

newsletter

Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association



FBWRA "Green Bin" complaint bears fruit Council charging for Green Bin collection starts in April

At its meeting on 20th January Barnet Council's Environment Committee decided to go ahead with charging for collections of household garden waste – "Green Bin collections", even though the results of a public consultation showed very strong opposition amongst the 6,500 responses that were received.

The consultation was carried out over 6 weeks in October – November 2019, primarily online using the "engage.barnet.gov.uk" website. 98.6% of respondents indicated they had a garden and just slightly less, 98.1%, said they had at least one green garden waste bin – so those without gardens were probably under-represented in the responses.

Four fifths of respondents opposed the introduction of charges and three quarters thought that it would be unfair to make any charge. Interestingly, the consultation results are not available on the website – but they can be found in the papers for the January Committee meeting, at

<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s57293/Appendix%20A%20Report%20of%20Public%20Consultation.pdf>.

The Council has a budget deficit to deal with and discretionary spending, such as green bins, is



inevitably "in the firing line" to bring in additional revenue – and it must be better to continue with the service on a paid-for basis, rather than to withdraw it completely.

It is estimated that making an annual charge will save the Council about £700,000 a year. A charge of £70 per annum will be similar to that charged by other local councils in North London.

There are arguments both ways as between continuing with a free service and charging – fewer people may use it; there may be more "fly-

tipping"; better to charge than to cut more vital services; it's a service used by people living in houses and it's unfair that those without gardens should contribute to the cost via Council Tax and so on.

continued on page 2

Friern Barnet & Whetstone Residents' Association

AGM
Thursday 14th May 2020

POSTPONED

The Committee and Officers will remain in post until an AGM can be held. If any member is unhappy with this then we are open to suggestions.

continued from page 1

FBWRA "Green Bin" complaint bears fruit

Anyway, the Council made its decision and in February leaflets advising of the charging scheme were delivered to households throughout the Borough- clearly no time was to be lost for a scheme starting in April. Unfortunately, the administration of the scheme has been poorly thought out by the Council and the result, at least initially, was chaos.

FBWRA complained to the Council:-

An application to register for the service can only be made via the Council website. The system that the Council has set up requires payment by card by telephone. Whilst that may be convenient for the Council (and presumably cheaper than alternatives) it is not necessarily convenient for "customers", and it might well be that the current system is discriminatory against certain categories of people.

The website has no facility for downloading and printing an application form and sending that to the Council with a cheque in payment.

Initially at least it seemed "impossible" to get through on the telephone to a real person at the Council to discuss any issues. The Council's system seems designed to discourage telephone calls - we understand that this has been done deliberately, as a means of reducing charges payable to Capita.

Not only was it "impossible" to speak to a real person, it was also "impossible" to get through on the 020 8359 4600 number given on the Council leaflet and webpage as the number for "signing up" to the waste collection service- on selecting "option 1" one heard recorded music- there were no announcements such as "you are 25th in the queue", such as you

would get from a doctor's surgery or "All of our agents are busy right now. Please try again later" as you might get from an insurance company.

The "sign up for waste collection" leaflets were being distributed throughout the Borough, and thus a very large number of calls to the 4600 number should have been anticipated. Consequently it was disappointing that the Council had failed to establish arrangements such that those calls were answered and dealt with promptly.



We received a substantive response from the Council just over a week after sending in our complaint (almost break-neck speed for the Council! – but we had copied in one of our local Councillors, which seems to do the trick in cases like this)-

"We are currently reviewing a process whereby residents who have no alternative other than to pay by cheque are given an alternative process they can use. "

"We apologise for the difficulties you have had with getting through to an advisor at the Barnet Contact Centre."

"Since you contacted us we have increased the number of agents supporting green waste changing calls as well as those able to support during peak times. We have also introduced messaging to those on hold informing them of the approximate time they will be waiting for so they can decide if they wish to hold or go online to request a call back."

