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/News from
Barnet Post

31st July



Waning
Gibbous
96%/0.51

New Moon
13th August

27th August



Full
Moon
100%/0.5

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Boats on the water at the Phoenix Outdoor Centre and Canoe Club at Brent Reservoir (see page 18)

Credit Leila Davaud

Barnet Council slams City Hall proposals to build on Green Belt

BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY
REPORTER & DAVID FLOYD

Barnet Council has warned Sir Sadiq Khan that he “does not have the remit” to make direct changes to the borough’s Green Belt – after a new City Hall document identified several areas for potential redevelopment.

The comments, made by a spokesperson for the local authority, come in response to the mayor’s new draft

London Plan, which sets City Hall’s new strategic planning goals across the capital. It was published for the first time last month.

The draft proposals, also criticised by Barnet Conservatives, could see new areas of Metropolitan Green Belt land in the capital released for development. This could be particularly significant for Barnet, where numerous Green Belt locations have been identified for potential use.

Part of the draft plan describes

how developments on Green Belt land could be acceptable if they meet “sustainable location tests”. This includes meeting the approved London Plan’s own criteria, or being a government-designated ‘new town’ site, which is the case in neighbouring Enfield.

However, the proposals from the mayor’s office also contain scope for sections of the Green Belt to be developed for “residential-led” schemes if “the vast majority”

of new homes are located either “within 400m” of an eligible bus route or 1.2km – “15 minutes walk” – from a select list of railway stations.

Barnet has been identified as having up to seven of these “well-connected train stations” near “broad locations for growth” that contain Green Belt land.

These are the Northern Line tube stations of Finchley Central, High

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ABOUT

Barnet Post is the borough's free community newspaper: written by and for local people, giving you the chance to learn more about what is going on in your area and to read (and write) stories about what matters to you.

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Zinkin worried council is ignoring residents' concerns over parking zones



BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Barnet Council needs to reconsider “what on earth” it’s doing with its parking policies, according to the local authority’s opposition leader.

The comments were made by Peter Zinkin, leader of the Conservative group at the council, at a cabinet meeting last month.

The meeting on Tuesday, 21st

July had been discussing the next steps for the controversial Underhill ‘experimental’ controlled parking zone (CPZ), after the statutory six-month consultation period for the scheme ended on Sunday, 14th June.

Cllr Zinkin expressed concern that the Labour-led local authority would only be paying lip service to the overwhelmingly negative public feedback the experimental CPZ had received before making its final decision.

Continued on page-2

Barnet, Mill Hill East, Totteridge and Whetstone, West Finchley and Woodside Park, plus the national rail station of Mill Hill Broadway.

It has also identified land near the A1 at Borehamwood East as a “future industrial-led Green Belt candidate”.

Overall, the draft plan sees Barnet’s annual housing target increased by 909 homes to 3,273 per year.

The Local Democracy Reporting Service (LDRS) asked the council for its response to the draft proposals.

In response, a spokesperson for the local authority said: “The mayor’s published draft new London Plan has put forward a case for strategic Green Belt release land to meet both housing and industrial need.

“It has identified broad locations in Barnet, however, the council is very clear that the mayor does not have the remit to make any direct Green Belt boundary changes.

“The proposals contain scope for sections of the Green Belt to be developed”

“We will now carefully assess the detail of the draft proposals before submitting a formal response to the consultation and we will continue to work with residents, communities and partners to ensure any future growth delivers the homes, opportunities and neighbourhoods that people need and want to see.”

The spokesperson also said the council “has had no direct discussions with the mayor’s office or London Plan team on the proposals presented in the draft plan”.

They added that council officers

“I do think that we need to reflect on what on earth we’re doing with CPZs,” said Cllr Zinkin, adding that the council would only be “pretending that the consultation is a real consultation” if residents’ concerns were largely ignored going forward.

He acknowledged that CPZs, like the one in Underhill, may be necessary. Regardless, the opposition leader said that the council needs to be more honest with residents on the weight given to their feedback.

Cllr Zinkin warned: “There may be reasons for what we do – but the way we do it makes residents believe that they are not listened to.”

The issue “really worries” him, he added.

Alan Schneiderman, cabinet member for environment and climate change, responded by pointing to the council’s track record of listening to residents, as evidenced by last month’s decision to review hours of the CPZ in Mays Lane.

The review came after a petition against the CPZ, titled “Stop Barnet Council from killing trade due to parking charges”, received over 1,300 signatures.

Cllr Schneiderman added that public consultations are “not a referendum” – and that the council can make a different choice if needed.

Craig Miller, the executive director of environment at the local authority,

said: “This is a complex item to deal with and it’s very difficult to get something that satisfies all parties. We acknowledge that.”

The senior officer explained that the council had already agreed to reassess its parking policy, including its approach to introducing CPZs, and would decide “whether or not that continues to be right for Barnet”.

With the consultation period concluded, the council is now set to assess its options for the Underhill CPZ. These include making the current arrangement permanent, starting a “new experimental process” – or removing the parking controls completely.

Cllr Schneiderman said the local authority would be analysing all the data and public responses gathered over the past six months before making a decision by “the end of December” this year.

This cabinet’s discussion followed a deputation made by Underhill Residents Group and local resident Gina Theodorou in March.

Speaking at the meeting, council leader Barry Rawlings said he’d be happy to provide further written answers to Theodorou’s deputation and meet with her at a later date “to look at the details”.

“That’s not a formal recommendation but I’m making that as a public promise,” Cllr Rawlings added.

“have since reached out to the London Plan team to engage in a fuller understanding”.

Conservative lead on planning, Shimon Ryde, said: “Barnet residents are increasingly asking what the point of local planning is when decisions are being dictated from Whitehall and City Hall. First the Government sets ever higher targets, then the Mayor signs off on them, and Barnet is left to pick up the pieces.”

Cllr Ryde added: “This proposal by the mayor makes it clear that Barnet is destined to lose parts of the green belt in Totteridge and Mill Hill as well as endure extremely tall buildings that will change the character and skyline of our neighbourhoods forever.”

“As I said in the council chamber: government decrees, the mayor agrees, and Barnet concedes.”



Sir Sadiq Khan
Credit: Wikimedia

NEWS

Council to provide fire safety loans

BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Barnet Council has agreed to loan eligible residents up to £30,000 to improve the fire safety of their homes following a blaze that destroyed a property in North Finchley three years ago.

The incident in June 2023 saw a terraced house in Moss Hall Grove burnt down, alongside severe damage to three neighbouring homes.

A recently-published report describes how the fire at a council-owned property spread rapidly across the terrace of four homes “due to the way the properties had been constructed”.

In June Naisha Polaine, the council’s executive director of growth, signed off on a new loan and repayment policy for owners of freehold properties in Barnet facing similar fire safety risks.

The decision was made in consultation with the council’s director of finance, Anisa Darr. It follows an “in principle” decision made by the local authority’s cabinet in March 2024 to approve the project.

Following the incident in 2023 the council hired “expert building consultants” Capital to identify similar properties that could increase fire risks to residents living in council-owned properties.

In total, the consultants found 153 council-owned homes, seven leasehold homes and 426 freehold properties sold by the local authority under the Right to Buy scheme. The homes, built between

► A house destroyed by a fire on Moss Hall Grove in North Finchley in June 2023
Credit: London Fire Brigade



the 1920s and 1970s, are “believed to be of a similar construction to the homes affected by the fire”.

According to the recent report, the 426 freehold properties “are in terraces interspersed with council owned properties”. As a result, Capital advised the council that remedial works on the council’s homes “cannot be completed without works to the adjacent freehold properties being completed in tandem”.

In response, the local authority has now approved a loan repayment

scheme to help private residents carry out the remedial works. It will give eligible freehold owners the option of taking out loans from the council to carry out the fire safety upgrades.

Residents taking out the loans will have the choice of organising work agreed by the council themselves. They will also have the option of borrowing up to £22,250, including administration costs, from the council for remediation works “on the condition that the works are

undertaken by Barnet Homes”. All loans will need to be repaid to the council in full, including interest.

The biggest loans, with a maximum value of £30,000, will be reserved for vulnerable residents with “minimal finances” living in homes with “unacceptable level of risk”, as established under the Housing Act 2004. These loans will be considered on a “case-by-case basis” and approved by the local authority’s head of housing and regulatory services.

The council has set aside £1.67m from its 2026/27 general fund budget with the principal aim of facilitating the “up-front costs of these works where the freeholder is eligible and requests a loan”.

In its report the local authority said it “appreciates that the costs to freeholders are potentially significant and unplanned for” and acknowledged that many of these residents are also on low income.

The report states: “The aim is to make the situation more manageable for residents, expedite the completion of these works and enable a more tenure neutral approach to these higher risk properties.”

Campaigners against incineration welcome new Green Party chair of North London Waste Authority

BY SEBASTIAN MANN, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Campaigners against a new incinerator in North London have hailed the appointment of a new Green Party-led oversight committee as a “victory”.

Hackney councillor Jacob Cable, who represents Stoke Newington for the Greens, was appointed to chair North London Waste Authority (NLWA) at its annual board meeting in June.

Enfield Green councillor Madeline Church and Barnet Conservative councillor Peter Zinkin assumed the two roles of vice-chair.

NLWA manages waste and recycling services for an estimated two million residents across the seven boroughs of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Hackney, Haringey, Islington and Waltham Forest.

