

BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP PRESS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Labour councillors welcome decision to sack Serco

Bexley's Labour Group of councillors have welcomed the decision that Serco's contract to manage the council's waste services will end this October but stated there must be strong controls in place to ensure that service levels for residents and an improvement in pay and conditions are implemented under the new contract to be managed by Countrystyle.

Labour councillors have continually campaigned for an improvement in service levels with Serco claiming collections were completed when it was clear this was not the case, for staff to be paid a minimum of the London Living Wage and to stop disparities in pay for workers doing the same jobs.

Cllr Daniel Francis, Shadow Cabinet Member for Places said "We are delighted that after many years of requests from Labour Councillors, that the council has finally agreed that it is time to sack Serco. Sadly however the council will continue to stand by for the remainder of the contract and allow Serco's working practices including pay below the London Living Wage, widespread use of zero hour contracts and agency workers alongside wide disparities in payments for individual staff.

While Conservative Councillors claim it is not their responsibility to resolve this issue, Bexley residents will be rightly asking if they pay their council tax to Bexley Council, why can they not resolve issues with the services they pay for?"

Cllr Stefano Borella, Leader of the Labour Group said "Our 2018 manifesto commitment was to explore bringing waste collection back into council control so that it is managed in a way that works for residents, not shareholders. It has become increasingly clear in service areas such as grass cutting and waste collection, that staff are not being recruited, service levels are not being adequately monitored and services are not being provided at the level our residents rightly expect.

We will therefore be carefully monitoring the commencement of the Countrystyle contract to ensure they are delivering the services our residents expect and that pay and working conditions for staff are strengthened. We will be carefully monitoring the new contract to support residents and staff and exploring alternative options for future management of the service if the issues experienced under Serco continue."

Serco staff are currently undertaking two weeks of industrial action regarding issues relating to a 1.5 per cent pay offer, disparities in pay for workers doing the same jobs, the removal of industrial sickness benefits and Serco's refusal to handover years of back pay, with the Conservative council refusing to intervene and try to find a resolution to the dispute.

Notes to editors

For further information, please contact Councillor Stefano Borella on Stefano.borella@bexley.gov.uk