

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**

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2006

TORIES MOAN ABOUT GRANT LEVEL DESPITE 35% INCREASE IN GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The September Full Council meeting saw the Tories drone on about levels of grant from central government. The attacks were led by newly elected Councillor Nicholas Bennett (West Wickham) who has had an interesting political career having been a member of Lewisham borough and an MP for Pembroke. This was seconded by another newcomer, Simon Fawthrop (Petts Wood and Knoll). Bromley Tories are obsessed with the sole goal of having the lowest council tax. Not that the figure here has ever been large. Of course, nobody wants to pay more tax but we are never going to be an excellent authority with this kind of mentality. There is no point in having the lowest council tax if the tree outside your property is not properly maintained or pruned regularly to prevent pavement damage etc. This is an increasing complaint from residents in the north of the borough and I suspect from elsewhere. The question that Councillor Bennett could not answer is why many outer London boroughs, also mainly Tory controlled with similar grant levels to Bromley have decided to have higher levels of council tax? This would give Bromley an extra **£29 Million** which would enable it to become an excellent authority. There has been an overall increase in expenditure in the borough from 2000-01 and 2005-06 of **35%** fuelled by significant increases in specific grants aimed at Education and Social Services in the main. Let us not forget that under the Tories nationally from 1993 to 97, there was a 7% cut in real terms in local government expenditure. Doubtless we could expect something similar should David Cameron ever get his fingers near the levers of power. The Director of Resources, Paul Dale has produced an excellent précis of the current situation in Bromley. If you would like a copy, please contact me. (Contact details overleaf).

COLIN WILLETTS PRESENT TWO PETITIONS TO THE MAYOR

Cray Valley West Councillor, Colin Willetts continued his excellent record of community politics by presenting two petitions to the mayor at the start of the last full Council meeting on 11th September. One concerned a ban on crossover parking in Midfield Way, St Pauls Cray which contained 50 signatures, and the other was about phone masts in Poverest Rd, St Mary Cray which had over 100 signatures. The crossover petition is going to be debated at a meeting of the Environment Portfolio holder in early October. There are clear inconsistencies in the policy on crossovers which were introduced by the previous Portfolio Holder, George Taylor.

PLANNING PERMISSION GIVEN FOR FORMER ARMY AND NAVY SITE

At a recent meeting of the Development Control committee, planning consent was granted for 163 flats on the former Army and Navy depository site in Bromley town centre. The front part is now occupied by TK Maxx. This will involve demolition of the covered footbridge in Ringers Rd. Part of the site has recently been opened as a satellite dialysis unit for Kings College Hospital. 53 units will be for affordable housing accommodation. A previous scheme for 204 flats was withdrawn by the applicants, Legal and General Assurance Society Ltd.

TEMPORARY ICE RINK GIVEN APPROVAL

Bromley is to have a temporary ice rink in a bid to attract more shoppers and visitors over the Christmas period. It will be located at the Queens Gardens site in Kentish Way from 27 November 2006 until 8 January 2007. Up to 100 people will be able to use the facility at any one time with sessions lasting 45 minutes. The facility will be open from 0900 to 2130 Monday to Saturday and 1100 to 1800 Sunday. Tickets will be available from the Churchill Theatre from 9 November 2006 with schools able to make block bookings.

LEARNING DISABILITY SERVICES IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A recent Commission for Social Care Improvement (CSCI) report was a bit harshly pretty critical of the services in Bromley. CSCI judged that the service served some people well but that capacity for improvement was uncertain. The borough has been working with the Local Government training and development organisation (Idea) and those boroughs who attained beacon status to come up with an improvement plan. The Tories have not properly funded this service for quite sometime.

CCTV UPGRADE FOR THE BOROUGH

The CCTV control room for the borough has been upgraded following a £310,000 investment. The room is based at the Civic Centre and the system monitors 160 cameras across the borough. On average, 30 pieces of evidence are taken by police or enforcement officers every month. The upgrade allows for better quality images from the cameras to be stored digitally. Professionally trained operators are in direct contact with the police and other services to alert them to any problems. CCTV was initially installed in Bromley town centre in 1994.

LONDON WIDE SCHOOLS TO ALSO BENEFIT FROM CCTV

As part of the same upgrade, Bromley is going to run a new project designed to cut crime in schools in London in collaboration with the London Grid for Learning. The scheme is being piloted in two schools where broadband links will be used by the cameras to transmit images to Bromley's control room where intruders can be followed on screen, warned over a loudspeaker system that they are being watched and reported to the police. Cameras placed around participating schools will be activated by movement in playgrounds and classrooms to alert the Bromley Control room out of hours. Schools who buy into the scheme will have the peace of mind offered by surveillance that operates when it is really needed – at night, weekends and holidays. If the pilot is successful, it is likely that other schools will buy into the scheme. We are fortunate that this is not a major problem in Bromley schools but it should be of major assistance to those schools elsewhere located in more challenging circumstances.

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