Before the May local elections altered North London’s political landscape – with Haringey, Waltham Forest and Hackney all now led by Green Party

► North London Waste Authority chair Jacob Cable (centre) alongside vice-chairs Madeline Church (left) and Peter Zinkin (right)



administrations – NLWA had been controlled by Labour for many years, under the leadership of Waltham Forest councillor Clyde Loakes.

There are 14 members of the NLWA board in total, with two nominated by each borough council. The new political make-up is now seven Green councillors, five Labour and two Conservative.

The authority is currently overseeing

the construction of a new incinerator at Edmonton Eco Park, which has been increasingly plagued by construction delays.

Due to these delays and other woes, the incinerator will likely not be finished until after 2030 – three years later than when it was supposed to come into use.

In response to news of the Greens now controlling NLWA, a spokesperson for the Stop the Edmonton Incinerator campaign group called the appointments a “major victory for all of us who have campaigned tirelessly to stop the new Edmonton incinerator for close to a decade”.

“The new Green-led board of the NLWA has already shown it intends to scrutinise the rebuild and its

spiralling costs,” they continued.

“This gives us confidence that this marks the beginning of the end of the plans for the new outsized, toxic incinerator for a greener, fairer, less polluting way to manage North London’s waste.”

The NLWA has previously argued that the Edmonton Eco Park incinerator is the “best long-term environmental solution for the waste generated by millions of people”.

Former NLWA chief Clyde Loakes warned: “Not everything can be recycled, and councils will still need a solution to deal with waste.”

Cllr Cable said he would lead the NLWA “in an open and participatory way and ensure that we work to reduce waste in all its forms”.

NEWS



Councillor warns of ‘great danger’ of illegal vapes as council ramps up enforcement

BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Barnet Council’s licensing chair said he would do all he can to crack down on illegal vape sales – warning they pose a “great danger” to the borough.

The comments, made at a full council meeting last month, came from Danny Rich, chair of the Labour-run local authority’s licensing and general purposes committee.

Ahead of the meeting, Conservative councillor Jennifer Grocock submitted a question to her Labour colleague, asking about the efforts being made to reduce the number of vapes being sold to underage children in the borough.

In his written response, Cllr Rich said the council’s trading standards team was taking a “multi-layered approach to prevent the sale of vapes to under-18s” which includes ‘Operation Joseph’, a National Trading Standards initiative targeting illegal and underage vape sales.

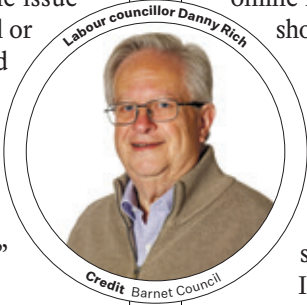
He noted that efforts to address the issue had resulted in more than 7,800 illegal or non-compliant vapes being removed from local shops in the borough in the past year.

Cllr Rich also explained that various measures are being used as part of this campaign, including “undercover test purchase operations” and “rapid” responses to tip-offs from residents.

The licensing chair added: “Together, these national and local measures are helping reduce access to vapes for under-18s and ensure retailers in Barnet meet their legal obligations.”

At the meeting, Cllr Grocock followed up, asking what more could be done to crack down on the issue in order to “protect the health of our young people”.

The ward member for Finchley Church End also asked the Labour administration if it agreed that the next step would be to “actually start closing down such establishments and set an example”.



Cllr Rich thanked the Conservative member for her question, adding: “We need to make sure that we have all the powers at our disposal to both shut down these illegal vape shops and educate everybody about their danger – because they are a great danger.”

“Some even now have ‘spice’ in them, a very serious drug.”

The licensing chair said he “looked forward” to working with Cllr Grocock to ensure the council is able to do its part in addressing the issue, adding: “Where we don’t have the powers we will lobby the government together to make sure we do have the powers.”

Chipping Barnet MP Dan Tomlinson, who is also working for the Labour government as exchequer secretary to the Treasury, in June wrote an article for *Barnet Post* announcing the launch of an online reporting portal for “dodgy” shops that are “local” to the area.

He argued that these premises “undermine legitimate businesses who want the best for our high street”, adding: “They put off investors. They make our high streets feel less safe.”

In the article, the Labour MP told residents he was keen to hear about shops they suspect are “selling harmful, illegal, or counterfeit products, and shops that may be committing fraud, evading tax, or linked to organised crime”.

Tomlinson added: “Where there are grounds for further action, I will raise directly with the relevant authorities – the council, trading standards or the government.”

“The more detail you can give on the issue, the better.”

Jewish ambulance charity attacked this year given ‘freedom of Barnet’ honour

BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Barnet Council’s highest honour has been awarded to an “outstanding” Jewish ambulance service targeted in a “despicable” suspected arson attack in Golders Green earlier this year.

The local authority bestowed the ‘Honorary Freedom of the London Borough of Barnet’ to the Northwest, Edgware and ‘HBS’ branches of the charity organisation at an extraordinary full council meeting last month.

The HBS section of the charity covers Southgate, Cockfosters, Hadley Wood and Barnet.

Community Security Trust (CST), an organisation which focuses on the safety and protection of Britain’s Jewish community, also received the honour, as did Shomrim NW London.

Shomrim NW London is a non-profit voluntary organisation. On its website, the organisation describes itself as “a mobile neighbourhood watch” made up of unpaid volunteers from the local community “regardless of ethnicity or

religious affiliation”.

A report published ahead of the meeting on Tuesday, 7th July said the awards were being bestowed in recognition of the organisations’ “extraordinary service to the borough”.

Four ambulances used by Hatzola were set on fire in Golders Green on 23rd March this year. The incident again raised concerns about anti-semitism and the safety of Barnet’s Jewish community.

In June, the police announced that a fifth person had been charged by police in relation to the attack. They are set to go on trial in January 2027 for the alleged offences.

Shortly after the incident in March, Andrew Walthers, an Orthodox Jewish councillor in Manchester, described how Hatzola ambulances are “not just a Jewish service”.

“If a call comes from within the area, they will come to your aid, whoever you are. There’s no cost to anyone and even on the sabbath, they’ll go to any case,” he added.

In its report, the council said it wished to recognise

“Hatzola’s outstanding contribution to the health and wellbeing of Barnet residents through the provision of a free, 24-hour volunteer emergency medical response service available to all members of the community”.

It continued: “For many years, Hatzola volunteers have responded to thousands of medical emergencies, worked alongside statutory emergency services, promoted community health and helped save and enhance countless lives across the borough.”

“This honour also recognises the resilience and dedication shown by its volunteers in continuing this vital work following the despicable attack upon Hatzola ambulances on 23rd March 2026.”

The report added: “In conferring the Honorary Freedom on these organisations, the council is formally recording the high esteem in which they are held by the council and the community and recognising the invaluable contribution they make to the life of the borough.”



NEWS

Silk Stream project expansion plans approved by Barnet Council

BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

A major West Hendon redevelopment project is set to expand onwards and upwards after Barnet Council approved “essential” plans to add more than 200 homes.

Proposals to build an additional 227 homes at the ‘Silk Stream’ project, located at Unit 4, Hyde Estate Road, were given unanimous approval by the local authority’s planning committee at a meeting last month.

It means the site will take up an additional 18 storeys of the skyline and deliver a total of 1,564 homes – although the maximum height of the scheme is only one storey higher.

This includes an additional 74 ‘affordable’ units, maintaining a rate of affordable housing provision at the site of 34.5% “by habitable room”.

The scheme was originally granted planning permission back in July 2020 in a joint application between St George North London Ltd and Sainsbury’s.

In September 2024 changes were approved to add 28 homes and extra staircases so the West

Hendon development would comply with new fire safety standards.

Speaking ahead of the vote on Wednesday, 15th July, Claire Hammond from developer St George Limited argued that the project “cannot be delivered in its current form, placing the delivery of affordable and private homes at risk”.

She added: “Our priority is simple: to keep the cranes moving at Silk Stream – and this application is essential to achieving that.”

By “that” she meant ‘viability’ – and by viability she meant ensuring the site will make enough money for the developer, now owned by the publicly listed Berkeley Group.

According to a press release published in June, the company made a £451m pre-tax profit in the 2025/26 financial year and was enjoying a “robust financial position with

net cash increasing to £363million”.

Hammond told councillors that major challenges had emerged since the scheme was first approved six years ago, making the updated plans essential for deliverability.

These include “sharp construction cost inflation, changes to building regulations, political uncertainty and reduced investor appetite, driven by taxation and regulatory shifts”.

The majority of the newly-approved changes relate to two tower blocks set to be delivered in ‘Phase 2’ of the scheme, where an additional 220 homes will now be delivered. There, the site’s two tallest buildings, referred to in planning documents as ‘B10’ and ‘B11’, will rise to 29 storeys.

The application also includes changes to the facades of the two tallest blocks and improvements to the site’s green spaces. There will also be a reduction in the ratio of basement-level parking, resulting in rough-

ly one space for every four flats, due to the higher proportion of homes.

Previously, ‘Phase 1’ of the project included the delivery of housing in a block referred to as ‘BO9’. This single building was set to have connected sections, rising to 16 storeys in one section and to eleven storeys in the other. Following last week’s decision, this will now be split into two buildings, ‘BO9a’ and ‘BO9b’, rising to 25 and twelve storeys respectively.

The updated scheme will, according to council officers, increase the number of “low-cost” rentable homes from 114 to 286, resulting in “a substantial uplift in genuinely affordable social rent accommodation”.

In a report prepared ahead of the meeting, officers concluded that “the amended height and massing strategy has evolved through a robust designed process” and “would not result in unacceptable townscape, heritage, environmental or amenity impacts”.

