

Save Our Suburb Library

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Marketplace who let us have petitions to sign in their premises or put up our posters in their windows and to the RA for their assistance with the Suburb notice boards and website.

There has been an encouraging number of letters of protest sent to Cllr Robert Rams (the author of the Barnet 'Strategic Library Review' and the man who has proposed the closure of the Suburb library) and Tom Pike, the Head of the Barnet Library Service. These letters have come from both individual library users, parents with young children, in addition to letters on behalf of the RA, Fellowship and many of the Suburb Schools (Brooklands, Annemount, The Garden Suburb School and the Kerem Nursery). It was perhaps revealing to see that, although Tom Pike, as far as I can tell, has not replied to any of the letters, Cllr Rams acknowledged each one with the same reply each time despite the variety of questions being raised, but which remain unanswered.

We were also disappointed that Cllr Rams refused an invitation to speak at a proposed Residents Association Open Meeting despite an offer by us to provide an independent chairman. We tried.

Neville Silver and I had an initial meeting with Cllr John Marshall and a subsequent meeting with Cllr Rams, Cllr Marshall, Tom Pike and Richard Grice (Deputy Head of Barnet Libraries). Then, because our petition had achieved over 2,000 signatures, we were given the opportunity to present our case to the Barnet Council 'Overview and Scrutiny' committee at the Town Hall. Alas, although the open meeting was scheduled to commence at 7pm, unfortunately Cllr Rams indicated that he would be not be able to attend and answer questions until 9.30pm! Why

do we get the impression that he is someone who does not wish to 'face the music', but would have us believe that 'he cares about our Suburb community'.

Although we would be the first to acknowledge that the HGS library premises are not ideal, indeed they are far too small, we are not aware of any other premises which could be made available within the Suburb. The Council's proposal to transfer the Suburb library to The Institute premises in East Finchley, which is geographically outside the Suburb, begs the all important question as to how this would produce the necessary savings i.e. no rental cost?, no librarians? Barnet have assumed that Suburb residents will volunteer to run this facility so as to avoid employing librarians. Although we have proposed the use of volunteers (to assist a librarian) at the HGS Marketplace library, no volunteers could be found to man a facility at the Institute in East Finchley during our extensive research with users of the Suburb library. Indeed, we could not find anyone who would use a 'library' at the Institute. I am afraid this is typical of a quango making decisions regarding a location of which they know nothing.

What we, the 'Action Group' object to is the capricious assumption used in Barnet's 'Library Review' to determine the allocation of the substantial central services costs (i.e. the senior management, support services, stock costs etc). This has been assumed that all of the 16 libraries in the Borough should be treated equally, however large or small and are therefore charged the same while no account has been taken of the different size of the premises, the number of books on the shelves, the number of



librarians employed or the number of available opening hours.

In their 116 page document which seeks to plan for the future needs of Barnet residents as a whole they rightly claim that particular emphasis should be given to 'young children, the ever-growing number of elderly residents and those with learning difficulties'. It is therefore all the more strange, to say the least, that the HGS target audience and by far the major users of the Suburb facility fall clearly into the first two of these categories. Surely there appears to be some confusion or contradiction here?

Unless the consultation period has been a mere 'window dressing exercise', we remain hopeful that the latest revelation, that any review of the lease on the Marketplace premises cannot be legally terminated for another five years, will be yet another reason for a reappraisal of the closure of our library. The annual rental of £10,532 would have to be paid by us, the Council Tax payers until 2016.

This alone may justify the much hoped for change of mind by our Barnet Council.

DEBORAH WARLAND

HGS Theatre Club - come and join us!

How would you like to be taken to the theatre once a month by coach? The HGS Theatre Club has been doing just that for the past 22 years.

We collect our members from North Square and Barclays Bank, Temple Fortune and the coach parks outside the theatre. At the end of the performance we collect and return our ticket holders to Temple Fortune and North Square.

During the past few months we have secured reduced group bookings for *London Assurance* with Simon Russell-Beale at the National, *All my Sons* by Arthur Miller with Henry Goodman, *Flare Path* by Terence Rattigan with Sienna Miller and, most recently, the 25th anniversary production of *Les Miserables* with Alfie Boe.

Future outings will include Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* with Zoë Wanamaker, Shaw's *Pygmalion* with Rupert Everett and Diana Rigg, and our annual trip to the Watermill at Newbury which is an all-day outing with lunch, a show and tea. This is the

highlight of our year for many of our members.

The majority of plays we attend are evening performances, but we also try to include a few matinée shows over the winter months. We visit West End playhouses, The Richmond Theatre and occasionally other fringe

theatres. Group numbers for these outings have to be restricted to 53 owing to the size of coach.

For details about membership of the HGS Theatre Club, please contact Elaine Grays on 8442 0096. We look forward to welcoming you on our outings.

VALERIE CODRON



A very superior feline poses for Suburb News with decidedly superior wheelie bins

Trust (*trust*) n. reliance on and confidence in the truth. Custody, charge or care. (Sp in *Hampstead Garden Suburb* - members elect four Trustees to the **Trust Council** in whom is vested legal powers to preserve the character and amenities of the **Suburb**.)

The Trust requests the pleasure of your company as a member

The Trust Council would like to see more Suburb residents represented as members. The sole requirement for membership is to have lived continuously on the Suburb for three years.

Many residents come to live here because it is a unique environment and support the aims of the Trust in trying to preserve the Suburb's character and amenities.

All residents who believe that the job we are trying to do is worthwhile should be members of the Trust. New residents are now welcome to join as associate members.



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