



BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 2026

Labour councillors vote for a plan to deliver decent homes and more affordable housing

Bexley's Labour Group of councillors proposed an amendment at last night's council tax setting meeting that would deliver safer housing for Bexley's rapidly increasing private renters, more affordable housing and council housing, more investment in Bexley's highways and pavements, Councillors pay for parking in Bexley car parks and better community facilities and libraries. Instead, Bexley Conservatives voted against these positive solutions and just want to raise your council tax, parking charges, and garden waste collection without any plan to improve council services after years of cuts and council tax increases.

Cllr. Stefano Borella, Leader of Bexley Labour Group said 'We welcome that the Labour Government has provided more funding to councils this year and welcome the return of multiyear funding settlements from 26-27, the first for 10 years that will provide more financial certainty and disappointed that Bexley Conservatives voted against our plans to deal with the housing crisis in Bexley, more investment in our roads, pavements and deliver more income to the council'

Bexley Tories voted against a scheme to introduce a £57.50 per year charge to all Cllrs regardless of owning a car, to those elected on May 7th, 2026. This would be linked to those staff on Bex 07 and equivalent grades

At present Councillors do not pay for parking in the designated car parks under the new car parking permit scheme. These arrangements extend to the designated public car parks (Bexleyheath Albion Road, Bexleyheath Cinema car park and Bowling Alley car park, Bexleyheath - basement only) or staff car parks situated on other sites (including the Learning and Enterprise College), yet in these same car parks they have increased your charges by 12%.

After years of selling the family silver, like parks and open spaces, buildings, council housing and mobile libraries, the councils Director of Finance has identified the councils limited asset base as an increasing risk to the council's potential to borrow and invest in the capital programme

Cllr. Chris Ball, Shadow Cabinet Member for Finance and Corporate Services said "We are stunned that Bexley Conservatives chose to increase 30 minutes stay in Bexley car parks by up to 12%, yet refused to support the Labour amendment for councillors to pay for their parking in the same car parks they now get for free but are happy to increase charges to Bexley residents by way above inflation'

Please note the Labour Group budget amendment for 2026/27 that was voted down by Bexley's Conservative council.

FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP

This Council notes:

The 2026/27 budget includes a 2.99% increase in the share of Bexley's Council Tax and a 2% increase in the Adult Social Care Precept, a total of 4.99% increase, which continues the yearly increases by this Conservative administration since 2015.



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The concerns of residents and businesses across the borough regarding the condition of the council's roads and pavements after years of inconsistent funding, and want long-term plans to deal with this key part of council infrastructure.

This Council therefore resolves to:

Housing:

Develop a new Bexley Housing Strategy to better fit the needs of Bexley residents, to replace the 2020-25 Housing strategy.

Change the BexleyCo business plan to focus delivery on more affordable housing, affordable rental provision, and the building of social rented properties once again in Bexley.

Explore the benefits of opening a Housing Revenue account to allow the council access grants from central government and the Mayor of London.

Supports the Renters rights act that will provide more security of tenure for renters in Bexley

On 1 May 2026, the following provisions will come into force:

- The end of assured shorthold tenancies, fixed terms, and new section 21 notices.
- New and amended grounds of possession.
- Annual only rent increases via section 13 notices (challengeable in the First Tier Tribunal)
- Advance rent limited to one month
- Ban on rent bidding wars
- Discrimination against potential tenants on basis of receiving benefits or having children.

Explore the benefits of introducing a borough 'Rent it Right' licensing scheme on a self-funded basis across Bexley, instead of the presently limited area of Belvedere, to discourage anti-social behaviour and the small number of rogue landlords.

Roads and pavements:

Support the Labour government's record increase of up to £11m for highways over the spending review period.

Libraries/ Community Centres/Council Assets:

Create a community vision strategy to map out service delivery by the council, community partners, health, and voluntary sector to deliver better facilities and community hubs.

Improve outcomes using data delivering appropriate investment in existing council assets and sharing costs across partners.



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Create a long-term sustainable investment plan to renew our libraries and community assets to unlock better service delivery, modern facilities, more housing and to avoid the running down of council assets, like the failure of Parkside community centre, which had to be demolished.

Council Structure/Scrutiny:

Align the Policy team with the OSC team within existing budgets and undertake a democracy review to make council processes work more effectively for the public and the council. This review will improve the effectiveness of scrutiny to make it more focussed on contract performance and procurement, service delivery linked to council objectives, transformation projects and discourage silo working.

Annual Charges for parking for Bexley Employees, agency workers, and consultants

Introduce a £57.50 per year charge to all Cllrs regardless of owning a car, to those elected on May 7th, 2026. This would be linked to those staff on Bex 07 and equivalent grades

At present Councillors do not pay for parking in the designated car parks under the new car parking permit scheme. These arrangements extend to the designated public car parks (Bexleyheath Albion Road, Bexleyheath Cinema car park and Bowling Alley car park, Bexleyheath - basement only) or staff car parks situated on other sites (including the Learning and Enterprise College).

Fees and Charges

Change the implementation of the annual changes to fees and charges policy of the council (those within the discretion of the council) to align with the calendar year (1st January to 31st December) from the present financial year budget setting (1st April to 31st March) this would allow for better analysis and scrutiny of the impact of the previous year's changes.

Local government funding

Welcome the Labour government's commitment to a 3-year funding settlement for the first time since 2017 and after 14 years of uncertainty from the previous Conservative government, who failed to act on the fair funding review. In addition, the removal of the 2-child benefit cap, more funding for free school meals, more school breakfast clubs, homelessness prevention, £150 off energy bills from April 26 and the warm home discount scheme.