

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 2009

BROMLEY GETS THREE STARS BUT STILL ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT

The Audit Commission published their assessment of councils in Mid December and Bromley got three stars out of four for the second year running. Many Bromley Tories choose to ignore this assessment and claim that they only take account of the wishes of Bromley residents which is in effect a euphemism for their Tory voters. Many of them think that just because they have got 49 out of 60 council seats that they have similar support on the ground across the borough which of course is not true.

SUCCESS FOR BROMLEY LABOUR GROUP

It is not easy when you have got a small group to make much progress but recently we have highlighted issues and manage to persuade one or two more enlightened Tories of the validity of our case. This has included the Kings Hall Rd sport site in Beckenham where we have managed to get the council to agree to clear the land and then put a charge on the property if the owner will not make the site tidy. Hopefully this policy will be extended across the borough and encourage private owners to keep their property in good condition. A further case has been highlighted in Whitebeam Avenue in Bromley Common. We have also got the council to support the Lewisham Plus Credit Union based in Sydenham with a grant of £10,000 to encourage residents who may not have access to bank accounts to avoid loan sharks by enabling them to have bank accounts and to access credit at reasonable rates.

BROMLEY TORIES GO AGAINST THE TIDE

Bromley Tories have refused to take up nearly £100,000 worth of government funding to provide free swimming for those aged 60 and over. Over 82 per cent of Councils have signed up to this major drive to get England more active. This is part of a £140 million Government scheme to leave a lasting legacy from London 2012. Bromley Tories have also refused to consider taking advantage of a similar scheme for those under 16 and have also lost out on the chance to gain extra funding for capital investment in pools. Bromley Tories have failed to tackle obesity and neglected to promote healthier lifestyles. If Tory run authorities like Wandsworth can sign up to both schemes, why can't Bromley?

BROMLEY TORIES BLEAT ON ABOUT LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCE SETTLEMENT

The January Full Council meeting saw Bromley Tories Colin Bloom (Bickley and recently selected parliamentary candidate for Erith and Thamesmead) and Chris Phillips (Bromley Town and recently selected parliamentary candidate for Lewisham West and Penge) bleat on about Bromley not getting enough funding, particularly as we have a high number of older people. The formula for the Revenue Support Grant is being looked at but it is surely right that any system has the deprivation index as the top priority. With 25% plus actual increases in local government expenditure since 1997, do they seriously suggest that a Tory government would somehow provide extra money to this borough? Councillor John Getgood, Leader of the Labour group provided a stout defence of the government. As ever with Tory motions in Bromley these days, their friends the Lib Dems backed them. It is increasingly difficult to tell them apart. The Tory party national website has nothing to say about local government finance.

HOW CAN WE IMPROVE BROMLEY COUNCIL MEETINGS?

A working party is currently looking at how we can make meetings and the constitution of the authority more relevant to the needs of Bromley residents. The January full council meeting rejected the idea of moving meetings of the Full Council from Monday to Wednesday nights to assist with press coverage. It was though agreed to reduce the number of full council meetings from 8 to 5. Croydon did provide podcasts of meetings on the internet but the take up was not high and the experiment was discontinued. Have you any thoughts on this subject? Of course, if the public gallery is frequently full to near capacity when there are planning issues being discussed.

GOOD NEWS FOR BROMLEY SCHOOLS

The Key Stage 4 Achievement and Attainment tables published on January 15th show a significant increase in the proportion of pupils gaining 5 A* to C including English and Mathematics. The rise of 5 percentage points between 2007 and 2008 compares very favourably with the national position. This reflects the hard work, commitment and professionalism of both students and staff in Bromley's schools as well as that extra government investment which continues to see above inflation increases despite the current economic difficulties.

TUBBENDEN INFANTS AND JUNIOR SCHOOLS TO MERGE?

The council are currently consulting on a proposal to merge Tubbenden Infant and Junior Schools at Sandybury, Orpington. The amalgamation would create a primary school for 4 ½ to 11 year olds, utilising both school buildings. The primary school would open in September 2009 and would take up to 90 children (three forms of entry) into its reception classes each year, the same number as can be currently admitted to the infant school. The deadline for responses is 13th February 2009.

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 or

www.pengeandcatorcouncillors.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 0208-460-0626. Don't forget that the only scheduled election this year is on Thursday 4th June from 7-00am to 10-00pm when the European Elections take place. If you might be away or have difficulty in voting in person, you can vote by post so don't lose your vote. More details are available on the Bromley council website.