

June 2009

Friern Barnet and Whetstone Residents' Association

- We are non-political
- We work for all residents in the area
- We discuss issues with Local Councillors and Council Officials
- Associated with the following bodies
 - The Federation of Residents Association of Barnet
 - The Post Office Advisory Panel
 - The Finchley Society
 - Friends of Friary Park
 - The Friern Barnet & District Local History Society
 - Coppetts Wood Conservationists
 - The London Green Belt Council
 - North Finchley Local Agenda 21

Editorial

What's wrong with Council outsourcing?

Outsourcing is a comparatively novel addition to our vocabulary and according to a dictionary it means "obtain by contract from an outside supplier". We come across one form of it when a phone call to our bank, or public utility company, is answered by a clearly remote voice of someone with different ideas about pronunciation.

Presumably, outsourcing is generally used to reduce overheads by employing, say distant staff at considerably lower salaries than native workers and allowing substantial reduction in Council staff.

Our local authority is involved in "consultations" and planning for a number (most) of its services to be farmed out, and street lighting is one of them, where you are being instructed to sort out any problems with the help of a private organisation, which is normally not responding to calls or mail.

There are numerous services the Council considers potentially suitable for this treatment. Past experience (at Council and National Government level) has demonstrated that no saving for the consumers is achieved, as the outside employer



Mike Freer, Leader of Barnet Council and prospective Conservative candidate for Finchley & Golders Green. We presume Cllr Freer will not be standing for election as a Councillor at the next local Borough elections, if he wins

wants to make a profit. So, what else might be the driving force?

One obvious feature of this process is that the Borough shifts responsibility for services to outside contractors, and if these prove elusive, suffering residents will be unable to obtain any satisfaction.

There are good reasons why the council tax payers should be interested in what is going on. But it looks as if there are more suspicious reasons for not allowing us to find out.

The "consultation" is being conducted by the Council Heads and a small team.

Even Conservative Council members not in the Cabinet or inner circle are kept in ignorance – as are Labour and Lib-Dem members.

Questions by the public and by officers of your Federation of Residents Associations have met with wordy but uninformative stonewalling.

As the Trades Union is also precluded from participating in the "Consultation", the Trades Council is trying to set up a Barnet Community Campaign, hoping to involve residents groups and individuals.

Can you suggest how we might be able to shed some light on events to bring an informed review of outsourcing plans, and its motivation, into the open?

We will warmly welcome any suggestions, and through the Federations of Residents' Associations in Barnet, we can marshal borough-wide support for any steps which would enable the residents of Barnet to evaluate and influence what, at present, seems to be an underhand and secretive undertaking.

KR

Subscriptions

For those who have not already done so, it is time to renew your subscriptions for the Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association for the year 2009. Please complete the form and send a cheque for £5, using the envelope provided, made out to "Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents Association" to:

Treasurer FB&WRA
112 Oakleigh Road North
N20 9EZ

Provision of libraries services in Friern Barnet and Whetstone remains incoherent

still coming



South Friern Library—looks like the Ideas Store in Whitechapel Road, but not like any library in Barnet. Building finished long ago but needs books before it can be opened.

going



Barnet Council has announced plans to flog off the Ravensdale Avenue, North Finchley library, but, this plan seems to be in abeyance—however no word from the Council as to new

gone



In the face of stern local opposition, the Council flogged off the Totteridge Library to a private developer, who seems to have done nothing with it. The money was supposed to fund a new library in the locality.

When the Louis-Smith furniture shop in Whetstone closed in 2008, a planning application was made for it to be replaced by a restaurant. We opposed this and the application was withdrawn. This large shop seemed to one of your officers to be an ideal location for a replacement for the Totteridge Library, which was closed several years ago.

When that Library closed we were first told that a new library would be incorporated into a development on the site. That was deemed impractical and we were told the Council would seek a new location. Since then things have gone quiet.

