

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**

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2007

This is a report of the November Council meeting.

BROMLEY GOES FROM FOUR TO THREE STAR AUTHORITY

Bromley have gone down from a four to a three star authority, mainly as the result of a mixed report into its children's services. The Joint Area Review (JAR) was critical of the authority in respect of reaching out to people with disabilities and those from black and minority ethnic groups. The Youth Offending Team (YOT), Behaviour Service and Youth Service have all had major problems, although the latter has made progress. Another concern was the fact that health inequalities across the borough between the least and most affluent parts of the borough remain high. As ever, there were good things said about the authority in the report. We are blessed with very committed officers but this is probably a correct assessment of the authority. Nearly half of all authorities were rated as three star with a third obtaining four stars. Previously we had been awarded one star which was a bit harsh. Further details can be obtained on the Audit Commission website. As ever, Bromley Tories are sacrificing decent services on the altar of having the lowest council tax. In terms of efficiency and communication with residents, there is still room for improvement. This applies particularly in respect of new technology where investment in equipment will mean lower revenue costs in future and ultimately savings in the long term.

MAPLE ROAD MARKET

Councillors Fookes and Getgood highlighted the concerns of residents in the north of the borough over the plight of Maple Road Market with a motion to council. The Tories seem content to let it wither and die. There was a time when the Tories were considered the party of the small business/trader but not anymore! Admittedly many markets now find life hard work with changing patterns of consumer spending and the Bromley North market on a Thursday has also suffered but a boot fair which operated in the grounds of St John's School on a Saturday morning until earlier on in the year showed that there is still a demand for this sort of thing. It needs to be promoted and stallholders encouraged to come. This is having a knock on effect on other traders in Maple Road and Penge as a whole and there are far too many empty shops. Different ethnic groups in the area can help revitalise the market. There has been investment in Penge and hopefully the opening up of the car park in the Blenheim Centre shortly will also help.

LEARNING DISABILITY DAY SERVICES REVIEW

A review is currently taking place following the decision to close the three day centres in the borough. They were the Oakfield Centre in Penge, Leasons in the Crays and Astley at Bromley Common. Bromley had some excellent ideas for modernisation which centred around smaller units across the borough, designed to promote independence and community presence. This was one of the most innovative schemes in the country. Originally there was going to be virtually one per ward and then it came down to half a dozen. Now, all we are going to be left with is the new unit at Cotmandene Crescent and another unit at the Kentwood Centre in Penge which is currently under construction. Parents and carers are not happy with this situation, particularly those with more challenging needs. There are some very good schemes for those who are capable and are now being helped into sheltered work environments being run by the Shaw Trust and the Bromley Mencap JobMatch scheme but many who previously had a five day a week service are now only working a couple of days a week at most. There are issues around staffing as well. The Tories are happy to let officers take the flak for this situation at public meetings.

CRYSTAL PALACE PLANNING APPLICATION RECEIVED

A planning application for the future of Crystal Palace Park was received at the end of October from the London Development Agency. The scheme involves 180 units of accommodation, more public open space and a new regional sports centre and construction of a tree top walkway. It will see the change of use of the caravan site to part residential and part public open space. It is expected to be at least a year before officers are ready to put the proposals before councillors for a decision.

BROMLEY TOWN CENTRE SCHEME CONSULTATION

The Council are currently consulting on proposals for the future of Bromley Town Centre. An AAP (Area Action Plan) is being prepared to guide developments in and around the town centre over the next 15 years. Revised options have been prepared following consultation early last year. These revised plans identify opportunity sites for new and improved shopping, leisure, community, faith, and health facilities as well as additional housing. More details are available on the Bromley website or at local libraries. Consultation is due to end on December 11th.

BIGGIN HILL TO GET NEW LEISURE CENTRE

Proposals to build a new leisure centre at Biggin Hill on the site of the existing library were agreed at the October meeting of the Council's Executive. The £5 Million scheme follows consultation with local residents which saw nearly 40% of them respond, mainly in support of a new swimming pool. The library would be constructed above it. The scheme in Church Road is subject to planning consent being granted. The possibility of using Charles Darwin School has not been ruled out at this stage.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALEX HESLOP

Congratulations to Alex Heslop who has been selected to fight the GLA seat of Bromley/Bexley next May. Alex is a Councillor on Tower Hamlets where he represents Bow East ward. He is an expert in the housing field.

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 or leave a message on our answer phone (020) 8460-0626. We would like to wish you the compliments of the season and all the best for 2008.