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THE ARCHER



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A community newspaper for East Finchley run entirely by volunteers.



A sure-footed steed shows a surge of speed during the donkey derby at the Muswell Hill Festival. The event is held each year in Cherry Tree Wood because Haringey Council will not allow the race to take place on its land. For more on the festival, turn to page 6.

Threat to our library

By Daphne Chamberlain

Barnet Council leader Mike Freer has spelled out the continued threat to East Finchley Library just months after the service suffered cuts in staff and opening hours.

Writing on the future of libraries in the council's magazine Barnet First, Councillor Freer warned: "Some of our libraries are listed buildings, which makes them very difficult to adapt, and we need to look at new models, such as multi-functional buildings. Many of them are no longer part of the main footfall of our town centres, and—as any retailer knows—when the footfall moves, you have to follow."

His comments have raised fresh fears amongst campaigners fighting to safeguard East Finchley Library, which is housed in a listed building towards the upper end of the High Road.

Earlier this year, it was downgraded to 'community library' status and its staffing and opening hours were reduced.

The site is right

Three years ago, East Finchley people voted overwhelmingly in favour of our library's present site. Majority opinion then was that the library should remain next to Martin Schools, in the centre

of the residential area.

Leslie Gilbert, from The Friends of Barnet Libraries, told *THE ARCHER*: "Footfall is shop-keeper-speak for the frequency with which potential customers traverse a shopping area. But public libraries are not shops. They are unique resources that should be plentifully situated in local neighbourhoods... When they are well maintained, which is the Council's responsibility, people will seek them out."

Traditional or modern: a false opposition?

Cllr Freer went on to write that libraries are now "just as important for their Internet access as for their store of books", concluding that the library service needed significant investment to remain relevant and attractive.

Mr Gilbert commented that Cllr Freer seemed to see a modern library as an array of computers, dispensing goblets of information from the internet, but had failed, apparently, to notice the maps, guides, newspapers and magazines, dictionaries in many languages, local information collections, talking books, large print, and areas introducing children to the wonderful world of literature. He said that these "traditional" library materials had stood the test of time, and were likely to continue to do so.

He also accused Cllr Freer of overlooking the pace of technological development, saying that soon almost everyone would have their own internet facilities, just as they now have their own televisions.

While agreeing that the future structure and nature of libraries was worth considering, Mr Gilbert wanted "deeper thinking and a genuine, widespread public discussion, not a token consultation". Meanwhile, he said, why not give libraries the money and staff they need, and put some of that significant investment into publicising them?

New faces in Barnet cabinet

Barnet Council has created a children's services position with responsibility for education, children's services, the Youth Service and the Youth Offending Team and for ensuring that Barnet's youngsters receive a 'seamless service' for all their needs.

The new post, to be filled by Councillor Fiona Bulmer, is part of a small facelift for the council's Cabinet which also sees the introduction of a Learning Infrastructure post to look after the Primary Schools

Capital Investment Programme and the borough's libraries. Here is the new Cabinet in full: Resources (Leader) - Cllr. Mike Freer, Environment & Transport (Deputy Leader) - Cllr. Matthew Offord, Children

- Cllr. Fiona Bulmer, Community Engagement & Community Safety - Cllr. Brian Coleman, Planning & Environmental Protection - Cllr. Melvin Cohen, Regeneration - Cllr. Anthony Finn, Policy & Performance - Cllr. Andrew Harper, Public Health - Cllr. Helena Hart, Adult Social Services & Housing - Cllr. Lynne Hillan, Learning Infrastructure - Cllr. John Marshall.

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