Your officer wrote to Barnet Council pointing out that a Library in the centre of the Whetstone shopping centre would enhance the centre, and be convenient for the residents of Totteridge and Whetstone. He also said that, when the Totteridge Library was sold, money was no doubt put on one side for a replacement Library, so funding should be no problem.

The reply from Tom Pike, Head of Libraries, Museums and Local Studies, was that the suggestion could not be implemented. The Library Strategy developed in 2007 was for a network of 6 Leading Libraries across the borough, supported by 10 local libraries. The Council's capital programme had not allocated any funding for a library in Whetstone, and there was no funding available.

Your officer wrote again, saying that the shop had now been acquired but asked

not here



Your residents' association suggested that the Council take over this building in the High Road, Whetstone (before it was taken up by "Amy's Kitchenwares").

nor here



At one time the Council had plans for a new Library to be established in on a redeveloped "Furnitureland" site in North Finchley. This plan disappeared with the property market

maybe here



The Council is now considering locating a new library somewhere in Barnet House, much criticised as an "architectural eyesore" - maybe it could be placed on the top floors, so the public could enjoy wonderful views over Barnet.

about the commitment to replace the Totteridge Library. Tom Pike replied, after referring the question to the current political administration, that the Council's commitment would be to consider a better located library and discussions had previously concentrated on the potential to provide this service through a redeveloped Barnet House. The limitation was that the Council's capital programme had not allocated any funding for a new Library site, which could cost up to £1 million.

So there you have it. There could be a Whetstone and Totteridge Library based at Barnet House subject to funding. We will ask the Oakleigh and Totteridge Councillors to support the idea and fight for funding to be provided.

BS

An outline of Friern Barnet Urban District Council

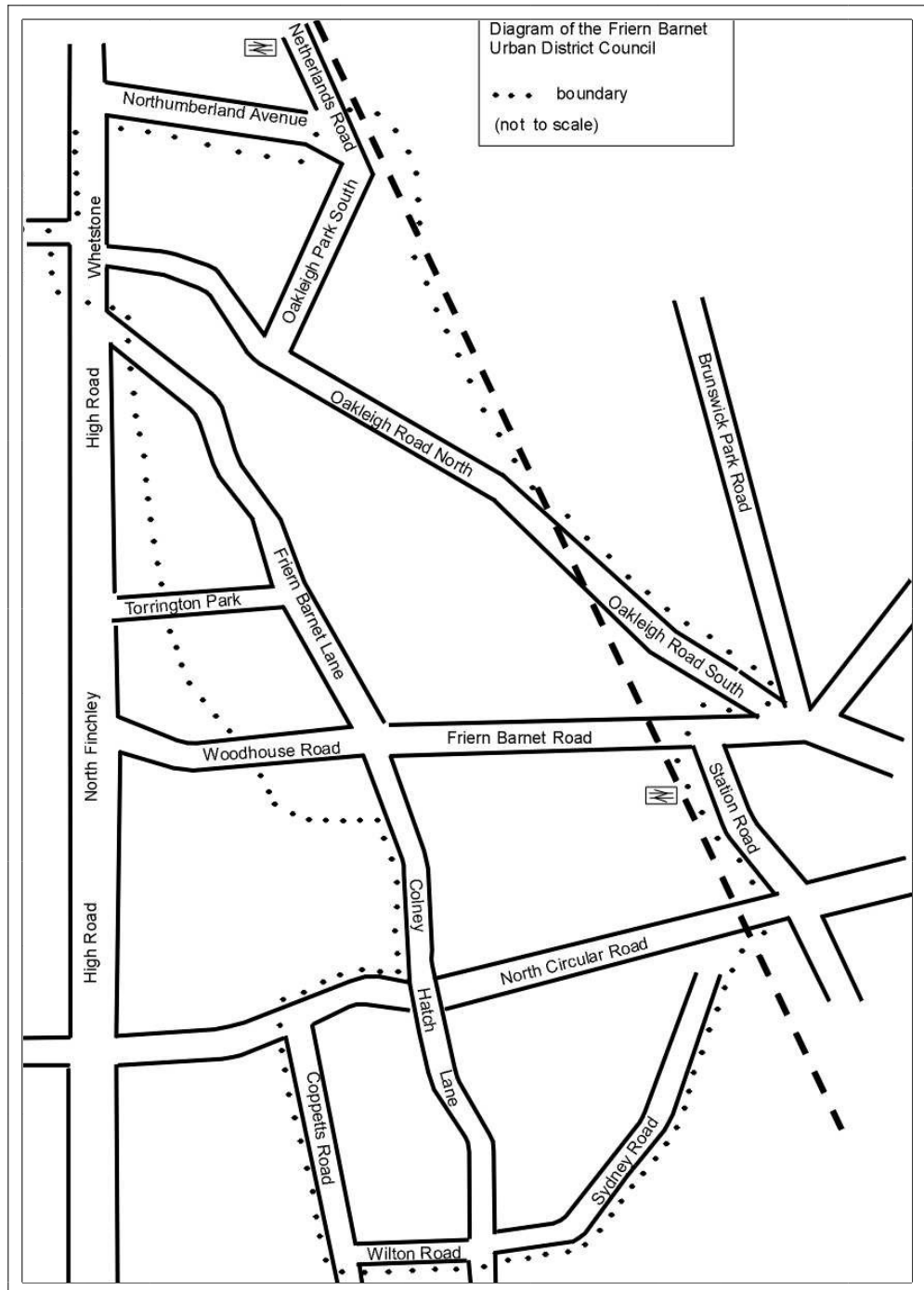
The Friern Barnet and Whetstone Residents' Association follows the imprint of the old Friern Barnet Urban District Council. The District Council was dissolved in 1966, with the formation of the Greater London Council, when the boroughs of Finchley and Hendon together with the Urban Councils of Friern Barnet, Barnet and East Barnet were merged to form the present Barnet Council.