Redesigned green space dubbed ‘Silk Gardens’ Credit Makower Architects



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NEWS

Barnet schools part of free breakfast club expansion



Dan Tomlinson MP opening Ashmole Primary's breakfast club Credit Ashmole Primary School

BY DAVID FLOYD

Barnet MPs have hailed the expansion of a national scheme that provides free breakfasts for schoolchildren. Dan Tomlinson, who represents Chipping Barnet, David Pinto-Duschinky (Hendon) and

Sarah Sackman (Finchley and Golders Green) said they were proud that the government is extending its 'Best Start' scheme to more schools in September. The beginning of the new school year will see more than 2,700 schools across the country providing children with

breakfasts which the government says can save parents up to £450 a year – and result in children being more settled and ready to learn from the beginning of the school day. This will mean 680,000 children attending the clubs, compared to 300,000 currently, with

six more Barnet schools joining the scheme (see list below). In a joint statement, the MPs said: "We have been working hard with the Labour government and Barnet Council to get 'Best Start' free breakfast clubs into Barnet's schools. This expansion secures savings for local families when they need it most and will mean every child, no matter their background, can feel the benefits of a nutritious breakfast before school. "We must enable working families to prosper – not force them to choose between their employment and their child's education. "We're proud of this Labour government backing working families and giving kids in Barnet and across the UK the best start in life." Explaining the move, then education secretary Bridget Philipson said: "From September,

families will feel the difference at the school gates: free breakfast clubs at 1,400 more schools, an end to expensive lists of branded uniform, and more free lunches for those who need them. "That's the British childhood this government believes in – and why we'll always fight to give every child the very best start in life." *Schools across Barnet to offer free breakfast clubs from September: Ashmole Primary School*, The Windmill School, Saracens Broadfields, Watling Park School, Tudor Primary School*, Claremont Primary School*, Wessex Gardens Primary School, Mansor Primary School, All Saints' CofE Primary School NW2.* **Part of the first phase of free breakfast clubs operating since April 2025*



Council leader Barry Rawlings

Rawlings backs crackdown on groups linked to Iran

BY DAVID FLOYD

The leader of Barnet Council has supported the government's decision to ban two groups associated with Iran. Barry Rawlings' statement came after Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood announced last month that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the Islamic Movement of Companions of the Right (IMCR) would be proscribed, meaning that it will be a criminal offence to support them. The groups are suspected of involvement in multiple recent attacks on the Jewish community, including the attack on Hatzola ambulances in Golders Green on 23rd March. The then Prime Minister Keir Starmer was a strong supporter of the move. Cllr Rawlings said: "MI5 has identified at least 20 Iranian-state backed plots against people in the UK, and the IRGC is a particular threat to the Jewish community and Iranian dissidents. "The IMCR meanwhile claimed responsibility for the Hatzola ambulances arson in April among other attacks." He added: "Barnet is the local authority with the greatest number of Jewish and Iranian residents in the country. "It is right that supporting or assisting these groups that threaten harm to our residents, will now mean long custodial sentences. We thank the Prime Minister, Sir Keir Starmer, and the Home Secretary, Shabana Mahmood, for taking action."

Work to begin on step free access at Burnt Oak Station

BY DAVID FLOYD

Barnet Labour politicians have celebrated the announcement that work on step-free access at Burnt Oak Station will go ahead this summer. The party's councillors for Burnt Oak ward praised the role of their fellow councillor and GLA member Anne Clarke in getting the go ahead for the upgrades to the Northern Line station, which will include a new lift and footbridge. A TfL spokesperson told *Barnet Post*: "Making more tube stations step-free is a major part of our work to make the transport network more accessible. "Work will start at Burnt Oak station later this summer to make the station step-free, following the completion of the scheme's detailed design.

The upgraded station will see a new elevated walkway and footbridge, with a new lift providing step-free access between the island platform and street level. We expect to complete the works by winter 2027/28." TfL say that the station will remain open for the majority of the works but will close for two weeks this autumn while the work to create an opening for the lift takes place. Burnt Oak Labour councillors Sara Conway, Charlotte Daus and Kamal Gurung said: "It has been great working with our Labour GLA member for Barnet and Camden Anne Clarke and our Labour mayor Sir Sadiq Khan to secure these changes for Burnt Oak. No one should be barred from our transport system due to disability, and these

changes will make the station far more accessible. "After many meetings and continued collaboration between ward councillors, TfL officers, the London Assembly member, and Barnet Council representatives, this project will now go ahead. "This is a significant achievement that will make Burnt Oak Station more accessible for everyone, particularly disabled passengers, older people, parents with pushchairs, and anyone with mobility needs." Clarke, who is also a Labour councillor for Cricklewood ward, said: "Labour in London is leading a revolution in

transport accessibility, with now more than a third of the tube network and over half of London Overground stations now accessible. "We will continue to push for improvements throughout the borough, including making Totteridge and Whetstone station step-free."



Burnt Oak Station

NEWS

Councillors united in condemnation of City Hall planning decision



Cllr Charli Thompson

BY JOE IVES, LOCAL DEMOCRACY REPORTER

Barnet councillors have protested a decision by City Hall to overturn the local authority’s rejection of plans for around 1,750 homes. Conservative councillor Shimon Ryde put forward a motion at a full council meeting last month in response to a controversial planning decision by deputy mayor of London Jules Pipe.

At the end of May, Pipe overturned two decisions made by

Cllr Ross Houston



Barnet Council’s strategic planning committee to refuse planning permission for a 1,485-home development at Great North Leisure Park in North Finchley and a 283-home scheme at High Barnet Station’s car park. The move attracted criticism from councillors of all parties and, at the meeting on Tuesday, 7th July, a motion by Cllr Ryde was passed unanimously following agreed amendments. Cllr Ryde accused both the government and Mayor of London Sir Sadiq Khan of acting “to disregard the wishes of local residents and the concerns expressed through the council’s planning committee regarding the High Barnet and Finchley Lido schemes, as well as the serious fire concerns in the Edgware development”. The motion also slammed government plans to reduce the role of elected councillors in planning decisions. Cllr Ryde said: “Development is the single most powerful driver of irreversible change in our communities, and the planning system controls that change. “It must be answerable to residents and their elected representatives. It must be transparent and open to public scrutiny. It must allow residents and elected

members to help shape the future of the places where we live.” In an unusual moment of cross-party cohesion, all members agreed to back an idea put forward by the borough’s only Green councillor, Charli Thompson. Cllr Thompson represents Woodhouse ward, the location of the Great North Leisure Park scheme. Cllr Thompson thanked Cllr Ryde for his motion, adding: “I think there is a huge amount of common ground here.” She continued: “Whatever our political differences, I think we can all agree that people who know their communities best are the people who live in them and the councillors they elected to represent them.” The Green councillor put forward amendments to Cllr Ryde’s motion, including a call to prioritise local housing need over government-led targets. “We need the right homes, in the right places, at the right prices to meet the needs of the people who actually live here,” she said. Cllr Thompson’s amendment was passed with unanimous approval. An amendment put forward by Ross Houston, the council’s deputy leader and cabinet member for homes and regeneration, was also given full support by all members. Speaking ahead of the vote, Cllr

Houston said his group would be happy to support the motion “in the spirit of cross-party co-operation”. Amendments included the addition of extra details, such as a recognition that Pipe is not serving in a political position and “is actually a civil servant – appointed not elected”. “We have a tradition in Barnet of democracy around planning and sticking up for that democracy,” said Cllr Houston. He added: “The commitment to affordable and social homes can still be delivered in the context of local democracy.” Pipe made both decisions in May under delegated authority from Khan. The London mayor is consulted on all planning applications of ‘potential strategic importance’ to the capital. Speaking at the time, Pipe said he recognised the “numerous concerns” regarding the location, density and proposed building height of the Great North Leisure Park scheme. Nevertheless, the deputy mayor praised developer Arada London and said it was necessary to support the development in order to prevent the need for development in other locations, including on the Green Belt. He also commended the 25% affordable housing allocation proposed.

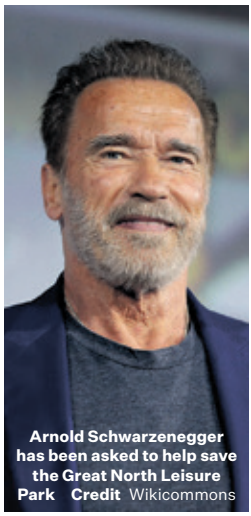
Cllr Shimon Ryde



Campaigners ask Arnie back to save Great North Leisure Park

BY DAVID FLOYD

Campaigners are calling on Arnold Schwarzenegger to honour his pledge to return to Finchley to help save the cinema he opened nearly 30 years ago. The Terminator star, who also had a spell as governor of the state of California, visited what is now the Vue Cinema at Great North Leisure Park (GNLP) in North Finchley in 1996 for the premiere of the film Eraser. During the visit, reported on at the time by GMTV, he used the phrase “I’ll be back” which he popularised in his role as the Terminator. Now campaigners against plans to demolish the cinema as part of a controversial development approved by the deputy mayor of London in May are urging Schwarzenegger to come back and support their cause. In their open letter to the no nonsense former bodybuilder posted on Change.org, the campaigners say: “We are residents of Finchley and nearby areas in North London. Thirty years ago, in August 1996, you opened a large movie theatre in our suburb for the premiere of your film Eraser. It was a momentous event for the community, who turned out to give you a big welcome. People here still remember your visit!” They add: “You told us: ‘I’ll be back!’. Well, now we are asking you to come back. We need your help to save the movie theatre that you opened. It would be wonderful if you could come in person to sort things out, as you do in your movies.” However, they note that an in person visit may not be necessary with the acknowledgement that “California is a long way from here, so we’d understand if you came back to us on social media instead” while requesting a message of support. The letter points out the importance of the cinema to the community: “The Vue is the last big-screen movie theatre in our part of London. We want to keep our giant screens and super sound so we can continue to enjoy great movies like yours.” Barnet Post approached Schwarzenegger’s representatives to ask whether he had any plans to visit Finchley in the near future, while also asking what his views are on the future of GNLP. The Post has yet to receive a response.



