



London Borough
of Barnet

Councillor Mike Freer
Leader of the Council

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Date: 24 July 2009

Ref: HRD

RESIDENT
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Dear Local Resident,

Shaping the Future in Barnet – The Leader Listens

I wrote to invite you to a 'Leader Listens' meeting at West Hendon Community Centre on 16 June 2009 to give you the opportunity to discuss issues that concern you in your neighbourhood or in the Borough as a whole.

I would like to thank those of you who were able to attend the meeting. It was extremely worthwhile for me to find out more about the local community and what is important to you. If you were unable to attend, I thought you might be interested in seeing the notes of the meeting and the issues that people raised on the night.

I will write again to update you on progress against all the matters raised on the night, on which it was agreed to take action or investigate.

Please feel free to continue to contact me by letter, telephone or email on these issues or any others that concern you about living in Barnet

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Freer".

Cllr. Mike Freer
Leader of the Council

To view the minutes, blogs and videos please visit www.leaderlistens.com

Leader Listens Action Notes – 16 June 2009

West Hendon Community Centre, Marsh Drive, West Hendon NW9 7DW

In attendance:
Cllr Mike Freer
Victoria Blyth

Leader of Barnet Council
Democratic Services Officer – Community Engagement

No. of Residents: 23

Introduction

The purpose of the Leader Listens meetings is to give residents of the Borough an opportunity to discuss local issues directly with the Leader of the Council. The meeting also allows residents to contribute to Barnet's policy-making process.

The action notes from the meeting will be distributed to residents within the invited polling district. Any issues raised will be forwarded to the relevant officers/service area for action and comment. In addition, residents will also receive the final action notes detailing what action had been taken within six - eight weeks after the meeting.

Some key points about the Borough:

- Barnet is the joint largest borough in London, the 16th most ethnically diverse and the 2nd most religiously diverse;
- Barnet has more roads and pavements than any other London Borough;
- Barnet is experiencing a period of growth primarily due to an intensive house-building programme along the A5 corridor;
- Barnet's age mix is also on the rise with more under 5's and over 85's within the Borough. The Council is challenged to provide services to meet the diverse needs of this demographic;
- Barnet has a £1 billion cash flow (on par with a FTSE 500 company); and Barnet spends just under £700 million on council services each year.

Issue	Response from the Leader of the Council	Action by
What is happening with sheltered housing wardens? Why aren't there wardens living in each sheltered housing block?	The council is not suggesting scrapping wardens altogether. Barnet has 1500 elderly people in residential housing and around one third has access to a resident warden Monday – Friday, 9am-5pm and two thirds have no access at all to a resident warden. The sheltered housing consultation suggests floating wardens being available for every elderly person who needs one. Residents who are frail or vulnerable should be assessed for extra care housing. The council is considering	

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	<p>using the wardens to provide support to elderly residents who need the service whether they are in a sheltered scheme, rented, privately rented or privately owned property. The council wants the warden service to be available for every elderly resident who needs it, regardless of what type of housing they have.</p> <p>Society has changed since the warden scheme was set up around 30 years ago and now people continue to live active lives after 60, often still working. However, under the current rules active people over 60 are still eligible for sheltered accommodation.</p> <p>Under the current scheme the council also pays for accommodation, heating, council tax etc for the resident wardens and this costs £1million that could be better spent on the service.</p> <p>The proposed new scheme will create teams of wardens in strategically placed teams available for visits to those who need it. This would for example allow wardens to visit an elderly person just out of hospital while they need it. At the moment this would not be possible unless the person already lived in a sheltered housing scheme.</p>	
<p>What is happening with Icelandic banks?</p>	<p>There is no impact on council services by the money currently frozen in Icelandic accounts as the money is not from the council's operating budget. The latest news is that the council may receive 100% back from the first deposit and 95-100% back from the second deposit next year.</p>	
<p>How is money allocated for <u>West Hendon</u>? Does the area get fewer services than other parts of the borough? There are lots of rats in the area.</p>	<p>Street cleaning is the same in <u>West Hendon</u> as it is in <u>Finchley</u> or <u>Mill Hill</u>. Areas close to water, railways lines, underground railways etc suffer from rats as this is where they like to live. This is the same across the borough and an unfortunate fact of life for living near these amenities.</p>	
<p>Residents listed a number of areas they felt suffered from rats, fly-tipping and rubbish, including fly-tipping in an area near <u>Priestly Way</u>.</p>	<p>Streets are cleaned once a month and the skip service is available three times a year. Town centres are cleaned daily, throughout the day. Details of approximately when your streets are due to be cleaned are available on the council's website www.barnet.gov.uk. A resident agreed that she had seen street cleaners in her area the previous week. The council is looking to improve the street cleaning service even further in the next budget.</p> <p>Fly-tipping and rats can be dealt with if residents inform the council by calling the customer care team on 020 8359 4600. The Leader agreed to meet one of the residents and do a short walkabout to see some of the problems first hand.</p>	
<p>The teams cleaning the pavements leave</p>	<p>This allows the teams to cover a greater area without a vehicle and these bags</p>	

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bags of rubbish behind when they have finished.	should be collected within a day.	
Fly-tipping takes place on the estate and in the surrounding area.	Fly-tipping is often not the local residents, but people coming from outside the borough to dump large quantities of waste or soil. The council can clear it up if it is reported to us and we also track instances of fly-tipping to look for trends and hot spots. We can use CCTV to investigate and prosecute offenders.	
Why do Barnet charge for collection of items like freezers when Brent does this for free?	As Barnet is generally seen as an affluent borough by the government, our subsidies from central government are small, less than Camden, Hammersmith and Fulham and the City of London. Brent receives more funding and can therefore afford to provide more services for free.	
Nettles are growing across the path by the children's nursery.	Action: Cut back weeds and nettles by the <u>Marquin Centre</u> .	Dorne Kanareck Acting Director of Environment & Transport
The new cardboard recycling collection is appreciated as is the skip service. The refuse service is excellent, especially the teams working <u>Woolmead Avenue</u> and <u>Verulam Court</u> .	It is always nice to hear if we are doing something right. Action: Pass congratulations back to teams involved.	Dorne Kanareck Acting Director of Environment & Transport
Residents were unclear of the difference between Barnet Council and Barnet Homes.	Barnet Homes is an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) and as such is independent of the council. Council tenants were given the choice of staying under the control of Barnet council or the setting up of an ALMO and they voted for an ALMO. ALMOs and therefore Barnet Homes have access to funding that councils do not and can source funding to improve properties and meet Decent Homes standards. The council cannot tell Barnet Homes what to do but can influence their decisions. Residents unhappy with Barnet Homes are encouraged to speak to their tenant representatives who sit on the board of Barnet Homes.	
A resident has been complaining to Barnet homes about anti-social behaviour by new, temporary tenants. The resident claims they were told by Barnet Homes that only vulnerable clients were being housed on the estate.	The problem with the regeneration estates is that secured tenancies cannot be offered. This means clients are aware they will not be staying there long and this can affect their attitude to the property. In acknowledgement of the fact that some phases of the regeneration projects will take a considerable time to complete, the council has agreed to convert approximately 115 temporary tenancies into secured tenancies. Adults coming out of care or vulnerable people are given priority for temporary	

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	<p>housing as the council has a duty to house them. Homosexuals and ex-prisoners are not automatically given priority as suggested at the meeting.</p> <p>Barnet Homes can warn tenants against anti-social behaviour and in serious cases clients can lose their tenancies.</p>	
<p>A resident of Marriotts Close complained that the security doors at the rear of her building are regularly broken to allow access through for dog walkers. The dogs are not kept under control and leave mess behind, especially on the ramp.</p>	<p>We will raise the issue of the broken door with Barnet Homes. We will also ask them to investigate the issue of irresponsible dog owners and whether there are clauses in tenancy agreements that affect dog ownership.</p> <p>Action: Confirm whether tenancy agreements allow tenants to keep dogs.</p> <p>Action: Fix the broken lock on the building.</p> <p>Action: Investigate the anti-social behaviour of some dog owners.</p>	<p>Pam Wharfe Head of Housing</p>
<p>Residents are unhappy with Barnet Homes and discussed two cases of alleged bullying by members of staff. Residents were unwilling/unable to provide full details of these incidents.</p>	<p>Cases are difficult to investigate if witnesses do not come forward to provide full details of the incidents mentioned. Details that were provided will be passed onto Barnet Homes. The Leader stated that he will not accept bullying and if details were passed to him he would be able to have the cases looked into.</p> <p>Action: Pass limited details provided to Barnet Homes.</p>	<p>Pam Wharfe Head of Housing</p>
<p>Barnet Homes say that television aerials now have to be placed under windows instead of on the concrete at the side as with previous aerials. One resident stated her neighbour had been told to put the aerial where she wanted and to keep quiet.</p>	<p>Without more details of the neighbour or the officer involved the individual case cannot be investigated.</p> <p>Action: Barnet Homes to confirm their policy of television aerials on the <u>West Hendon estate</u>.</p>	<p>Pam Wharfe Head of Housing</p>
<p><u>West Hendon</u> estate has been waiting for eight years for the regeneration project to begin. Residents have been unwilling to make changes/improvements to their homes as they are due to be moved. Will the council provide compensation to enable residents to improve their homes until the project goes ahead?</p>	<p>The regeneration project is going ahead but has been affected by the downturn in the economic climate. The works have been re-phased with Barrett Homes to get the project started.</p> <p>The council is not aware that compensation can be paid but will bring this up with Barrett Homes.</p> <p>Action: Raise the issue of possible compensation if residents on the estate whose homes feature in the regeneration programme choose to make home improvements.</p> <p>One of the issues is with a local electricity substation. EDF Energy originally stated that the substation would need upgrading to cope with the new homes, but now insist that a whole new substation is needed. This would add £5 million on top of the</p>	<p>Pam Wharfe Head of Housing</p>
<p>Barrett Homes have been giving a different impression of the progress of the regeneration programme. What is happening?</p>		

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	<p>current budget and talks are continuing with EDF to resolve this.</p> <p>The council has been speaking to the Homes & Communities Agency to ask for a grant that would enable the project to go ahead. The council is confident that this grant will be agreed and is expecting to hear within the next four weeks. This grant would be £8.5 million and would mean work could begin at the end of this year. If the grant is not agreed the council would have to go back to negotiating with Barrett Homes. It was discussed that it is in Barrett Homes' interest to encourage residents to put pressure on the council.</p> <p>Action: Provide an update to residents on the progress of the grant and likelihood of when work will begin.</p>	<p>Stewart Murray Director of Planning, Housing & Regeneration</p>
<p>Why is the regeneration of the estate taking so long when the Olympic Village is being built in much less time?</p>	<p>The planning process is a long one, especially for a large development. It is not a fair comparison as the government gave extra powers to the Olympic Delivery Team to speed up the process. A number of businesses were moved from the area of the Olympic Village but this is very different to having to re-house a large number of tenants from a housing estate.</p>	
<p>What is happening with the sailing base and the adjacent car park?</p>	<p>The sailing base is due for demolition and as part of the regeneration plans the building will be re-provided within a later phase in the programme. The sailing base was closed due to the poor condition of the building which made it unsafe to occupy. While rebuilding will take place on the land, discussion is still taking place as to what the facility will be used for, and who will manage it. The council are no longer in a position to fund a sailing facility itself as it is too costly.</p>	
<p>Why have <u>Lakeview nursery</u> and <u>Wendover Lodge</u> been closed?</p>	<p>Wendover Lodge was closed because the accommodation did not meet the current standards for sheltered housing. Barnet Homes have re-housed the existing occupants into replacement sheltered housing. The building is due for demolition in a later phase, and the council are in negotiations with development partners to see if the building can be acquired for demolition at a much earlier phase.</p> <p>The nursery land was required for the pilot phase of works on <u>West Hendon</u> and the facility is due to be relocated to the <u>Hyde School</u> as part of the regeneration plans.</p> <p>Action: Ask Barnet Homes to ensure that fences etc around these buildings are adequate and in good condition</p>	<p>Pam Wharfe Head of Housing</p>
<p>Residents were against properties built as part of the regeneration of the area being put up for private sale.</p>	<p>It is the profit from private sales that funds the building of the social housing component of the regeneration. Every council across the country uses the model of a private developer replacing council stock while building homes for private sale. The Decent Homes standards set by the government are not met by the housing</p>	

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	stock on the <u>West Hendon estate</u> so the properties cannot stay the same and the council cannot fund the replacement of stock.	
Residents asked about the replacement of windows across the estate.	A surveyor has visited and says that as the south facing windows get the worst of the weather, they need replacing. As the north facing windows are more sheltered they are not worn to the same degree. Due to the planned regeneration it does not make sense to spend money fixing both sets of windows. When the phasing of regeneration works has been decided we can revisit the maintenance issues for the blocks. General maintenance such as grass cutting and emergency works should still be completed and any issues with this not being done should be reported to Barnet Homes.	
A resident's property was damaged and they are having problems dealing with council's claims procedure.	The Leader agreed to meet personally with the resident to go through the details of the case and look for a solution.	
Another resident's property was damaged by leaks and began a case against Barnet council. The resident had to drop the case and says that the council is requesting costs. There was due to be pavement parking between 126-158 West Hendon Broadway but residents were told this was put on hold due to cost. Parking is a severe problem in the area and affects deliveries and visits from contractors.	The situation will be reviewed by senior officers if the resident provides his details to the Leader. Before the council can allow pavement parking the pavement has to be strengthened to protect any cables etc underneath. The council is not allowed to approve pavement parking for an area unless this strengthening has taken place. Delays to changes in parking in this area may also be because there are plans to reconfigure the roads as part of the regeneration project. The council is completing a full parking review across the borough and this includes pavement parking. Action: Confirm the situation with pavement parking 126-158 West Hendon Broadway.	Dorne Kanareck Acting Director of Environment & Transport
Residents state that pavement parking has been allowed in <u>Marsh Drive</u> and <u>Ramsey Close</u> and only recently parking attendants have started issuing tickets to cars. Many years ago the council laid tarmac on an area of pavement in <u>Marsh Drive</u> for pavement parking after a council vehicle unable to get past parked cars damaged a resident's car.	Normally the council can turn a blind eye to pavement parking in areas where road parking causes issues, but we have to investigate and ticket cars if complaints are made about pavement parking in the area. The Leader confirmed that increased parking attendants in the area were not due in any way to council money frozen in Icelandic banks. Action: Confirm whether complaints have been made about pavement parking in the area of <u>Marsh Drive</u> and <u>Ramsey Close</u> .	Dorne Kanareck Acting Director of Environment & Transport

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<p>Areas of the <u>West Hendon estate</u> have resident parking limited to one hour.</p>	<p>Action: Confirm whether details of parking ticket revenue are available to the public.</p> <p>Controlled Parking Zones (CPZs) are generally designed to combat commuter/student parking. CPZs across the borough are being reviewed to ensure they best meet the needs of local residents and users of the area.</p> <p>Action: Confirm to residents what the CPZs are locally and when they are being reviewed.</p> <p>We will arrange to have someone look at this.</p> <p>Action: Repair/replace the damaged railing by <u>Perryfield Way</u>.</p>	<p>Dorne Kanareck Acting Director of Environment & Transport</p>
<p>An accident last year caused damage to the railings by <u>Perryfield Way</u>.</p>	<p>Extra homes are being built as part of the regeneration of the four main estates. <u>Beaufort Park</u> already features new homes and the regeneration of the <u>Cricklewood Broadway area</u> will also increase homes in the borough. There is also a possibility of homes on the <u>Peel Centre</u> as the Metropolitan Police are interested in selling the land. There will be a mix of homes to rent, buy and shared ownership.</p> <p>The council has changed the priority for planning to include more family sized homes.</p>	<p>Dorne Kanareck Acting Director of Environment & Transport</p>
<p>If Barnet is expecting 40,000 more people to live in the borough, where are they going to live?</p>	<p>The council needs to provide services in the most cost effective way possible. Services such as the refuse collection that are efficient and provide good value for money will remain in house as long as they continue to meet these standards. The council is not trying to privatise every service and in fact helps internal services to bid for tenders if the situation arises.</p> <p>It may surprise residents to know that a number of facilities are already provided by other groups, including voluntary groups. Age Concern and the Red Cross already provide services such as day centres for the elderly.</p> <p>Government funding will reduce so the council needs to plan for the future.</p>	
<p>Is Future Shape going to privatise the council?</p>		

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