Subsequently we have been told a postal application with cheque can be made by those unable to pay by card - first speak to the Call Centre

David Thompson

Another cannabis factory found in Friern Barnet

This time a house in The Ridgeway used illegally

Residents of The Ridgeway, N11 were horrified (mostly) to discover, in December, that a rented house in the middle of the road had been used as a cannabis factory. "How could this have happened?" disconcerted residents asked themselves, "Why didn't we notice anything was going on?"

The answer is that the gangs who are behind the proliferation of these factories in our urban settings are extremely efficient and have had much experience in law breaking. Usually organised crime is involved and these types of criminals are adept at what they do.

The majority of cannabis factories are found in residential properties let by unsuspecting landlords or agencies to what appears to be a perfectly normal family. The family give the impression that they are moving in. Once that has happened, they are not seen again. The gang, who have paid the family to rent the house, often for a 6 month period with money up front, move in and the destruction of a home begins.

I have researched cannabis growing and discovered that a good crop needs heat and humidity to flourish. These must be available 24/7. So, once inside the rented property, the gang rig up very sophisticated hydroponic systems in every corner of the house. Pipes, ducts and electric cables are run through holes drilled into walls and ceilings. Heavy duty insulation will be spread everywhere with windows included. The rented house becomes almost equatorial inside.

How it's done

Growers bypass electricity meters in these houses and tap into the main grid thus ensuring that the electricity companies will have no suspicion that vast amounts of power are being used by one particular house. This can be highly dangerous and lead to a fire although not in the case at The Ridgeway.

By the time the police had been informed of local suspicions and acted upon them, the vast majority of the crop had been removed from the house. Only a paltry amount was left and the people found there were very low down on the list of criminals.

Those of us living in the road were amazed by all that had been going on without us noticing. Many of my acquaintances were envious of my proclivity to such



Typical cannabis leaf, leaves are bright green and finger length

an establishment. I was horrified, both by the fact of what had been going on virtually under my nose and the easy acceptance of cannabis as a part of daily life by my friends. I decided I must live in 'Cloud Cuckoo Land'.

Advice to Landlords and Residents

1. Check up on new tenants a fortnight after they have moved in.
2. Watch out for windows closed during a heatwave and permanently drawn curtains.
3. Anything smelly exuding from house.
4. Many visitors to property or NONE,
5. Excessive and obvious security measures
6. Lookouts posted, (often teenagers hanging around outside).

There have been quite a few cannabis factories discovered in our borough. They are highly lucrative establishments.

Please, be aware. Every factory that is destroyed helps prevent a vicious circle. Organised crime receives nothing and cannot fund more factories or more crime, lives will not be ruined, our communities will not be polluted and there will be less street cannabis to buy.

If you are concerned about a property near you, call Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111

Kate Salinger

Local residents express concern at the number of large scale development plans in the pipeline

Members meeting with Council officers reveals the extent of changes to the suburban nature of Friern Barnet and Whetstone

Members attending the FBWRA Members' Meeting on 27th February expressed concerns over the Council's plans for housing development in the Borough over the next 15 years.

The meeting, which was attended by about 40 members, heard a presentation on the draft of the new Barnet Local Plan from Planning Policy Manager Nick Lynch and two of his colleagues from "Re", the joint venture between the Council and Capita which runs many Council services, including the planning department.

The purpose of the Local Plan is to shape growth and change, and the proposals it contains are based on a range of technical studies on subjects such as housing need and delivery, town centre uses, employment and car parking.

The aim was to focus growth on 6 "Growth Areas", town centres, transport nodes, estate renewal and major thoroughfares, and so to protect the suburban character of the Borough. Over the 15 years covered by the Plan, up to 46,000 new homes would be needed (around 3,000 a year) and new office and retail space to support a growing population, together with 27,000 new jobs.



The new Plan would have more policies than the 2012 Plan that it would replace (55 compared with 34), including clearer restrictions on residential conversions, a policy to protect pubs

and a policy on basement development, and more specific policies on housing, local jobs, car parking, tall buildings and other areas.