Arnold Schwarzenegger has been asked to help save the Great North Leisure Park Credit: Wikimedia

NEWS



Men who came from Spain to graffiti trains in High Barnet sentenced

BY DAVID FLOYD

Four men from Spain who travelled to High Barnet to graffiti underground trains have been sentenced.

Asier Dorado-Alosete, 21, Javier Martinez-Lopez, 30, Juan Palomino Andres-Cabanas, 22, and Galo Adrian Romero-Valle, 21 appeared at Highbury Magistrates' Court on Saturday, 11th July.

They were charged with criminal damage, having articles with intent to cause damage, and trespass on the railway.

The court heard how in the early hours of Wednesday, 8th July, the four men trespassed across live railway lines in High Barnet.

Immediately upon arrival, the four men began to spray large graffiti murals across the side of a train. The group were spotted by staff observing CCTV footage who contacted British Transport Police (BTP).

A search of the area was launched, and officers found and detained Romero-Valle and Andres-Cabanas nearby after they had fled the scene. Unable to explain why they were there, they were arrested and their phones were seized.

Police found bags containing

44 aerosol spray cans hidden in the bushes while the two other men, Dorado-Alosete and Martinez-Lopez, remained hidden.

The arrested men admitted what they had done and were charged. Further evidence was downloaded from their phones which revealed the group had also been involved in a separate incident of criminal damage to a train in Amer-sham on the same night.

Mobile data from the phones also alerted police to the timing of Martinez-Lopez and Dorado-Alosete's flights out of the country on 9th July. BTP officers went to Stansted Airport and arrested the pair as they waited to board their flight home.

All four men were handed five-year criminal behaviour orders and fined £187, while Romero-Valle and Andres-Cabanas were additionally ordered to pay £972 in compensation to TfL.

Martinez-Lopez and Romero-Valle were additionally sentenced to twelve months in prison, suspended for 24 months, while Dorado-Alosete and Andres-Cabanas were sentenced to ten months, suspended for twelve months.

Analysed data also revealed that Romero-Valle had a child

sex abuse image on his phone. He was additionally charged with making an indecent image of a child in Category A and later pleaded guilty.

Sergeant Phil Osafo said: "This was an amazing effort by so many people at BTP to quickly attend the location and arrest those involved, and to later arrest the other two men before they could fly home.

"While these offences may seem relatively low-level, there is high cost involved to train operating companies who have to carry out repairs costing thousands of pounds. It also causes disruption across the rail network as trains are taken out of service to be cleaned."

He added: "The conduct of these men was also incredibly ill-thought out as stepping on the tracks is extremely dangerous. The railway is an unforgiving environment to trespass on and our officers as first responders have sadly seen the horrific consequences of doing so.

"Anyone who witnesses anyone committing criminal damage on the railway network to get in touch with BTP by texting 61016 so we can robustly deal with offenders."

North London mental health trust staff walk out on strike

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

Dozens of staff at North London NHS Foundation Trust walked out on strike last month after negotiations failed.

The staff, represented by GMB Union, are employed by outsourcing giant ISS in a variety of roles including catering, cleaning, and security.

The strike action was announced at the start of June after lengthy negotiations resulted in a failure to agree on members' claims on working practices and culture, equalisation of terms with NHS staff, and union recognition.

After ISS's latest offer was presented to members, 95% voted to reject and maintain industrial action.

Strike action began on Tuesday, 15th July at North London NHS Foundation Trust's Chase Farm Hospital site in Enfield, and continued on six other days last month. Further dates are also expected to be announced.

Jack Phipps, GMB's regional organiser said: "ISS have shown no respect for their workers and have repeatedly failed to



make a reasonable offer to meet their concerns, leaving our members with no choice but to take strike action.

"Our members first raised a collective grievance over a year ago and ISS has had more than enough time to engage with our members' concerns.

"Our members' message to ISS is clear: show staff the respect they deserve by getting back round the table and meaningfully addressing the serious issues members have raised."

When contacted for comment previously as the industrial action was announced,

a spokesperson from North London NHS Foundation Trust said: "ISS provides services including catering, cleaning and security. We are working closely with ISS to ensure appropriate plans are in place to minimise any disruption, and these will be kept under constant review in the lead up to and during the period of industrial action.

"Our priority is to maintain safe, high-quality patient care, and we will take all necessary steps to ensure services continue to operate safely during this period."

ISS did not respond.

Man charged with murder following East Finchley assault

BY DAVID FLOYD

A man was charged with murder last month following a fatal assault in an East Finchley shop.

Tevin Melbourne, 30, of Pittman Gardens, Ilford was having been arrested on Friday,



17th July.

He was charged on Monday, 20th July and appeared at Croydon Magistrates' Court later that day.

The charge relates to the death of an East Finchley resident, 53-year-old Paul Heyfron, who died on Sunday, 12th July after he was assaulted inside the shop in Brook Walk on Monday, 30th June.

Police were called to the shop shortly after 10pm on Monday, 30th June after reports of an assault and the victim, who lived locally, was taken to hospital

where he later died.

A 47-year-old woman who was also arrested last month on suspicion of assisting an offender has been bailed pending further investigation.

Following the arrests, Detective Inspector Jon Moseling, the Senior Investigating Officer said: "Our thoughts remain with Paul's family and friends at this extremely difficult time.

"This is a significant update in our investigation, however our enquiries continue to establish the circumstances of this tragic incident."

NEWS



Students protesting outside Barnet Council's offices

Students secure council leader's commitment on work experience

BY LEILA DAVAUD

Chanting “Hi-ho, hi-ho, it’s off to work we go” and carrying their CVs, 30 students dressed as their dream jobs rallied in front of Barnet Council’s Colindale offices last month.

Pilots, engineers, entertainers and even a ‘prime minister’ demanded greater access to work experience placements.

The students, from year nine, ten and twelve at Hendon School and St Michael’s Catholic Grammar School, expressed their concerns for their future through testimonies given to council leader Barry Rawlings.

Aimee, a student from St Michael’s, said: “We aren’t asking for jobs to be handed to us, we are asking for the opportunity to earn our place. We agree to a system where success depends on who you know rather than what you can achieve.”

She added: “Ambition alone isn’t enough if the opportunities aren’t there, and every rejection chips away at your confidence.”

Currently, Barnet Council offers ten work experience places and does not coordinate



Council leader Barry Rawlings addresses the protest

work experience offers from businesses in the borough.

“But it is going to change,” Marian Mohamed told *Barnet Post*. She is a student at University College London (UCL) in social sciences and takes part in the module on educating and organising for social justice which led her to be assigned to the schools’ campaign.

“Cllr Rawlings pledged to increase the number of work experience placements offered by Barnet Council and convene local businesses to create more opportunities.

“He mentioned including a call for placements in the council’s monthly newsletter, which reaches around 1,100 local businesses. He also committed to exploring whether work experience commitments could be added to social value agreements for developers and contractors, to holding a roundtable with Barnet Council officers, and to visiting Hendon School and St Michael’s Grammar School to discuss further solutions.”

Marian added: “I was happy to see younger students fighting for their rights and being heard!”

Rafael, a year twelve student from St Michael’s, said: “It felt very fulfilling to be part of this campaign. I hope it becomes successful and that young people especially are able to exercise their capacity to do good.”

The campaign comes amid growing national concern about young people’s employment prospects. Former Prime Minister Keir Starmer has described the latest findings on young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) as “sobering” following Alan Milburn’s report warning that the number of young people who are NEET could rise by around 25% by the 2030s if further action is not taken.

Council’s consultation on the future of Colindale playground

BY LEILA DAVAUD

Barnet Council’s consultation on a new space for children and young people in Colindale ends this month.

The £400,000 playground plans form part of the wider masterplan to transform and revitalise Heybourne Park using Section 106 funding from the redevelopment of the nearby Grahame Park Estate.

Proposed new equipment includes a triangular climbing net with hang out zones for young people. Alongside a large multi-play active zone featuring slides, bridges, monkey bars, swings, roundabouts, picnic areas, a big noughts and crosses board and more.

Alan Schneiderman, cabinet member for environment and climate change, said: “We are delighted to be building Heybourne Park’s first playground in what is currently an empty space.

“Right now, residents have to walk a good 15 minutes to take their children to playgrounds in Montrose Playing Fields or Silkstream Park. This project will give them a state-of-the-art playground right on their doorstep and the children will love it!”



An artist's impression of the proposed playground

The consultation will run until Thursday, 6th August. Residents are invited to attend and talk to council officers about the plans. Cllr Schneiderman insisted: “Please get involved and let us know what you think of our plans before we start work on them.”

Early proposals also include a new BMX and skate park, table tennis area and amphitheatre that could provide a sunny seating area for small events like Movies in the Park.

Work on the new playground is expected to begin in spring 2027.

