

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

MARCH - APRIL 2007

This is a report of the Full Council Meeting held on Monday 19th March.

BROMLEY TORIES RAISE CARE CHARGES BY 50% AND RESTRICT ACCESS

The Tories in Bromley are increasing care charges for domiciliary care by 50% over a period of three years. 20% will come in 2007/08 and again in 2008/09 with the final 10% coming in 2009/10. Domiciliary care services include help with everyday activities such as getting washed and dressed, shopping, cleaning and laundry. This involves mainly older people but also some younger people with a disability. A series of public consultation meetings were held across the borough in January and February but the Tories and in particular Councillor Graham Arthur, Tory Portfolio Holder for Adult and Community Services left it to officers to field questions and was not present himself. This will see care charges rise from £9.27 per hour to £14.19. At that price, it would probably be cheaper for people to employ their own care workers. Maybe that is what the Tories are trying to do? Approximately a third of people do not pay the charges, a third pay something towards their care and a third pay the full cost of the service. We argue that these charges should have been phased in over five years. We pay tribute to the work of the Kent Messenger group of newspapers who ran a campaign "Fight for Fair Care" which highlighted this issue and had over 603 responses. By their very nature, many people affected by these proposals are isolated and not easily able to protest against these charges. The Tories are also removing access to services for those people who are currently classified as in "Moderate need". Existing residents will continue to receive the service but new ones will not. The Tories are currently looking at getting Age Concern to assist those vulnerable residents who need care which will prevent people deteriorating so as to maintain their independence. More cuts from the Tories. They should also be persuading those older people who are entitled to benefit but not claiming it to access it.

COUNCIL TAX RISES BY 5%

Bromley's Council tax meeting in February saw council tax increase by 5%. Government grant for the Schools budget has gone up from £157 Million to virtually £166 Million. This is a rise of 6%. The Tories in Bromley are always moaning about needing more government money but they also conveniently forget that they also received virtually £70 Million in grants for other services including school Standard Funds, Sure Start, Children's Fund and Supporting People.

BROMLEY COUNCIL TAX FIGURES FOR 2007-2008

Band A = £811.74	Band E = £1488.19
" B = £947.03	" F = £1758.77
" C = £1082.32	" G = £2029.35
" D = £1217.61	" H = £2435.22

101 CENTRE CLOSED BY THE TORIES

The 101 Centre in Parish Lane, Penge was closed by Bromley Tories at the end of January and is set to be sold on the open market despite requests by us to look at working with the private sector to provide some community facilities as well as housing in the area. Various community groups including Beckenham and Penge Gateway Club (A social club for adults with learning disabilities) have been rehoused on a temporary basis. The Tories are talking about having a new library with community facilities in Penge High Street with the closure of Anerley Library but we will believe it when we see it!

BROMLEY TORIES RULE OUT CONGESTION CHARGING AND ROAD PRICING

The Tories on Bromley came up with a motion at the last Council meeting to rule out congestion charging and road pricing in the borough. So much for David Cameron and the new Tory Party being "green"!

Many Tory Councillors are very much out of step with their new leader! There are no plans as yet to introduce such a charge in Bromley but we would not want to rule it out. Indeed the borough has few statistics to quote as to the level of congestion unlike Greenwich who are looking at particular problems around the Blackwall Tunnel. As ever, the Tories try to ignore problems and hope that they will go away. Surprisingly the Lib Dems abstained on this. So much for their "green" credentials!

COLIN WILLETTS TAKES UP ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

St Pauls Cray Councillor, Colin Willetts continues to ask many questions of the Tory Cllr, Colin Smith, the Environment and Leisure Portfolio Holder, on various environmental issues raised by Cllr Willett's constituents relating to tree pruning, footway and highway defects, as well as missed bin collections in the Crays. This is the best way for Labour Councillors to raise residents concerns as it is unlikely that we will win any votes at full council meetings.

POLICY OF CUMULATIVE IMPACT IN BECKENHAM HIGH STREET

A recent report into the effects of the Licensing Act in Bromley show that generally it has had no or little effect on antisocial behaviour in the borough, according to Bromley Police. However, concerns have been expressed about the situation in Beckenham High Street where 43 licenses have been issued. It has been decided on an all party basis to introduce a "Policy of Cumulative Impact" which would presume to refuse all applications for new premises/club licenses or any variations, unless the applicant showed that the application would have no detrimental effect on the promotion of the licensing objectives in the area. A similar policy is also in place in Bromley High Street itself. Ironically, despite media hysteria when the Licensing Act was first introduced in November 2005, the number of pubs in the area seems to be falling, although supermarket sales are increasing.

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