The District Council was a long, narrow district, stretching from Northumberland Avenue area, at the northern end of Whetstone to Wilton Road in Muswell Hill. Recollections among some members of the Association (active in local politics from before the 1966 reorganisation) about the northern boundary of the District Council. An old map of Finchley shows that from Northumberland Avenue the boundary of the District Council ran south along the High Road to Totteridge Lane (it took in a few houses in Totteridge Lane).

From there the boundary crossed over the High Road and cut across the northern end of Friern Barnet Lane. Heading further south, it kept away from the High Road and crossed Torrington Park about half way along (the iron boundary marker can still be seen in Torrington Park).

Still heading south, the boundary crossed Woodhouse Road, about half way along, just east of Woodhouse College. On the south side of Woodhouse Road the boundary took in Hilton Avenue but not Ingleway or Summers Lane. The Hollickwood estate was in the District Council. Heading south, it took in the remainder of both sides of Colney Hatch Lane until it reached the North Circular Road, at which point it went to the west until it reached Coppetts Road.

The District Council took in Coppetts Road up to Wilton Road. From this point the boundary starts to head eastwards, crossing over Colney Hatch Lane and along Sydney Road (both sides) towards the North Circular Road. (This part of District Council has been redeveloped in recent



years.) The boundary travelled eastward along what is now Orion Road and crosses the North Circular and up the middle of Station Road. It crossed Friern Barnet Road and ran along the railway embankment (the Turrets was not in the District Council) and then over to Oakleigh Road South.