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COMMENT

Why I changed my mind about becoming a councillor

I've spent years as a campaigner and I've witnessed first-hand how local government is often much better at managing problems than preventing them. When people asked whether I'd ever become a councillor, I'd always say "I'll never be one of them!"

But that answer came from a place of deep frustration. Eventually I reached a point where I realised that unless different people step forward, nothing is going to change.

So I did.
Then this year's election happened. Barnet now has 31 Labour councillors, 31 Conservatives and one Green. Me.

I think that result says something important. Residents didn't hand either of the two biggest parties a clear mandate. After years of two-party politics, people voted for a council where no one can really claim to have won the argument. That puts Barnet in a unique position and gives us a real opportunity. The question is: What are we going to do with it?

During the election campaign, Labour and the Conservatives spent weeks explaining why the other couldn't be trusted to run Barnet. Yet once the election was over, they suddenly got remarkably friendly to avoid working with the lone Green. I think that's because they would rather stick with what's familiar and carry on as they always have. But that's not what people voted for.

People keep asking what it's like holding the balance of power, but I don't really see it quite like that. I don't want to spend the next four years doing keepy uppys with the political football bouncing between two parties.

I've never been interested in party politics with a big 'P'. I'm interested in how policy can improve people's lives and protect our planet. What drew me to the Greens was their willingness to challenge systems that aren't working and question assumptions that all the other parties seem to just accept. I don't have a party whip telling me how to vote, so I'm able to make decisions that represent my values and those of my community.

And key to that is asking whether we're willing to treat the underlying sickness rather than simply manage the symptoms.

A few years ago, I brought a deputation to the council with a group of local activists on adult social care, the biggest area of spending for every council and an issue I've spent years researching and campaigning on. As a disabled person and an advocate for my autistic sister who



Parents who've become experts in SEND because they've had to fight for their children; disabled people and carers who understand social care inside out because they've had to navigate it themselves; residents who've spent years analysing how planning and budgets work simply because they care, conservationists stewarding our land and protecting nature, unionised workers standing up for decent pay and conditions and educating the public on how public services really work.

That's why I see my role as a simple one. To ask the difficult questions, support good ideas and challenge bad ones, whoever proposes them. But more than that, to represent the people who don't have a seat in the chamber. I'm not here to speak for myself. I'm here to make sure community voices, experiences, and expertise are heard, especially when they're inconvenient.

Years ago, I used to say I'd never become 'one of them'. The truth is, I don't think I have. My seat in the council chamber might have changed, but why I'm here and who I stand with has not.

Charli Thompson is Green councillor for Woodhouse ward

BY CLLR CHARLI THOMPSON		
▲ Cllr Charli Thompson	lives in supported living, I was simply trying to raise what I thought were important questions and asking the council to do the same. What I was met with was some of the most disturbing behaviour I've ever witnessed, given the seriousness of the issues we were raising. I was heckled. Councillors chatted and laughed amongst themselves. The council leader became defensive because we dared to question the way things were being done. I remember thinking, if this is how members of the public are treated when they come to engage with the council, no wonder so many people lose faith in local democracy.	That experience stayed with me and helped ignite my determination to be part of the change local government desperately needs. The decisions of our council arguably have more impact on our day-to-day lives than national politics, yet local elections often attract little more than a third of eligible voters, compared with around two-thirds at a general election. I think that's a huge missed opportunity. If we want better local government, we need more people to understand how it works, challenge it, and perhaps become the councillors of tomorrow. Over the years I've met some extraordinary people across Barnet:
“ <i>I don't want to spend the next four years doing keepy uppys with the political football</i> ”		

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COMMENT

Taking charge of the future

BY CLLR ROSS HOUSTON

Barnet is a wonderful place to live. Pleasant tree-lined streets, countryside on our doorstep protected by the Green Belt and good transport links into London. Parks, playgrounds and amenities that make it a great place to grow up and grow old in.

Communities and their representatives are the ones best placed to understand their areas and what makes it special: ensuring that we preserve what we love about the borough and that new homes go in the right places.

To make Barnet accessible to the next generation, we are also committed to providing more homes. In the last four years we secured 1,000 new council homes and are aiming to provide 1,000 more for social rent.

We are one of the few councils delivering well against our adopted housing targets

– despite the financial and economic challenges. Since the London Plan was adopted in 2021, we have delivered on average 2,157 homes each year.

And, having set a higher strategic target of 50% affordable homes in our new Local Plan, 2,767 affordable homes have been completed through the planning system since 2022, with many more in the pipeline through approvals.

These are our lode-stars: preserving the Barnet we love, and providing the homes families need to live in. These will continue to be our principles whatever changes are brought in the world

of planning – from the government’s new framework to the draft new London Plan.

We want to take charge of the future of Barnet, together. At the council we will be working in a cross-party way to examine

the changes to how planning will work. Above that, we will be having a conversation as a whole borough as our Local Plan comes up for review.

We will be engaging residents, conservation societies, experts, representatives’ groups, and communities on this from next year, so we can take the next steps together, as one borough.

That way, we can ensure that we, as a borough, shape how Barnet continues to evolve, rather than have the lead taken by developers or national or regional government.

Doing that will help ensure that what we love about Barnet will be available for the next generation, alongside making sure we build the homes they need.

Ross Houston is Barnet Council’s deputy leader, and cabinet member for homes and regeneration.

“We are one of the few council’s delivering well against housing targets”



Cabinet member Ross Houston

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LOCAL NOTICES

Published: 31st July 2026

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FEATURES

12

Unitas Youth Zone creates HERspace:
‘a place that gives me freedom’

As the Edgware-based youth centre launches weekly girls-only sessions, Leïla Davaud meets the young women helping shape the programme

“It’s just girls!” Two male teenagers stand by the entrance of Unitas Youth Zone, baffled. They turn around and step out of the building.

Thirty seconds later, they return and ask: “Why?” The receptionist explains: “Right now, it is HERspace. Girls-only. Come back at 5pm.”

The boys immediately ask if there is a “guy sesh” coming, which isn’t planned. “If girls can have their own session, we should have our ‘boys only’ afternoon too,” one says to the other as they exit the facilities, again. “It’s not fair otherwise.”

The exchange raises a question: what does fairness mean in this context?

For Connor Lynch, head of youth work at Unitas Youth Zone, HERspace wasn’t created to exclude boys. “It was created to address a clear pattern.”

Membership data shows that girls’ participation is twice as high in junior sessions (ages eight to twelve) as it is in senior sessions (13 to 19). Unitas’ figures reflect a wider national trend. Government research has found that participation in youth activities declines during adolescence, with girls disproportionately more likely to stop attending clubs and organised activities.

Connor adds: “Conversations with girls and parents consistently highlighted the same issues: male-dominated environments, safety concerns, parental gatekeeping and a lack of spaces designed specifically for girls.

“Girls don’t disengage because they don’t care, but because spaces no longer feel built for them. HERspace aims to create an environment where girls feel safe, seen and empowered.”

Rochelle Mills, programme manager and deputy safeguarding lead, has often faced parents worrying about their daughters’ safety. “Not because the sessions are mixed-gender, but because the regular youth club finishes at 9pm. If parents can’t collect them, the girls have to walk home in the dark. It’s a big ‘no’ from them,” she says.

In response, HERspace was scheduled on Saturday afternoons, aiming to reduce concerns about travelling home late at night. But timing wasn’t the only issue. The decision to create a girls-only space also came directly from conversations with the young women themselves.



► Meena is a HERspace ambassador

At 14-years-old, Meena has been offered one of the roles of HERspace ambassadors. “I agreed to do this because helping the adults to design these sessions is helping girls have a place where they can be just that: girls.”

She adds: “It’s not that I don’t want to hang out with boys, it’s just that at least during this time we don’t feel pressured and judged on our skills or interests. We don’t have to think about anything else but having a good time with our girl friends. It’s relaxing.”

Shinaia is also an ambassador and shares Meena’s point of view. “It is a place that gives me freedom. I come with my friends because I feel free to be ourselves. We’re not scared to try new things, to play sports. We feel braver because we know we won’t be criticized, only cheered on.”

She also comes to Unitas during mixed sessions. “I’m not anti-boy. It’s just nice every now and then to escape their stares and words.”

Rochelle Mills understands where the girls are coming from. “I’ve never been a shy person, I would always jump in with the boys and make space for myself. I like that these girls don’t have to double their efforts to do what they want to do, here. They

can simply try something new, gain confidence and join the boys when they feel comfortable doing so.”

The girls weren’t simply invited to attend the programme, they helped shape it, contributing to its name, branding, activities and future direction. “We hoped for 50 participants per week,” says Rochelle. “The launch saw 155 girls. We now average between 80 and 90 girls weekly. It’s far from the tiny 20% we used to have in mixed sessions. It illustrates there was a need for change.”

Connor hopes for one thing: “That the girls know we are incredibly proud of them.”

Last Saturday, HERspace looked like a real party. Girls could learn how to DJ, while entertaining their friends doing a “sip (milkshake) and paint” or bedazzling pocket mirrors. Others are cooking, alongside the sporty lot playing volleyball, basketball or punching their way in the boxing area.