In relation to residential conversions, it was planned that conversion of large houses, with an original "gross internal area" of at least 130 sq. m. would generally be restricted except within 400m of town centres or in areas with very good public transport.

For housing developments, a minimum of 35% Affordable Housing would be required from large developments (10 or more homes), and the "Housing Mix" policy would generally treat the provision of 3 bed homes as the highest priority, whilst the smallest 2 bed home would be expected to provide at least 4 bed spaces.

It was clear to everyone at the meeting that there was widespread concern about the housing plans - not about the numbers of homes planned, but about their small physical size and that whilst 3 bed homes would supposedly be a priority, the proposals would actually see a preponderance of 1 and 2 bed "units", rather than larger sizes more suitable for families. It was noted that in assessing progress towards meeting housing targets, the Council got the same "credit" for a 1 bed flat as it did for a 3 bed house- a "perverse incentive".

Tall buildings were another "hot topic"- there was much criticism of the recent appeal (not Council) authorisation for tall buildings at the North London Business Park – assuming the plans go ahead, this will mean buildings of up to 11 storeys will be constructed in NLBP with 1350 residential units. The draft Plan looks to confine "Tall Buildings" (8 - 14 storeys to specific strategic locations, such as areas near Brent Cross, Colindale and Edgware as well as the town centres of Finchley Central and North Finchley,

although even taller buildings, Very Tall Buildings, might be allowed “in exceptional circumstances” in identified “Opportunity Areas”, the nearest example being the proposed “New Southgate Opportunity Area” near the North Circular Road.

The final part of the presentation looked at potential development sites identified in the draft Plan, and focussing on FBWRA’s “home area”:

Tesco, Coppetts Centre (by the North Circular): 397 housing units with 25% mixed uses (retail, community and car parking) - the audience had not expected this, there was a feeling of disquiet).

Sainsbury’s East Barnet : 199 units with 25% mixed uses including retail;

Great North Road (around the Everyman cinema): 84 units (the cinema would remain);

Whetstone Town Centre (the Gerson site and the station car park): 888 units;

Barnet House : 139 units (the Council view was that the existing building should be demolished, not converted as recently proposed);

Woodside Park Station car park 356 units – (and there are the current similar proposals for Finchley Central and Arnos Grove)

Great North Leisure Park (the Lido/Vue cinema site: 352 units with 40% mixed uses (sports and leisure, community uses and replacement car parking).

As one of the team from “Re” put it, Barnet residents might have to get over their love affair with the private car. This proposition was not welcomed by all members of the audience.

At this point the meeting had run out of time, as the hall had to be vacated. Judging from the flood of questions from members of the audience throughout the evening, the “dry” topic of planning had thoroughly engaged them, so the evening was worthwhile- and our thanks to Nick Lynch and his colleagues.

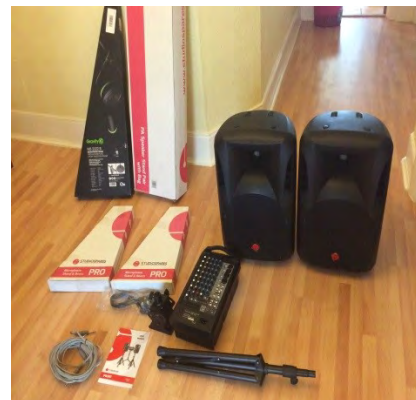
The slides from the presentation are available to see on the FBWRA website:

<https://www.fbwra.org/draft-local-plan/>

David Thompson

CAN YOU HEAR ME AT THE BACK?

FBWRA has invested in a portable public address system, for use at Association events. Our purchase arrived in time to be put into use at the Members’ meeting in February. The intention is to avoid a repetition of problems encountered when hiring equipment, particularly difficulties in setting up, and to take advantage of a reduction in the cost of systems. The purchase should “pay for itself” in two years or so.