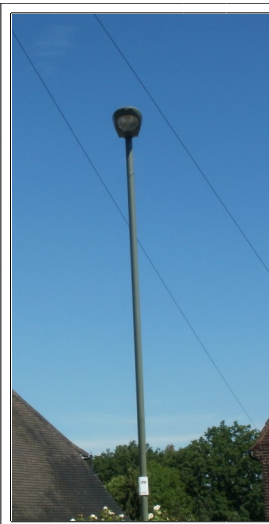
The boundary headed north along Oakleigh Road North with some small diversions which took in Oakleigh Close and some of Fernwood Crescent. It then crossed Russell Lane and the boundary took in Barfield Avenue, Beresford Avenue, Simmons Close and Simmons Way. It then followed the railway line to Netherlands Road, where it ran down the middle of the road until it reached Northumberland Avenue again.

Problems with your street light?

Residents living near the Friern Mount Drive and Buckingham Avenue intersection have had reasons of late to complain about a non-working street lamp. Galvanised into action, the rapid response team finally completed repairs in mid-May of this year. It was reported as not working in February, but it had been out of order since December of last year.

In the old days when you had problems with your street light you would phone up the Council and sooner or later someone would come around and fix it. In the wonderful new world of contracted out services, you have to follow different procedures. First of all you need a computer. You then have to go to the Barnet web site: navigating carefully you go through "Transport and Streets", "Roads Highways and Pavements" and "Lighting—Street Lights". You are now in the correct place to fill-in an online form with your report about the malfunctioning street lamp.

Our Council has entered into a PFI (Private Finance Initiative) deal, over 25 years, whereby all responsibility for lighting in the Borough falls with the provider, David Webster Lighting. So, on completing the on-line form, the Council sends the details to David Webster Lighting. The Council's web site says that you can follow up the report by contacting David Webster Lighting directly and they give a freephone number and an e-mail address. David Webster Lighting seems to be a subsidiary of ETDE, a maintenance company based in France.



2009 Annual General Meeting

This year's AGM was held on 29th April at St. John The Evangelist Church Hall on Friern Barnet Road. Over 50 people attended and after tea and biscuits the Treasurer presented his report and the accounts for the year.

Chairman Harry Gluck then gave a full and frank report on what the Association has been doing during 2008. This included our concerns with the large scale contracting-out of Barnet's services, as well as on-going involvement with various planning applications; the future of Friary House; the traffic situation along Colney Hatch Lane; the over-development of the Black Bull site in Whetstone; and the council's lack of a Town Centre Plan for North Finchley. He ended with a question and answer session.

The guest speaker this year was Alison Blair, who is the Deputy Chief Executive of Barnet Primary Care Trust. She gave a talk about the proposed rebuilding of Finchley Memorial Hospital. Finally, having rushed to our meeting from the House of Commons, Ms. Theresa Villiers, MP for Chipping Barnet and Shadow Secretary of State for Transport, told us about a debate that day on the Gurkha issue and an announcement about a swine flu case in Barnet.



HH

incognito theatre

Sunday 12th July to Saturday 18th July

A Midsummer Night Dream

by William Shakespeare

Performances start at 8 p.m., except Sunday when performance starts at 6 p.m.

Incognito Theatre is located in Holly Park Road (behind the Health Centre) Friern Barnet, London N11 3EB
Tickets 0791 287 5700

Finchley Society

Thursday, 25 June at 8.00pm

AGM & monthly meeting at Avenue House, followed by

"East Finchley's history through maps"

by Tony Roberts

Non-members welcome but are asked to make themselves known to one of the Society's officers present. Admission charge for non-members £2:00

Friern Barnet Library

Friern Barnet Road
Coffee Morning Talks

Wednesday 17th September—
"The Battle of Britain" - a talk by David Keen from the RAF Museum

Wednesday 15th October –
Living with Dyslexia – A talk by Elisabeth Landsbury

All talks start 10.30, coffee etc 40p

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS OF FRIERN BARNET AND DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY

Wednesday 24 June

History of Holiday Fellowship
by Colin Liversidge

Wednesday 23 September

London Garden Squares
by Daphne Glick

All meetings take place at St John's Church Hall, next to Whetstone Police Station, Friern Barnet Lane. Starts 7:45 p.m.; cost £2 to non-members.

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