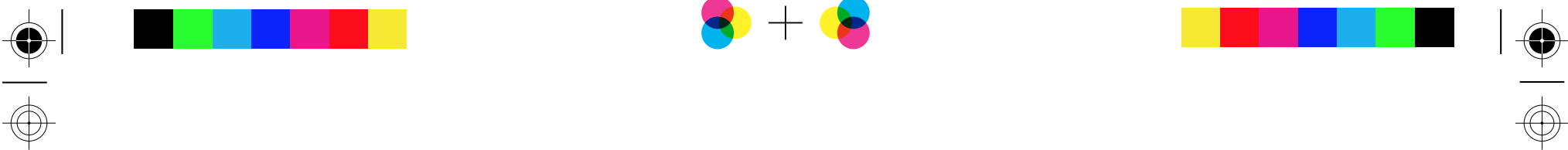
At first glance, HERspace isn’t much different from Unitas’ usual space. The same rooms are being used, similar activities are hosted. Looking more closely, though, the difference lies in “the girls’ knowledge that they are welcomed just the way

they are”, points out Rochelle. “We can see it by how at ease they look. I wish I had this space when I was growing up.”

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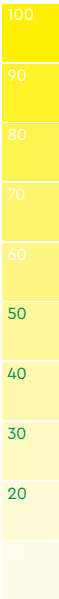
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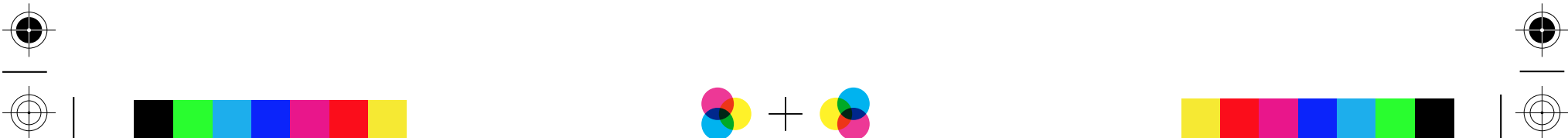
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FEATURES

‘People living with dementia deserve better’: charity calls for fast-track hospital care



Dementia Club UK founder Lisa Rutter is asking Barnet residents and the government to back her campaign for priority triage and discharge, reports Leïla Davaud

For the past twelve years, Lisa Rutter, founder of Barnet-based charity Dementia Club UK, has been campaigning to improve the lives of people living with dementia. Her latest campaign aims to urge the government and the NHS to introduce priority triage and discharge pathways for dementia patients.

“People living with dementia deserve better. These patients need to be attended to differently,” says Lisa, a former Barnet councillor and mayor of Barnet in 2011/12.

She adds: “It is very common for people living with dementia to be hospitalised with urinary tract infections, for example. Often, all they need is treatment and to be sent back home or to their care setting as soon as possible.”

According to Lisa, prolonged hospital stays can have devastating consequences for people with dementia.

“The break in their routine and being taken away from familiar surroundings can make them decline rapidly,” she explains. “Once they become

agitated and start deteriorating, it is very difficult to reverse that.”

Her campaign proposes a “fast-track” system that would enable hospital staff to prioritise people living with dementia for assessment and discharge, helping them return to familiar surroundings as quickly as possible.

“Right now, so many boxes need to be ticked before a patient can be treated or discharged that it is putting them in danger,” she says.

The campaign is deeply personal. Lisa’s own mother died in 2021 after being diagnosed with Alzheimer’s disease.

“My mother had to be hospitalised, but she wasn’t treated in a way that recognised her dementia,” she recalls. “She was distressed and agitated. The staff, through no fault of their own, weren’t sufficiently trained to understand what was happening to her. She regressed rapidly and eventually, she died.”

“Long hospital stays can lead to distress and aggressive behaviour”

Lisa says her family’s experience is far from unique.

In 2024, then health minister Helen Whately acknowledged significant gaps remained in hospital dementia care after hearing testimony from carers.

“We organised an online meeting with families, and Helen Whately heard first-hand how some hospital policies do not reflect what is safest for people living with dementia,” Lisa explains. “She raised these concerns in a speech in parliament, including the importance of keeping patients mobile to help prevent further cognitive decline, and how long hospital stays can lead to distress and aggressive behaviour.”

To build support for the campaign, Lisa has launched both an official petition on the UK Parliament website and a paper petition circulating in the local community. The petitions are open for signatures until Monday, 3rd

August. “We need 10 000 signatures for a government response and 100 000 for debate.”

The campaign comes as the number of people living with dementia continues to rise. According to NHS England Primary Care Dementia Data and NHS Digital, there are currently around 982,000 people living with dementia in the UK, with that figure projected to increase to around 1.4 million by 2040.

Over the last five years (2020–2025), recorded dementia diagnoses in England have shown a steady overall increase, including a temporary decline during the Covid-19 pandemic followed by a consistent recovery and continued growth.

Despite the issue being raised in parliament, Lisa says little has changed. While continuing to campaign for systemic change, she supports families navigating these hospital admissions.

“I always give carers three rules to follow,” she says. “Tell hospital staff immediately that the patient has dementia. Give them a ‘Get to Know Me’ form that includes information about their hobbies, family members, favourite topics of conversation, and anything that helps calm them. Finally, contact me or Dementia Club UK as soon as you can.”

Fighting a similar battle, the home care professionals at Walfinch try to intervene as much as they can.

“We let the hospitals know that we can provide at-home assistance so that dementia patients can leave safely. Once back in their usual surroundings, they are not lost anymore; they are less confused,” explains Marcelo Navarro, director of the East Barnet offices. “The goal is to free hospital beds and make sure the patients are safe. It’s a win for everyone. It simply needs to be facilitated.”

For Lisa and Marcelo, the campaign is ultimately about ensuring people living with dementia receive care that “recognises their condition rather than unintentionally worsening it”.

To support the campaign and sign the petition:
Visit petition.parliament.uk/petitions/755763



Holiday reading challenge

Neil McLaughlin on a chance for the borough’s children to read books that celebrate the joy of music

The summer school holidays are finally here!

Barnet libraries are once again running the summer reading challenge – the perfect way to keep your little ones reading throughout the long summer break!

This year’s challenge, called ‘Read to the Beat’, celebrates the joy of music and the power it has to move, inspire, and connect us – all through the magic of reading.

Children aged four to twelve can take part in the challenge by reading six books or more over the summer, earning prizes and rewards along the way. Children aged three and under can take part in a simplified version for younger readers too!

That’s not all – Barnet libraries have a jam-packed summer of music-themed events. Highlights in August include an interactive storytelling workshop, a DJ workshop, STEM Jams and lots more activities and crafts. All events are either free or low cost.

You can pick up a ‘Creative Communities’ events leaflet from any Barnet Library, or sign up to their children’s and families newsletter at barnet.gov.uk/librarynewsletters

Find out more about the summer reading challenge at barnet.gov.uk/summerreadingchallenge

FEATURES

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Jane Goodall: caring about our planet

Lila Griffiths explores how one conservationist's legacy turned fear into hope and action

Most writing about climate change makes the future feel smaller. Jane Goodall, primatologist, conservationist and one of the world's great environmental voices, does the opposite. On 3rd April, the first national Jane Goodall Day marked a moment of reflection on her work, legacy and message to the world. Revisiting her 'Final Message to the World', the climate crisis stopped feeling distant and began to feel personal. In 2026, it can feel as though the story of the planet has already been decided. We are constantly told how much time we have left, how much damage has been done and how irreversible things might be. It makes it very easy to feel overwhelmed or powerless.

But Goodall reframes that narrative. She speaks about hope as something active; something we choose. She reminds us that without hope, there is no reason to act. And without action, there is no chance of change. One of the ideas that has stayed with me most is her belief that every life matters. That every small decision – what we buy, how we speak, what we choose to care about – has an impact. It sounds simple, but it changes the way you see your place in the world. Goodall also challenges something deeper: the way we see ourselves in relation to the natural world. Humans are not above the planet, she argues – we are part of it. Guests, rather than owners. There was a sense of urgency in what Goodall was saying that I hadn't fully grasped before. Not panic, but clarity. The kind that makes you realise that the future isn't something abstract, it's something being decided now. For me, that shift made me start questioning the way I live. From what I consume to

how I think about food, and the impact of small, everyday choices. I've begun trying to reduce my meat consumption, thinking more seriously about vegetarianism, and considering how my future career might align with protecting the planet rather than contributing to its decline. The climate crisis is often presented in an overwhelming way. Statistics are thrown around, timelines are debated and the scale of the problem can feel impossible to comprehend. One estimate suggests that if global warming exceeds two degrees by 2100, it could contribute to the deaths of around a billion people. Numbers like that are difficult to process – they feel too large, too abstract, almost unreal. Especially without reminders of hope. And that's part of the problem. When something feels incomprehensible, it becomes easier to disengage from it. Fear can be paralysing rather than motivating. It's easy to place the blame entirely on those in power, and to an extent, that responsibility

does sit with them. But those positions of power are not fixed. One day, they could belong to people like you and me. This is why Goodall's emphasis on hope feels so important. She doesn't ignore the scale of the crisis, but she reframes it. Instead of something purely frightening, she presents it as something we still have the power to influence. That shift, from fear to possibility, is what makes action feel achievable. Jane Goodall passed away in October 2025, but her message feels more urgent and alive than ever. For me, that means trying to take action where I can; through writing, volunteering, or supporting movements that push for environmental change. Goodall's message is simple, but it stays with you: we are not separate from the planet – we are part of it. And the future depends on whether we choose to work with it, rather than against it.

