

BROMLEY LABOUR GROUP NEWS

NEWSLETTER OF THE LABOUR MEMBERS OF BROMLEY COUNCIL

**CRAY VALLEY WEST WARD
COLIN WILLETTS**

**PENGE & CATOR WARD
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JANUARY - FEBRUARY 2008

This is a report of the January Council meeting.

NEW CONCERT HALL PLANNED FOR THE BOROUGH AT LANGLEY PARK

Bromley are planning to build a new concert hall for the borough at Langley Park Boys School. A feasibility study is currently being undertaken. The school is being totally rebuilt thanks to government funding of £35 Million under the Building Schools for the Future Initiative. The cost of the concert hall would be in the order of £2 Million. In Bromley, there is currently very limited designated performance space of high quality which provides ready access for practice and performance of orchestras (Bromley Youth Music Trust and community) or choirs at affordable costs for amateur use. The aim would be to have capacity for an orchestra of 120 musicians and up to 600 seats. We are happy to support this project and the excellent work that goes on by Bromley Youth Music Trust even though some Tory Councillors have their doubts but it certainly gives a lie to the fact that the Tories in Bromley are hard up and always pleading poverty!!! They are always demanding more money when they need to get their own house in order.

ENVIRONMENT SET TO BEAR THE BRUNT OF TORY CUTS

Budgets are currently being prepared as we go to press and will not be finalised until 18th February but it rather looks as if the Tories will be looking for cuts in the Environmental Services Department. They are currently reviewing public toilet provision within the borough, the emergency repair budget and the graffiti removal service. The intention would be to reduce this to six days a week but this makes life difficult because the only day that shutters of shops could be cleaned is on a Sunday when they are closed. Footway maintenance would also see cuts. Generally Bromley's highways and footways are in a good state of repair but we do need to maintain them. Street cleaning is normally good but there is always room for improvement and it seems that High Streets are not always up to standard. Residents regularly contact us with concerns over the cleansing standard. The cleansing contract needs to be reviewed regularly in these days of 24 hour culture. Bromley also needs to look at improving efficiency and working smarter rather than harder. We need to look at ways of enhancing the new technology to communicate with residents in our quest towards a paperless society. Grants from central government have not been as generous as in the past, but Bromley Tories need to look at new ways of working.

BLUE CIRCLE SITE AT BROMLEY COMMON

A government inspector has allowed the appeal by Asprey Homes for development at Bromley Common on the former sports ground site in Crown Lane. One of the reasons for allowing the appeal was the fact that Bromley Council had failed to find sufficient land for housing development in the borough. The scheme will see 788 units built, comprising a mixture of flats and houses with all forms of ownership. Benefits of the scheme include a bus interchange, a linear park, medical centre, nursing home and children's playground. This site was formerly going to be the site of the new secondary school which was subsequently located in Magpie Hall Lane. (Bishop Justus). Bromley Tories have been bleating about this decision but the council owns some of this land so let's see them "put their money where their mouths are" and refuse to sell the land. This will be a large development but we have to ensure that it is implemented sensitively and with minimal effect on existing residents in the area. As ever in Bromley, the demand for all types of housing continues to outstrip supply massively. Higher density though does not have to mean poor quality.

TOWN CENTRE MANAGEMENT

The Council have a small team of officers who look after the town centres in the borough. They have been doing sterling work including working with businesses to improve town centres and to put on Christmas events and markets to generate custom. Much of their income is generated by the businesses themselves. Budgets are being finalised as we go to press and the council tax setting meeting will be held on Monday 18th February but as things stand at present, Bromley Tories are looking at cutting their budget by £5k per annum.

LEARNING DISABILITY DAY SERVICES

A review of day services is currently being undertaken with a report due to go to the Portfolio Holder for Adult and Community Services, Graham Arthur, on Tuesday 11th March. Many carers are concerned following the closure of the Leasons Centre in St Pauls Cray just before Christmas and an admission by Graham Arthur that two thirds of clients are not receiving a five day a week service. The Tories promised new day units in virtually every ward in the borough but to date have only delivered on a new centre in Cotmandene Crescent in the Crays. We support the principle of more independence and smaller units but carers have expressed concerns about the co-ordination of transport arrangements for their relatives. As ever, Bromley Tories try to do things on the cheap and forget that many of this client group find change difficult to handle.

SCHOOL TRAVEL PLAN SUCCESS

Despite the misgivings of some Tory Councillors, Bromley has achieved the highest level of car use reduction on the schools run compared to all London boroughs. This government funded scheme has seen car use fall by 15%. 82 schools across the borough currently have a school travel plan with 14 more in the pipeline. On completion of their travel plan, Bromley schools have received nearly half a million pounds to spend on improvements to their school grounds from central government. This has been spent on playground shelters, barriers across car parks, lighting and CCTV. The WOW campaign (Walk on Wednesdays) sees over 13,000 children walk to school each month. Bromley Tories have been extremely sceptical over the investment required to fund this campaign but it seems to be paying dividends with a reduction in congestion in the borough.

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 write to us c/o Bromley Civic Centre, Stockwell Close, Bromley BR1 3UH or leave a message on our answer phone (020) 8460-0626.

Don't forget the Greater London Authority and Mayoral Election which are now just over three months away on Thursday 1st May; Alex Heslop will be our candidate for the Bexley/Bromley seat.