Dear Resident,

I am proud of our reputation for the robust way we manage our finances and refuse to resort to short-term gimmicks. Over the past three years we faced drastic reductions in government funding and many cost pressures resulting in necessary savings of £57 million, achieved through our sound financial planning. This is a story that will not change in the foreseeable future - in fact our planning predicts that we have another £60m to save over the next four years - so we must go on with our comprehensive approach to budget management.

Our strategy is to seek further savings and efficiencies, to redefine services and continue commissioning services from those most able to meet our exacting quality and value requirements. To further protect services to some of the most vulnerable in our communities, the Executive has recommended a 1.99 per cent rise in the Bromley element of the council tax to Full Council who will make the final decision in February. Not a decision taken lightly, but we are determined to make the right choices on your behalf to have sustainable finances in place, not just for next year, but for the longer term. We will turn down the one-off bribe from government this year to freeze the tax because accepting would only store up major financial problems to be faced in future years and is not the financially sound thing to do.

We know from discussions at our public meetings that you appreciate the sensible approach we take for a more sustainable future and I thank you for engaging with us to help make what are proving to be very tough choices indeed for us all.

I’m pleased to say that, despite the pressures, we continue to deliver on our Building a Better Bromley priorities, some of which you can read about in this edition of Update.

Cllr Stephen Carr
Leader, Bromley Council

More information: Budget 2014-15

Mr Ni Zhaoxing Chairman of ZhongRong Group, London Mayor Boris Johnson and Bromley Council Leader Cllr Stephen Carr at Crystal Palace

Plans for Crystal Palace

An exclusivity agreement is in place for sixteen months following an ambitious proposal to rebuild the Crystal Palace to its former glory and to upgrade and restore the park.

The ZhongRong Group requested the agreement with Bromley Council to allow them time to bring about the detailed work required for a planning application. The scale of the Crystal Palace offers the potential to accommodate many different roles including public exhibition space and commercial uses such as a hotel.

Bromley Council Leader Stephen Carr said: “These complex proposals will transform the park itself and the wider area too and it is right that we give the ZhongRong Group the time to properly work up their proposals. An absolutely critical part of this will be talking with and listening to local people and representative groups about their views before a planning application is submitted and in that sense, these proposals are still at an early stage.”

Crystal Palace factfile

- Crystal Palace Park is the Borough’s largest park, it is 180 acres of parkland (with English Heritage Grade II* listing), historic terraces and Grade I listed life-size dinosaurs
- The park was once home to Sir Joseph Paxton’s Crystal Palace
- The building originally housed the Great Exhibition in 1851 in Hyde Park and then, in 1854, it was enlarged and rebuilt in the area now known as Crystal Palace Park.

www.bromley.gov.uk/crystalpalacepark
Tree Cheers for Street Cleaning

A staggering 36,000 trees line our streets presenting a real challenge when it comes to keeping pavements and roads safe from slippery leaves.

Almost scientific calculations take place to estimate leaf fall patterns for different species plus the effect of the weather to ensure the Council’s street cleaning contractor is well prepared to deal with literally hundreds of tons of fallen leaves.

You can play your part too by not sweeping leaves from gardens, drives or pathways into the road - they could block gullies. Instead take green garden waste to a reuse and recycling centre or join the Council’s green garden waste collection scheme, just £60 for 12 months. www.bromley.gov.uk/gardencollections

Recipe for success

Bromley College of Further and Higher Education is set to launch one of the UK’s first-ever Career Colleges, specialising in food and enterprise.

The College’s Orpington Campus will be the location for the new Food and Enterprise Career College, which is planned to open in September 2014, and will prepare students for employment in the catering and hospitality industry.

Students will be able to start at the College aged 14, where they will learn the practical skills they need for work, whilst continuing to study for GCSEs in maths, English and science.

Council Leader, Cllr Stephen Carr said: “I am very excited that Bromley College of Further and Higher Education is launching one of the country’s first-ever Career Colleges. By specialising in food and enterprise, it will provide a good opportunity for our young people to gain the skills they need for career opportunities in this fast-growing sector. This valuable resource will help us towards fulfilling our Building a Better Bromley aim to provide young people with opportunities to enter employment while also supporting our ongoing objective for vibrant, thriving town centres.” www.bromley.ac.uk

Manifesto mission

Bromley Youth Council is encouraging young people to talk about mental health issues. Research for their top manifesto campaign highlighted that young people recognised that adolescence can be a pressurised time with many finding themselves in difficult family situations as well as coping with general pressures of growing up.

Bromley Council’s Youth Support Service and Public Health Team are supporting the work which includes school visits and a handy wallet-size advice leaflet. www.bromley.gov.uk/YouthCouncil

Youth Councillors also worked with Bromley Y, a local agency offering confidential counselling to young people, to make an informative video. www.bromley-y.org.uk

Fraud focus

Bromley has a good reputation for managing its finances and using public money wisely. Part of this is cracking down on fraud. Here is one example from more than 300 fraudulent benefit claimants caught since Bromley and Greenwich Councils started working in partnership to prosecute fraudsters.

Two people pleaded guilty to defrauding Bromley Council of £11,305 in housing and council tax benefits from 2008 to 2013. They failed to declare changes in income and to declare a bank account. Both now have criminal records and received community orders for 150 hours of unpaid work, with £675 costs for one and £575 for the other plus £60 victim surcharge each and must pay back the overpayment.

If you suspect benefit fraud call the Fraud Hotline in strict confidence 0800 169 6975 or email audit@bromley.gov.uk

Read all about it

Library users are pleased with the improved services offered by the new library management system and a choice of more books. Some six million items from 170 libraries can be accessed following Bromley’s membership of the London Libraries Consortium.

Renewing books can now be done online or by phone and notifications can be by email, automated telephone call, SMS text message or by post. To change your method of contact, speak to a member of staff on your next visit to the library and your membership record can be updated. www.bromley.gov.uk/libraries

Paying for it? www.bromley.gov.uk
Fighting Flu

As part of our public health responsibilities we are urging residents who are offered a free flu vaccine to protect themselves and their families this winter. The vaccine is recommended for anyone with a long-term health condition, such as asthma, a heart problem, diabetes, liver or kidney disease, or lowered immunity; anyone aged 65 and over; all pregnant women and carers. For the first time this year, an annual nasal spray flu vaccine is available for all children aged two and three years as part of the childhood vaccination programme. For details talk to your GP or visit MyLife.

Your good health!

Public Health is now part of Bromley Council and in Update we’ll be bringing you regular news and information with links to tips and advice on how to keep in good health. So look out for our special new health page in future issues.

And more good news…

A leading publication for the public sector has judged Bromley one of England’s top health performers. Bromley was named fifth out of 324 in the Municipal Journal’s first guide on how local authorities across the country are performing in terms of their new health responsibilities.

Calling all carers

Do you care for a person aged 65 years or over, who is registered with a Bromley GP?

Bromley Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) is keen to reduce the number of admissions to hospital of people aged 65 and over with a urine infection. This can often be prevented if the infection is identified and treated early. Free training is being offered to teach carers how to recognise the signs and how to do a ‘dip-stick’ test. Taking part in this training could help you keep the person you care for out of hospital by spotting the signs of a urine infection early.

For more information, contact Ellen Baldry or Louise Vincent at Bromley CCG on 01689 866172 / ellen.baldry@bromleyccg.nhs.uk

Healthy Bromley

Cold weather can lead to serious health problems such as heart attacks, strokes, pneumonia and even depression. Make sure that you and your family keep warm and well as temperatures drop. Visit MyLife, the Council’s adult social care website, where there is more information to help people prepare for the cold weather. The local NHS is asking Bromley residents to use the right service when they are ill. Don’t go to A&E if it’s not a serious emergency - other NHS services are available. More information at www.bromleyccg.nhs.uk

How to become a health champion

We want to support residents to be safe and well in their own homes. We now have forty health champions helping identify vulnerable neighbours or friends who might need a little extra help especially during the winter months. Whether it’s making sure someone is eating well or checking on their room temperature it can make a real difference and help promote better health and prevent unnecessary hospital admissions. If you want to know more about becoming a health champion contact healthchampions@bromley.gov.uk
ASB crackdown
Bromley Council is stepping up enforcement action on antisocial behaviour. New CCTV cameras installed in the Crays, following strong representations from residents, have been positioned to help deal with the problem of inappropriately dumped waste. Already nearly 300 incidents have been observed and many people have received warnings or an £80 fine, or a court summons.

Did you know that your dog could cost you an £80 fine if you don’t clean up after him? It’s unpleasant, unhealthy and antisocial – so do the right thing and avoid a fine.

Litter bugs and those who do the unthinkable and spit in the street or drop messy chewing gum are getting their come-uppance too following vigilant work by enforcement officers who issue penalties of £80. Spread the word - bin it or take it home - all in the quest to keep our borough clean and pleasant.

New look for historic area
The first phase of work to revitalise Bromley North Village with extensive street and public space improvements is now complete.

The £5.2 million Bromley North Village public realm scheme started earlier this year and the first phase on East Street is now complete with brand new granite paving, lamp columns and trees. The project will improve and provide an economic boost to the historic area and builds on other long-term developments in the town. The work is now on hold for Christmas trading and will start again in the New Year in Market Square and the High Street. Visit www.bromley.gov.uk/bromleynorthvillage

And before you s-now it!
Inclement weather could be on the cards, but that’s no problem for Bromley’s army of Snow Friends. Earlier in the year more than 200 Snow Friends attended an evening at the Civic Centre to prepare. Snow Friends are volunteers who supplement the operation undertaken by the Council to keep the major routes open. They concentrate on clearing the residential roads as it would be impossible for us to reach every one. The Council provides the salt and shovels and the volunteers the enthusiasm.

Catch up on when and where we are gritting and much more at www.bromley.gov.uk/winter

Electric collection service
Recycle your unwanted electrical items through our new free door-to-door service. The collection service covers any broken or unwanted item, big or small, which needs a plug or battery to work. Please be patient when booking as we expect this to be a very popular service.

Call 01795 434114 or email bromley@sweeep.co.uk

Christmas time’s a-comin’
Checking up on waste collections and our opening hours over Christmas is easy on our website, and don’t forget that you can ‘pay, apply and report’ online when it suits you! All you’ll need to know is at www.bromley.gov.uk/ Christmas

Shop local and get into the Christmas spirit – Biggin Hill, Orpington, Penge, Hayes, Chislehurst, Petts Wood, West Wickham, Beckenham, and of course, Bromley Town Centre. You’ll find a combination of Christmas Markets and entertainment across the borough.

Have a Happy Christmas!