This article was originally published by the youth communications charity Exposure: www.exposure.org.uk



Jane Goodall Credit Wikicommons

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ARTS & CULTURE

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Review: *Time Served* by Colin Purkey

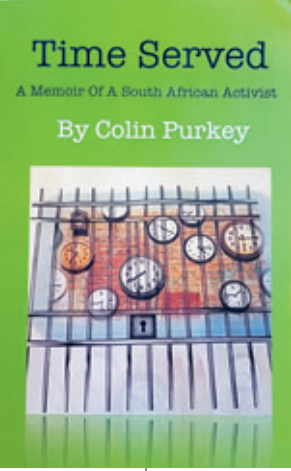
T*ime Served* is the memoir of an ordinary person who was part of some extraordinary events. Colin Purkey is a Barnet resident who, before retirement, spent over 20 years teaching physics at a further education college. He is also a political activist who was imprisoned by South Africa’s notorious apartheid regime.

This is an engaging but unusual book. It’s split into three sections which are not sequential. The first section covers the months that the author spent in prison, having been arrested for posting a letter on behalf of a leading anti-apartheid activist. The second section covers his experience in hospital having been hit by a car as a teenager. And the third section is a broader look at life within the anti-apartheid movement during the 1980s and early 90s as the regime eventually crumbled and was forced to move towards democracy.

It’s an unusual book in that it covers big historical events in a deeply personal way. There is a lot of detail of meetings, events and activities and how they connect to the wider cause but also about how Purkey’s involvement impacts on his life and relationships (in terms of having to live away from home or holding meetings in disguise to avoid the police).

David Floyd on a Barnet resident’s memoir of activism in apartheid South Africa

It includes multiple snapshots of relatively similar incidents: the security police turn up at Purkey’s and conduct a search while being intimidating and rude, and Purkey recounts his interactions with them alongside his fears of particular incriminating documents being discovered.



In the third section in particular, the significance of each particular snapshot to a wider narrative is not always clear but cumulatively they build an overall impression of what it’s

like to be an activist fighting an oppressive regime.

Each of the sections drifts back and forth between the time period it is specifically covering and other memories that Purkey draws on to explain his wider perspective. So, while the section on his imprisonment is the most diary-like, the week to week stories are interwoven with

flashbacks of the author’s time at university where he first experienced some of the ideas that

“

It covers big historical events in a deeply personal way

”

would motivate his activism.

The short second section, where Purkey discusses his hospitalisation and subsequent health problems, is a total break from the political narratives before and after, although it also takes some detours – including into the philosophy of consciousness.

Taken as a whole, *Time Served* is difficult to categorise. It is someone writing about important and significant events in their own life, from a very personal perspective but recounting a political period that also had a much wider significance.

Purkey’s voice is often idiosyncratic but also highly self aware: making clear that, despite his own distressing experience, he understands the privileges that liberal white activists had in comparison to the black majority on the receiving end of the regime’s actions.

For a general reader with an interest in the experience of activism, there is potentially lots to enjoy but some of the detail and the often haphazard progress of the narrative may be off putting.

For a student studying the history of the latter period of South Africa’s apartheid regime, it will definitely be an invaluable primary source.

Barnet Council – the musical

Factional infighting on Finchley streets. Cult rituals in the Artsdepot basement. A plot to brainwash the residents of Barnet.

Catch all of that and more in *A Very Divine Election*, the first ever horror comedy musical to be set in Barnet (albeit a surreal, alternate dimension of the borough)!

I’m a 20-year-old Cambridge student who grew up in Finchley. I have written an original musical about our borough which has been selected for the Camden Fringe, and we will be performing at the festival on Monday, 10th and Tuesday, 11th August at 9pm.

Adam Arkell is running the election campaign for his uncle, Dee Kleining – fictional leader of Barnet Council, a man who prefers decline over bold action. All Adam wants is Dee’s approval but the harder Adam tries to design election adverts, the worse they get.

All hope seems lost for Kleining, until he discovers a job opening at the advertising agency managing publicity for the horrifically dysfunctional WEE Party, which is running against Kleining.

Micha Winchester Plen on a fictional local election campaign that may be almost as funny as the real one

The cast of ‘A Very Divine Election’



The cast of ‘A Very Divine Election’

Dee hatches a plot for his nephew to sabotage the WEE Party from within. The plan seems flawless but, upon starting the job, Adam stumbles upon endless mysteries. Why is the CEO so disillusioned with her own company? Why do the co-workers act more like gremlins than human beings? And why are we running the election campaign of a radical anti-advertising party whose only policy is to shut us down?

Featuring original songs, choreography, live music, and very funny writing, this show is not one to miss. If you want to catch a show that *Varsity* described as a “thoroughly entertaining ... fever dream-ish, rough-and-ready spectacle” that “fizzles with creativity and passion” now is your chance!

Tickets are available on the Camden Fringe website for the 10th and 11th August performances! Visit camdenfringe.com/events/a-very-divine-election/

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ARTS & CULTURE

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A scene from 'Come From Away'
Credit John M Watson Photography



Review: *Come From Away*

Come From Away is a musical based on the true story of what happened on 11th September 2001 when the United States closed its airspace after the 9/11 attacks and 38 passenger jets were ordered to land in Gander, a small town in Newfoundland, Canada.

The locals opened their arms to almost 7000 strangers and fed, clothed and accommodated them for over a week until the planes could fly again.

This is on the surface a heart-warming tale and a much needed reminder of how people can band together in an emergency and help one another, with some rousing musical numbers for the audience to clap along to and lots of humour. However, there are also more sombre moments, such as when the play touches on the events of 9/11 and a Muslim passenger is treated with suspicion and subjected to a degrading body search.

This particular production,

Mary Groom on Whetstone Musical Theatre Group's performance of a show about the aftermath of 9/11

by Whetstone Musical Theatre Group, was a complete delight. Having seen the show in the West End, I thought it really benefited from being performed in a more intimate, immediate space. It was superbly directed by Owain Rose, with every nuance highlighted and brought out. The musical direction of Katie Hainbach showcased the beauty of the music. The simple staging allowed the story to be told effectively and clearly.

This was very much an ensemble piece, with every single cast member giving an excellent performance in a multitude of roles and accents (the Newfoundland accents were particularly impressive). Jon Musker was a jovial

Mayor of Gander, also embodying several other local mayors thanks to an array of hats and accessories. James Clarke and Mark Sampson-Vincent were both funny and moving as a couple (in fact, a couple of Kevins) struggling with the pressure of the unusual circumstances they found themselves in. Emily Kennedy-Neal was an endearing local, trying to make sure that the animal passengers were cared for as well as the human ones (including a pair of Bonobo apes!). Zoe Mack was an out-of-her-depth reporter, who unluckily had only just started work on that most newsworthy of days. A beautiful, believable romance developed between two passengers, Nick

and Diane, played by Matt Drage and Emma Pleass. Caroline Patel played Beverley, a pilot stranded along with her passengers. A particularly touching relationship was built between the characters of Hannah played by Candice Sher and Beulah played by Catherine Raingold, who had the shared experience of sons who worked as firefighters. Raingold is the producer of the show and founded the group in 2015. Many, many other characters were engagingly brought to life by David Berkovitch, Gavin Rodgers, Katie Hainbach, Mickey Polon and Lihi Livne.

The show played to sell-out audiences and, on the night I attended, was received with standing ovations and real appreciation. I can't wait to see what this group does next – and I definitely recommend booking early!

'Come From Away' was the latest production from Whetstone Musical Theatre Group, performed at King Alfred Phoenix Theatre, NW11 from 15th–18th July.

Telling better stories – why we need to talk about Raffles

Julie Gittoes and Dave McCormick on a local resident with a complicated legacy

Though the name Raffles is most commonly associated with hotels, Barnet has a significant connection to the man behind the famous name: not a hotelier but Sir Stamford Raffles, an employee of the East India Company.

Raffles was one of those involved in founding Singapore and the Zoological Society of London (ZSL). He is buried at St Mary's, Hendon and, to mark the 200th anniversary of his death on 5th July, people gathered for an exhibition and to hear talks reflecting on his life and legacy. This is important because understanding the complexity of a man of his time helps us appreciate the nuances of history and challenges us to reflect on how we engage with questions of trade, social justice and the environment today.

Born in humble circumstances and with only two years of formal education, Raffles spent much of his adult life working for the East India Company as a London-based clerk before travelling to Java and Sumatra. His life was marked by

personal tragedy – the death of his first wife and four of the five children born to him and his second wife Sophia. He himself died at only 45.

He was a largely self-taught polymath who was fascinated by religion and culture, and who learnt to speak Malay. He corresponded with William Wilberforce and contributed to the abolitionist movement. He sought to suppress the opium trade, clashed with William Farquhar about the running of Singapore, having established it as a freeport.

Whilst pragmatism sometimes outweighed his idealism, and his own records minimised the violence of colonial rule, his work in contributing to the foundation of ZSL was something that along with Charles Darwin's work shifted how we saw our relationship to and interest in the natural world, just as Sir David Attenborough has done with significant impact today. Raffles' wife Sophia was the first woman to be a fellow of ZSL.

On the 200th anniversary of his death, the event at St Mary's was a rare opportunity to reflect on the challenging aspects of our history in a way which might shape present action. Telling better stories – with honesty and nuance – helps us face the concerns of our own generation.

Thomas Stamford Raffles by James Thomson ("Engraved by Thomson, from a Miniature in possession of Mr. Raffles" – 1824)



SPORT

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When Gary Sobers came to Barnet

Dave McCormick on the late cricket legend's visits to a local club



Vic Lewis team photo

Sir Garfield (Gary) Sobers, arguably the greatest all round cricketer ever, died on 17th July at the age of 89.

Not only did he play for the West Indies between 1954 and 1974, score over 28,000 first class runs including 365 against Pakistan, take over 1,000 wickets and hit six sixes in one over for Nottinghamshire against Glamorgan (check it out on the BBC website), he also played twice against Barnet Cricket Club.

In the early 1960s cricketers were poorly paid and so ‘international teams’ made up of top-class players and a few celebrities took on club teams

in front of thousands of people who would throw money into buckets and blankets to contribute to charities and benefit funds.

On Sunday, 11th September 1960, when Sobers was 24-years-old, Barnet Cricket Club took on Vic Lewis's International XI comprising Mickey Stewart, Jim Parks, Sobers, Roy McLean, Rohan Kanhai, Ken Barrington, John Waite, Roy Castle, Freddie Truman, Vic Lewis, Hugh Tayfield. Roy Castle (later the presenter of *Record Breakers*) and Vic Lewis were musicians and keen cricketers, and the other nine players all represented their countries.

The Vic Lewis XI rattled up 439 with the main contributions coming from Sobers (103), Kanhai (74), Trueman (71), Barrington (57) and Roy Castle (56).

In return Barnet reached 231 all out (G. Amor 85, R. Pett 57, C. B. Wright 37, F.G. McCormick 0 not out).

On the bowling front, Freddie Trueman took 3-for-23 off eight overs for the Vic Lewis XI and for Barnet M. Tant had figures of 3–40 and F.G McCormick 2-for-60.

In a repeat match the following year, Vic Lewis's XI scored 217 for 5 wickets (Roy Mclean 102, Gary Sobers 35) in reply to the Barnet score of 216 all out (C.B. Wright 69, D Robinson

40, F.G McCormick 9 not out).

In 1961 I was five months old when my father Frederick George McCormick (‘Mac’) played against Gary Sobers for the second time. My mother would have been in the clubhouse making cricket teas and my elder sister would have been toddling around.

Mac continued playing for Barnet into the 1970s. One of his best friends was Lester Finch who represented Great Britain at football in the 1936 Summer Olympics, captained Barnet Football Club to victory in the 1946 Amateur Football Cup final at Stamford Bridge and also played cricket



for Barnet.

After his death in 2007 Mac's ashes were scattered on the Barnet cricket square.

Barnet CC merged with Old Elizabethans CC in 2012. The Barnet Cricket Club and the Barnet Football Club grounds in Barnet Lane are now part of the Ark Academy School which opened in 2019.

There seems to be little available online about the history of Barnet Cricket Club – it would be great if memories and memorabilia could be collected about what was an important part of our community for a long time.



A summer day on the water

The Phoenix Outdoor Centre and Canoe Club opened its doors to Leïla Davaud

The motor stops. The boat glides, slowly. All around it, cygnets float quietly, sharing the water with all sorts of birds that have taken refuge in the Brent Reservoir, previously called the ‘Welsh Harp’. It's peaceful, refreshing.

Further down, bursts of laughter come from the shore. It's the soundtrack to Camp Phoenix. “For a week, kids can try different activities,” explains Phil Atkinson, club lead and centre development director.

“They get a half-day ‘fun on the water’ where they can go out with a kayak or a stand-up paddle, get used to their surroundings. They get a day of multi-activity and then two-day courses for level one and two kayaking or levels one-four sailing”

The camp runs through the summer, alongside

other groups. “We also host sessions for children with [holiday] vouchers,” explains Phil.

It is exactly how Kathwar's ten-year-old daughter ended up on a kayak on this sunny morning. “We heard about the Phoenix Centre at school and my daughter loved it straight away. It's her second summer here, so she insisted on coming back. It's great for families, the team is incredible!”



The Phoenix Outdoor Centre and Canoe Club at Brent Reservoir Credit Leïla Davaud

By offering activities all year long, local families know where to find the club and come to escape the heat waves. Eliza comes often with her two sons “to escape the city and stay cool. They choose paddleboarding so they get to fall in the water!”

Supervising their children, Carlo Vizzotto is all smiles. “This is a very special place. The wildlife, the scenery. We can't really ask for more!

“It's grounding for the kids, it's incredible to have this space in the city. We get around ten thousand visits per year. People love this little oasis!”

Companies also book activities for their team-building sessions, some come back with their families or even join the sailing club.

And that is why the outdoor centre is in need of a glow-up. In a few weeks, the first phase of demolition will start. Phil explains the plan: “We

will go through six months of construction but the activities will continue on the water. In 2027, we will be able to host the community properly.”

The redevelopment will create a modern, accessible outdoor centre that serves as a community hub. Expanded water and land-based activities, together with meeting rooms and training spaces will be provided.

“A community café will benefit local residents, schools, businesses and community groups. Working with partner organisations, the centre will deliver leisure, fitness and vocational training, including opportunities for adults with learning difficulties through the café and vegetable garden.”

The new centre will aim to strengthen community connections, and provide greater opportunities for volunteering, education, employment and environmental conservation.

“It is and will definitely be the place to spend summer days,” assures Kathwar, her eyes glued to her daughter laughing out loud in her kayak.

SPORT

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Bees gearing up for new season

Nick Sandamas on Barnet FC’s plan to go one better than last time

With the season just over a week away, Dean Brennan’s squad is shaping up nicely.

The Bees played a number of pre-season friendlies against some higher ranked sides and are now looking forward to the new season with high hopes of going one better than last time.

As so often happens in the close season, several players have left, while nine new signings have come through The Hive’s door.

Zac Williams, Charlie Lakin, Brandon Gormley, Craig Farquar, Isiah Noel-Williams, Will Wright, Tom Knowles and keeper Taye Ashby-Hammond have all come to add to the squad – and what we hope will be a sustained tilt at promotion.

Another addition was striker Jack Maskell from Darlington who comes to North London with a good goalscoring pedigree having scored 23 goals in 77 games in his two full seasons for the National League North Quakers. This will be his first taste of full time football.

The pre-season schedule began with an 8–3 win in a behind closed doors friendly against Solihull Moors.

There followed away trips to Hitchin Town and Hemel Hempstead Town which both ended in narrow 2–1 victories. Bright Siaw and a trialist scored the goals against Hitchin at Top Field, while against the Tudors it was Maskell and a

late winner from a trialist to take home the Spencer McCall Invitational trophy.

A good 2–2 draw was then picked up against Championship side Watford with Kabongo Tshimanga and Charlie Lakin on the scoresheet.

Jack Wilshire’s Luton Town side were next up and another positive performance ensued, with another 2–2 draw the result. Nmandi Oforborh and Tshimanga were on the scoresheet.

As we went to press the Bees still had a couple of friendlies to negotiate before the action gets underway including a trip to face League One Cambridge United and Callum Stead who swapped The Hive for the Abbey Stadium this summer.

Bogey team Salford City is the League Two season opener at The Hive with further games in August against Shrewsbury Town, Cheltenham Town and Arsenal U21s in the opening EFL Trophy group game.

Is this going to be a season to remember for the Bees for the right reasons?

Let’s see over the next nine months. Can Barnet replicate what Bromley did in their second season and end the season with promotion in the bag?

Let the games begin. Come on you Bees!

Friends both treated for childhood cancer at Barnet Hospital raising money for NHS charity

BY JAMES CRACKNELL

Two teenagers who became best friends after discovering they both had childhood cancer are raising money to help thanks the NHS teams who cared for them.

Kleya and Ciara, both 14, met when they started year seven at secondary school and were placed in the same class. It was only after becoming friends that they realised they had both been treated for leukaemia at Barnet Hospital at the same time when they were just three years old.

The pair are now planning to take part in Walk for Wards 2026, a fundraising event for Royal Free Charity which takes place on Saturday, 19th September in Trent Park.

Kleya said: “I’d never met anyone who had had leukaemia when they were younger so it was cool to have someone I could relate to.”

“It’s really nice to have someone who understands it,” added Ciara.

Both girls underwent years of treatment before recovering and, despite the challenges their families faced, they remember the kindness, compassion and support they received from NHS staff and charities.

“All my memories from the treatment, they’re not the bad ones,” said Ciara. “It’s mainly dancing with the nurses or charities or the fun days out.”

Gentiana, Kleya’s mum, said: “We had great help from nurses and doctors, consultants, all the play leaders in both hospitals in

Barnet Hospital and all the charities providing all these events: they would come with instruments for a musical afternoon or bring a dog in the dog therapy room.”

Christine, Ciara’s mum, added: “Everyone has been absolutely brilliant, really supportive. I don’t know how I would have gotten through it without the doctors, nurses and the charity. They were just brilliant, carrying us along.”

Now the families are giving back by taking part in Walk for Wards 2026, the Royal Free Charity’s fundraising walk through Trent Park.

The event brings people together to walk either 5km or 10km to raise funds to support patients, staff and researchers across the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust.

“We want to give something back because everybody’s been amazing,” said Gentiana. “They don’t just do their job; they go far beyond that.”

Christine said: “We’re doing Walk for Wards to give something back because we’re eternally grateful.”

The teenagers are also encouraging others to sign up and join them at the event.

Kleya said: “When you do something like this, it’s not only that you feel proud of yourself because you’re giving back and helping people, but you also just have such a good time.”

Ciara added: “Just go for it!”

Every step will help to fund ground-breaking research, cutting-edge equipment, and the vital support that people rely on during some of their hardest times.

Royal Free Charity’s vision is for everyone served by the hospital trust to have access to world-leading healthcare. It funds medical research, facilities and services at Barnet, Chase Farm, North Mid and the Royal Free hospitals.

Walk for Wards is open to all ages and abilities. To sign up, visit qrco.de/walkforwards





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