David Thompson

Horse trough returns to Whetstone



A collaboration between FBWRA, Friern Barnet & District Local History Society (FBDLHS) and Love Whetstone came to fruition on the 22nd February. A Horse Trough to replace the one that used to be next to the Whetstone on the High Road opposite the Griffin Pub was inaugurated by Cllr Caroline Stock, the Mayor of Barnet. In addition, a historical Notice Board, whose text was produced by the FBDLHS, recounting the history of the area was also unveiled.

Over 100 residents, our MP, the Rt Hon. Theresa Villiers, Martin Russell, the Representative Deputy Lieutenant for the London Borough of Barnet and local Councillors Alison and Richard Cornelius, Sachin Rajput and Tom Smith were among those who braved the strong winds to hear the Mayor talk about the importance of the project locally.

Representatives from FBWRA and FBDLHS, including their respective chairmen, David Thompson and David Berguer as well as Love Whetstone, all strong supporters of the local area and its history were able to mark the end of their first joint project.

Refreshments in the form of burgers and coffee were offered courtesy of the Griffin pub which is now under new management and very supportive of local initiatives.

The project was a year in the making and was part of an initiative to replicate the street scene outside the Griffin and to remind residents what a historic place Whetstone actually is.

Our local history has been lost over the years with the huge amount of redevelopment the area has suffered. It proved impossible to find an original trough with the Metropolitan Drinking Fountain and Cattle Trough Association inscription on it or to obtain one "at risk" from Camden. The cost of producing a granite trough identical in every detail was prohibitive. A similar one was therefore commissioned using old photographs to design and site it.

With help from Barnet Council and fundraising by the local community, including FBWRA, FBDLHS and Love Whetstone, sufficient funds were raised for the replacement trough and the historical Notice Board. Without this, it would have been impossible to meet the costs of the project. A big Thank You goes to all who supported it.

There are plans to complete the 1917 street scene (above) by reinstating the old Griffin pub sign and in time erect further historical Notice Boards on the High Road to remind residents.



Mayor Caroline Stock accompanied by her husband



FBWRA committee with the Mayor
From left to right : Maria Jordan, Harry Gluck, David Thompson, Mayor Caroline Stock,
Richard Testar and Yvonne Ruge

Spring Festival

at Coppetts Wood Nature Reserve

POSTPONED UNTIL SEPTEMBER

(WATCH THIS SPACE)

relax with family and friends with our lunches / snacks,
enjoying gentle Live Music and find out more about local groups that
offer advice / help / companionship ..

We offer Hot and cold drinks cakes etc ... and you can watch thro'
RNIB's telescope baby birds being fed by their parents.

Gifts for all from Rocks & Fossils,.... Plants for house & garden.

Jake's amazing puppetry for the whole family. See wild creepy-

crawlies magnified and a grand RAFFLE with LOTS of good prizes,

Our artistes can PAINT your face

organised by Coppetts Wood Conservationists

All Welcome

Free entry.

Fun for the whole family

Membership

Membrship of FBWRA costs only £5 per household per calendar year. It provides quarterly newsletters, e-mail updates, social events, meetings on local issues, and a chance to influence what happens in your neighbourhood.

Application forms from FBWRA.org or from FBWRA Treasurer, 12 Macdonald Road N11 3JB

In this issue

1. FBWRA Green bin complaint bears fruit
2. Cannabis factory in The Ridgeway
4. Local residents express concern about large number of developments in the pipeline
6. Horse trough returns to Whetstone

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' Associations of Barnet
- The Finchley Society
- Friends of Friary Park
- Open Spaces Society
- The Friern Barnet & District Local History Society
- Coppetts Wood Conservationists
- The London Green Belt Council
- Love Whetstone

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY

Thursday 14th May - AGM - POSTPONED

Sunday 28th June – FBWRA Summer Splash – POSTPONED

Forthcoming Events

Incognito Theatre, Holly Park Road Performances are Sunday at 6pm, Monday - Friday at 8pm, Saturday at 3pm and 8pm.

All shows cancelled until further notice

FRIERN BARNET & DISTRICT LOCAL HISTORY SOCIETY
start 7:45 p.m.

Wed 22 Apr April Meeting - Postponed