



Letters to the editor...

Council created this mess

Dear Editor,

On 18 July a Conservative councillor tweeted "Cabinet meeting tonight. Officers need to identify achievable savings of £15million by April 2014....There is always a consequence". It is my belief that this was a reference to the recent Court of Appeal case brought by Maria Nash in respect of her judicial review of Barnet Council's decision to out-source 75% of the Council to Capita without first conducting a consultation, as they were legally obliged to do. This certainly is a grave consequence, but I think we need to be clear where the responsibility for this mess lies. The judge at first instance, Lord Justice Underhill, made a finding of fact that there had been no consultation whatsoever. However, he found that her challenge had been brought too late, because she had challenged the wrong decision within the chain of decisions leading up to this point. The Court of Appeal will decide whether Lord Justice Underhill was right in law to make that judgement. But one fact remains, the Council acted unlawfully by not holding a consultation. They knew they had to, they said they would in their papers. They chose not to. That is maladministration. I think it is important to consider who is responsible for the difficult situation the Council now finds itself in. In my view the responsibility does not lie with Mrs Nash, the Barnet resident who appealed to the Court to uphold her legal rights and prevent maladministration, breach of the law, and an abuse of power (for judicial review is always about abuse of power). She was perfectly entitled to ask for her civil rights to be upheld; arguably it was her civic duty. The responsibility lies squarely with the Council and the Councillors who chose to spend the best part of £10million of council taxpayers money on their implementation partners, Agilysys/MPower, and their lawyers, Trowers and Hamlin, pursuing a policy which they knew they needed to consult on, but who chose to ignore that legal responsibility. There is always a consequence, whatever the outcome in the Court of Appeal, and it is the result of the unlawful action of the Council, not the woman who chose to challenge it. Yours faithfully,

Julia Hines
Address supplied

Who has space for three bins?

Dear Editor,

I recently received a leaflet from the council concerning the new recycling arrangements. I am extremely pleased that Barnet now sees fit to include more plastics in the scope of their recycling collection.

I note that Barnet Council maintains it is currently recycling 33% of its household waste which is exactly the same percentage as two years ago when they advised me that they were focussing efforts on getting people to recycle more food waste. To my knowledge there has been no campaign to get people to recycle more food waste and I fail to see how an additional brown bin will help matters.

I already recycle food waste into my green bin so it is of no benefit to me at all to be required to separate garden waste from food waste. It is all

compostable material so why do they need to be separated? If people do not have a garden, by all means introduce a food waste bin for them but those of us who do have gardens neither need nor want two bins.

Furthermore has any consideration been given into where residents are supposed to keep all these bins? As of October I will have to find space for three full size wheellie bins (green, black & blue) plus a smaller brown bin which may or may not have wheels and a seven-litre kitchen caddy. I live in a mid-terraced house with limited outside space at the front and NO side access whilst my kitchen does not have excess space for additional bins. I also doubt I am the only resident with this problem. I am a great believer in recycling but am disappointed in the council's approach as it is not helpful to residents, is inconsistent and I believe, not cost effective.

Yours faithfully,
Catherine Johnson,
By email

Folk on the hill

Folk and country music lovers should make a beeline for the next Hill Country Folk evening when there will be music from local singers and bands including Teyr, Three Deuces and Sweet on Monday 16 September from 7.30pm to 10.30pm in Birchwood Hall, 170 Fortis Green Road, Muswell Hill.

Tickets cost £5 and will be sold at the door from 7pm. There will be a bar for drinks but no food except crisps. Donations this time will go to the Noah's Arks Children's Hospice which serves the communities of Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington. For more information email wendysykes@btconnect.com.

Yoga cured my reflux

By Amy Fielding, Hatha Yoga teacher

In 2007, while studying theatre and performance at university, I started coughing a lot and friends noticed that my singing voice had got quite weak.

My GP diagnosed possible asthma and gave me an inhaler; I used it for a couple of months but it did not help in the slightest.

He referred me to a private ear, nose and throat specialist who asked me all sorts of bizarre questions, including did I wake with a metal taste in my mouth and did I suffer from wind, to all of which, quite embarrassingly, I could say yes.

He then said: "I think you have acid reflux, which means you have an excess of acid in your stomach that is agitated by food and stress and overnight will make your throat red raw."

His advice was for me to start the strongest acid reflux medication so I lived with pills and watched my diet carefully.

Six months later

During all this time I had been practising yoga on and off and was loving it. I practised at least three times a week and realised after about half a year that my body had completely changed. I'm not necessarily talking about my figure, even though that had also changed. I mean that I was eating and not suffering at all. I was barely coughing, never hiccupped and had not suffered from any stomach aches in a very long time.

I am now a qualified yoga teacher, furthering my practice to become a British Wheel of Yoga teacher and practising

every day, along with teaching four times a week. I have not touched medication since 2010. My singing voice is now back to what it used to be and I can eat pretty much anything. Yoga has given me many benefits, but curing my acid reflux has been the most marvellous result.

I teach privately and have a group class at Millfield House, Millfield Arts Centre, Silver Street, Edmonton, N18, on Wednesdays from 7.30-9pm.

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Any reader who feels strongly about any matter is invited to use this "Soapbox" column.

Please note that opinions expressed are those of the writer alone.



Runners of the world, unite!

By Victoria Davenport

As many runners begin to think about starting their training for the NYC and other autumn marathons, their thoughts might be turning to the Boston Marathon, and its significance for runners all over the world. For anyone running in a big-city marathon this year there is bound to be anxiety mixed with excitement, particularly in a city such as New York.

The atmosphere at the London Marathon a week later was electric. The minute of silence before the start had everyone holding back tears and trying to run all at once.

What happened in Boston affected runners in a way that might have been a surprise: out of nowhere came a feeling of shock for the runners, shock for the families, but also a sense of resolve. While this might apply to all sports, there is something about running, and particularly a marathon, that generates a different feeling, perhaps because the large ones include the plain folk like you and me who just get out there and do this crazy thing for whatever reason, with no hope of reward or recognition, and our friends and families who get out there with us too.

The outrage about Boston was not only at the violence and waste of life, it was the attack on something that is innocent of any political, religious or racial intent or purpose. Runners run for all kinds of reasons, but not to express their political or religious views.

While many will be feeling anxious about running the NYC marathon (it is the first major US marathon after Boston), it is also a chance to show that not only are we not intimidated by the craziness of the world, but that we refuse to let go of what running really means, a positive expression of life, a desire to help others and reaffirm what is so easily lost these days: hope.

As one person said: "If you start losing hope in mankind, go and watch a marathon." Or, as someone else said thousands of years ago: "Strive on heedlessly."



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