

# **BROMLEY LABOUR GROUP NEWS**

## **NEWSLETTER OF THE LABOUR MEMBERS OF BROMLEY COUNCIL**

**PENGE & CATOR WARD  
PETER FOOKES, JOHN GETGOOD & KAREN ROBERTS**

**JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2010**

### **BROMLEY TORIES CRITICISED IN INDEPENDENT CARE REPORT**

As you may have heard on the local news, Bromley was one of eight local authorities across the country to be failing in its duty to provide good adult social care. It was merely deemed adequate. The independent report by the Care Quality Commission was released in early December. Some aspects of the services were rightly recognised as good but waiting times for assessments are too long in some cases and there is a reluctance to spend money on carers. Bromley have also been slow in promoting direct payments which allow individuals to purchase their own care. The report found that 140 out of the 148 councils assessed were performing well and or were rated as excellent. Whilst there are high numbers of people aged 85 plus in the borough, Bromley Tories are more interested in keeping the council tax down rather than providing services to those people in need. There are many staff vacancies that have been left unfilled or covered by locum staff. In an outrageous performance at the December full Council meeting, Cllr Graham Arthur, the Portfolio Holder for Adult and Community Services dismissed the report and claimed that there was not a problem. He even arranged some planted questions to be asked by fellow Conservatives at the meeting but could not even organise that properly as to their credit, one Tory member denied having submitted the question!!! A report will be prepared for a meeting on 16<sup>th</sup> February to come up with an action plan to address the concerns of the Care Quality Commission. More details about the report are on the Care Quality Commission website.

### **LABOUR MOTION ON DIAL-A-RIDE SUCCEEDS!**

At the December Full Council meeting, we moved a motion on Dial-A-Ride calling on the council to consult with users and potential users over the future of this service which has been very much hit and miss of late. A party member recently tried to book a service for a party at 6-00pm on a Friday evening recently and was told that there was no way that he could receive a service. Surely this is not the way to treat people with a physical disability when we are trying to encourage them to be more independent and to reduce isolation? The service is provided by Transport for London with Boris Johnson having ultimate responsibility and a new computer system seems to have caused many problems. A cross borough survey saw 40% of respondents rated the service as poor or very poor. We support a proposal from London Councils (the co-ordinating body of councils across London) to look at all schemes currently offered to those with mobility problems as there are various schemes out there which probably need rationalising. The proposals include the transformation of Dial-A-Ride into borough based bus services managed and operated either by boroughs or sub-regionally with a concept of integration with Adult Social Services and Children's Special Educational Needs transport. We are pleased that the Tories accepted our motion and that a working group is being formed to look at transport issues for those people not able to use public transport easily. Lets hope that Boris Johnson and TFL get their act together on this one.

## **STRONG LEADER AND CABINET SYSTEM ADOPTED FROM MAY 2010**

The December Full Council meeting decided to adopt the strong leader and cabinet system with effect from next May. This will in effect mean that the Leader of the Council will be elected for a four year term rather than annually which currently takes place. The only other option under the Government legislation was to have a system whereby there was a directly elected Mayor as they have got in Lewisham. The Tories nationally are talking about returning councils to the old “committee system” which was the situation prior to 2002. The current system sees the power in the hands of the Executive comprising Portfolio Holders who are responsible for Children and Young People, the Environment, Resources, Recreation and Renewal, Adult and Community Services and Public Protection and Safety as well as the Leader of the Council; Stephen Carr (Bromley Common and Keston). Unusually Bromley has opposition members on the Executive with John Getgood, Leader of the Labour Group being our representative but other authorities do allow opposition members to chair scrutiny committees who look at what the Portfolio holder is doing. This is not the case in Bromley. The Tories were looking at removing the opposition from the Executive but we argued that this should only be done if we could then chair a scrutiny committee. We reminded them that they had been in opposition from 1998 to 2001 and that this could arise again if there was an unpopular Tory government and that they could be similarly disenfranchised. They subsequently decided not to make any changes.

## **COUNCILLOR COLIN WILLETTS**

We regret to announce that Councillor Colin Willetts, (Cray Valley West) has left the Labour Group and is now standing as an Independent Member of the Council. We salute the work that he has done on the ground on behalf of the people of the Crays but he has failed to treat officers and members of the council with the respect that they deserve over a long period of time and has done very little for his colleagues in the Labour Group. He has treated various Mayors discourteously. He is currently putting his name to literature going out in the Crays purporting to be from the Cray Independence Party.

## **PROPOSED EXPANSION OF FOUR BROMLEY PRIMARY SCHOOLS**

The Council is currently consulting on proposals to increase primary places at Bickley Primary from 1 to 2 form entry, Churchfields in Clock House by a similar amount as well as the new Unicorn Primary on part of the former Glaxo Wellcome site in Beckenham. Princes Plain in Bromley Common is looking to expand to two form entry from the current one and a half. Consultation ends on February 19<sup>th</sup>. More details are available on the Bromley Website – [www.Bromley.gov.uk](http://www.Bromley.gov.uk)

## **ORPINGTON IMPROVEMENTS AGREED**

Planning consent has been granted to relocate Orpington Library to the Walnuts Shopping Centre and despite some Tory misgivings over the introduction of a 20mph speed limit in the area, improvements to the High Street comprising a £2.2 Million scheme will go ahead after funding was agreed by Transport for London (TFL).

## **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](http://www.Bromley.gov.uk) You can contact councillors by using the same format eg, [Peter.Fookes@Bromley.gov.uk](mailto: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.pengeandcatorcouncillors.co.uk](http://www.pengeandcatorcouncillors.co.uk) and is regularly updated almost daily by John Getgood. 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 local elections will be held on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May and it is widely believed that that will also be the date for the General Election. You must be on the electoral register to vote in an election. If you need a postal or proxy vote, please contact the Electoral Registration Office at Bromley Council either through the website or by phoning 0208-313-4364. Don't lose your right to vote.