

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

JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2007

This is a report of the Full Council Meeting held on Monday 22 January 2007.

BROMLEY TORIES LOOK TO RAISE CARE CHARGES BY 50%

The Tories in Bromley are currently consulting with users of social care services with the intention of increasing charges for domiciliary care and the community alarm scheme by up to 50%.

Domiciliary care services include help with everyday activities such as getting washed and dressed, shopping, cleaning, and laundry. A series of public meetings are being held across the borough before a final decision will be made by Portfolio Holder for Adult and Community Services: Councillor Graham Arthur. So far, he and his colleagues have failed to show up at any of these meetings leaving officers to take the flak. Approximately a third of those in receipt of the service do not pay, a third pay something towards their care and the other third pay the full rate of £9.27 per hour. The Tories are also looking at reducing future care for those who are currently classified as in moderate need. There are currently four national banding levels based on the Government's eligibility guidance; Critical, Substantial, Moderate, and Low. The Council does not currently provide services for those classified as low need. It does seem a bit of a false economy to stop future help for those in moderate need as surely they will progress more quickly into the substantial category. The Council will continue to help those who are currently classified as in moderate need and who are in receipt of a service.

We argue that we should continue to provide services, even if people have to pay more towards them. A lot of extra government money has gone into Social Services but there has been a large increase in demand, particularly as the number of people aged 85 plus in this borough continues to grow. It costs the Council on average £16 per hour to provide domiciliary care, so in effect the current subsidy is £6.73 per hour. All users would continue to have an individual financial assessment to work out their ability to pay for the service.

Under these proposals, the domiciliary care charges would increase from £9.27 per hour to £14.19 and the Community Alarm monitoring service from £3.04 to £3.44 per week with the full service going from £5.87 to £6.64 weekly - you would need to have more than £21,000 in savings and/or capital to pay the full cost.

COUNCIL TAX MEETING

The Council will set its budget for 2007-2008 on Monday 19 February at 7.30 pm at Bromley Civic Centre with the government looking for increases of no more than 5%.

COLIN WILLETTS TAKES UP CROSSOVER ISSUES

Cray Valley West Councillor Colin Willetts has taken up a number of parking and crossover issues on behalf of residents in his neck of the woods, in particular around Spur Road, Leasons Hill, St Paul's Wood Hill and Midfield Way. The Tory Portfolio Holder for the Environment, Colin Smith has now agreed that the new policy for crossovers to properties should be 4.5 metres as a minimum frontage requirement as opposed to the previous policy of 5 metres which tended to be unfair to those residents with small front gardens. Vehicles must not though overhang the pavement. Other boroughs and the Environment scrutiny committee had suggested that the figure should be 4.8 metres.

TAXICARD SCHEME - BROMLEY TORIES TAKE PEOPLE FOR A RIDE!

After a council question from Peter Fookes, Tory Portfolio Holder for Adult and Community Services, Graham Arthur admitted that 105 people were on the waiting list to receive a taxicard. This London wide scheme which Bromley had up until now refused to join enables people with a physical disability to enjoy a reduced rate fare for cabs. They are more interested in being anti-Ken Livingstone rather than delivering services for the vulnerable people of this borough. Bromley had operated its own scheme but it is proving increasingly popular and is exceeding the budget of £70,000. So much for Bromley Tories promoting independence for people with disabilities in this borough!! Do you know somebody who is on the waiting list for this scheme? We are happy to try and get them a service.

101 CENTRE IN PENGE CLOSED

The Tories on Bromley Council have rejected a motion moved by Peter Fookes and seconded by Karen Roberts to rebuild the 101 Centre in Parish Lane, Penge. This site was formerly used as a youth centre and was being used by various community groups including Platform Penge, Beckenham and Penge Gateway Club and the Pineapple Club. The site has now closed at the end of January. Lets hope that there is no vandalism but it does seem short sighted of the Tories to close it before a decision is taken as to what should be built there.

Officers recommended that community facilities could be included but any developer is not going to provide them unless they have to!! It seems that Bromley Tories have already spent the capital receipt for this site.

The groups themselves have been able to find alternative accommodation in the short term and are looking at forming a trust to work together to ensure a long term solution. The Tories have let this site fall in to disrepair over a number of years and the building does have asbestos but there are other community facilities next door run by the sea and air cadets which have also probably seen better days. With some imagination, it would still be possible to work with a developer to provide housing and new community facilities. As ever, Bromley Tories are not interested in the north of the borough.

BIGGIN HILL INFANTS AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS TO MERGE?

The Council are currently consulting on proposals to merge Biggin Hill Infants and Junior Schools in Old Tye Avenue. The amalgamation would create a primary school for 5-11 year olds, utilising both school buildings. The new school would open in January 2008 and would take 60 children into the reception class each year. Previously, the infants school was three form so the school will now become two form entry due to declining pupil numbers in the Biggin Hill area. Both schools are successful in their own right. A public meeting will be held at the Infants School on Wednesday 21 February at 7.00 pm. Consultation is due to be completed by the end of February.

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.bromleylabour-group.co.uk.

You can also write to us c/o Bromley Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH.