



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

18th April 2019

Labour express disappointment at Red Box amendment

Bexley's Labour Group of councillors have expressed their disappointment that their motion pressing the Government to take immediate action to assist those in period poverty and to work with the Red Box project to provide products to girls in local schools was watered down by Bexley Tories last night.

Labour's motion sought to ask the council to write to Damian Hinds MP, Secretary of State for Education to work to support a scheme for free access to sanitary products in primary schools before 2020 and to work with the charitable Red Box project to support local schools prior to the roll out of a national scheme in secondary schools in September 2019.

Bexley's Tory amendment removed any mention that welfare reforms have led to an increase in period poverty and any mention that the council would support the work of the Red Box project, despite the fact that collection points are located in the council's own libraries which leading Tory councillors denied was the case.

Councillor Nicola Taylor (Erith Ward) who proposed Labour's motion said "The Red Box project is a community led volunteer organisation that have been working hard across Bexley Borough to lessen the effects of Period Poverty. For the council not to support hardworking volunteers in our community is disgraceful"

Councillor Mabel Ogundayo (Thamesmead East Ward), Shadow Spokesperson for Communities said "Whilst I welcome the Conservative Government adopting the Labour policy on sanitary products to primary and secondary schools, 2020 is still some way away. There are still many young women whose health, wellbeing and education will be put at risk and it was disappointing that the administration was unwilling to support a motion with no financial implications to the council's budget. I know Labour members will continue to provide support where we can, including through donation drives as we did last month."

While voting against the amendments to their motion, Labour councillors voted for the substantive motion given their support to abolish period poverty and work with local schools to address this.

-ENDS-

Notes to editors

- Details of the Red Box project and its work to support young people experiencing period poverty can be found at <http://redboxproject.org/about/>

BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP PRESS RELEASE



- Labour's motion seeking to address the issue stated:

“Across the country 137,700 girls missed school last year due to period poverty, not having enough money for sanitary products.

This Council recognises that recent Welfare Reforms have left families of young girls with the choice of not eating to be able to afford sanitary products or missing vital days at school.

This Council supports the Red box project, a community led scheme to discreetly supply products donated by the public to those in need and pledges to promote this scheme throughout schools and academies in the borough.

This Council notes the actions of the Chancellor Phillip Hammond in asking Right Honourable Damian Hinds MP, Secretary of State for Education to design a scheme for secondary schools across England for free access to sanitary products.

This Council will write to the Right Honourable Damian Hinds MP, Secretary of State for Education to request that the scheme includes girls in Year 6 of primary schools.”