will do likewise in September 2007. The final decision on closure rests with the independent Schools Organisation Committee. This is an independent body of the Council made up of five groups representing Bromley councillors, the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, the Learning and Skills Council, and non voluntary aided schools. In the event of the SOC not reaching a unanimous decision, the matter is referred to the Office of the Schools Adjudicator, appointed by, but independent of the Department for Education and Skills.

CONTACTING BROMLEY LABOUR GROUP

We are always happy to take up issues that you raise with us and to keep the Tories in Bromley in check. 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 e.g., 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.