

# barnetfirst

issue 48 February 2012



**Barnet to shine in  
diamond year**

**See page 12**

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## Contacting your council

### Corporate Customer Services

tel: 020 8359 2000

email: [first.contact@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:first.contact@barnet.gov.uk)

Contact us and we will identify the correct service or person you are looking for

### Street-based services

tel: 020 8359 4600

Covering refuse collection, holes in the road, abandoned vehicles and graffiti

### Parking enquiries

tel: 020 8359 7446

email: [parking@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:parking@barnet.gov.uk)

### Planning and licensing advice

tel: 020 8359 3000

### Social Care Direct

tel: 020 8359 5000

### Out of hours emergencies

tel: 020 8359 2000

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# Leader's column



I now realise I could use this space to stress the challenges the council faces with a reduced budget but growing demand for services for years to come.

However, I would rather enter 2012 on an optimistic note and highlight how this will be a year of celebrations.

While the Olympics may seem a long way off, as the year goes on I am sure that sporting fever will grip the city and the borough, and I look forward to seeing the torch come to Barnet in July.

As the interest in last year's royal wedding and HM The Queen's previous jubilees show, there is likely to be a great demand by residents wanting to celebrate this year's Diamond Jubilee in the first week of June.

The council will host a civic commemoration service but most importantly we will again be removing red tape and making it as easy as possible for Barnet residents to hold street parties for both the Olympics and the Jubilee. There are further details on page 12 of this magazine.

This will be a difficult year for many people in the borough, but I hope there will also be many causes for personal celebration on your part.

Yours

Richard Cornelius

## news in brief



### Children's Centres see a surge in visitors

Children's Centres have seen a 25 per cent increase in the number of families passing through their doors between April and October 2011.

During the seven months following the service's restructure back in March, more than 7,800 individual families visited the borough's 13 centres compared to 5,821 during the same period the previous year.

In total, more than 50,500 visits have been made by families across the Children's Centre network between April and October 2011.

Children's Centres are open 8am to 6pm, 48 weeks a year, offering families with children under five a range of services, information and support in their local community as well as providing a safe and enjoyable atmosphere for children to play and learn.

Children's Centre programmes are based on the concept that providing integrated education, care, family support and health services are key factors in determining good outcomes for children and their families.

To find your nearest Children's Centre visit:  
[www.barnet.gov.uk/childrens-centres](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/childrens-centres)



### Winter response ready around the clock

Although the predicted cold snap failed to materialise over the festive season, the council's gritting crews were primed and ready to keep the borough's roads moving safely in the event of snow.

Following three consecutive severe winters, Barnet Council reinforced its winter response team ahead of the cold weather with nine new gritting vehicles and additional salt stocks.

Since the start of November, gritting crews have been out on a total of 31 days and made more than 197 individual gritting runs across the borough's road network, spreading a total of 580 tonnes of salt. An extra 117 tonnes of grit were also used to top up the borough's yellow grit bins.

In the past the council stocked 2,000 tonnes of salt each year, a level which was almost doubled to 3,804 tonnes this winter.

Each of the council's new trucks can hold up to nine tonnes of grit and boast state-of-the-art electronic tracking and monitoring systems which provide real time data on the location of the vehicles, the route followed and the amount of salt spread.

The new designs also allow for a more even spread of salt, including mechanisms for targeted spreading under parked vehicles where required.

## news in brief



### **Fraud investigators feature in BBC documentary**

The work of Barnet Council's benefit fraud investigators has been highlighted in a BBC documentary.

Officers from the Corporate Anti-Fraud Team (CAFT) took part in filming for an episode of the BBC series 'Saints and Scroungers', which aired in mid-January, to explain their five-year investigation into a £112,000 benefit scam.

The investigation, codenamed Operation Avalanche, led to the conviction last July of four benefit cheats, three from the same family.

The culprits used multiple aliases and false identities to fraudulently claim housing and council tax benefit before using it to finance the purchase of properties.

Riccardo Guthrie and his two sisters Bianca and Cosima Guthrie received jail terms ranging from three years to 18 months, while accomplice Courtney Campbell was handed a 12-month suspended sentence and 160 hours of community service for his part.

Confiscation proceedings are now underway to recover the illegally claimed money.

Anyone wishing to report a fraud can call the fraud hotline on 020 8359 2007 in confidence.



### **How are we doing?**

What do you want to know?

How do you want to find out?

Barnet Council is reviewing how it presents information about how it is performing.

An 'Ideas Website', used for last year's budget consultation, has been adapted so residents can suggest what information they want about council services and how that information should be published.

Currently information published by the council varies in detail between an "Excellent" rating for the council's Children's Service and "percentage of managers submitting a monthly absence return" in Corporate Governance.

Residents can watch a short video on the site and then suggest what different information they would like published. They can then rate other residents' suggestions. The council is committed to reviewing all comments and where possible suggestions will be incorporated into a revised council website, due to go live later in the year.

You can make suggestions on how the council should publish this information at [ideas.barnet.gov.uk](http://ideas.barnet.gov.uk)

## news in brief

### Switch, don't ditch

Nearly three million Londoners risk wasting money by needlessly replacing their TVs ahead of the digital switchover in April 2012. Most TVs, even black and white ones, need not be replaced, but can be converted to digital with a set-top box. For more information visit [www.digitaluk.co.uk](http://www.digitaluk.co.uk) or call 0845 650 5050.

The Switchover Help Scheme can help people who are disabled, aged 75 or over, have a visual impairment or anyone who has lived in a care home for 6 months or more.

For more information visit [helpscheme.co.uk](http://helpscheme.co.uk) or call 0800 408 5900.



### Borough's newest primary school design revealed



Proposals have been put forward by Barnet Council to relocate and expand the existing Orion Primary School in Colindale to a new site, providing a purpose-built four-form entry school for the area.

As The Orion School currently shares a constrained site in Grahame Park with Blessed Dominic School, the proposals would also allow for future expansion of Blessed Dominic onto the vacated site.

The project is an important step in helping to ease the increasing demand for primary school places across Barnet, particularly in the west of the borough.

A planning application will be submitted and will be subject to comprehensive public consultation.





## Our SATs results in top five nationally

**B**arnet's schools have once again achieved a top five position nationally for Key Stage 2 exam results.

Last year 86 per cent of pupils in the borough's schools achieved level 4+ in English, with 84 per cent gaining the same grade in maths. This compares to 82 per cent in English and 81 per cent in maths nationally. 80 per cent of pupils achieved level 4+ in both English and maths compared to the national average of 74 per cent. In total, 89 per cent of pupils also met their expected progress in English from Key Stage 1 to 2, the fourth best in the country, while 88 per cent made their expected progress in maths, the third best score across the country.

Councillor Andrew Harper, Cabinet Member for Education, Children and Families, said: "With each set of exam results published, Barnet is firmly establishing itself as a borough that is providing a first class education to every pupil in every school.

"There is no better start in life than a good education and this is the reason why Barnet Council places such a great emphasis on its schools system.

"My congratulations go to all the hard working pupils and staff in their excellent achievements."

To find out more, visit

[www.barnet.gov.uk/education-learning](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/education-learning)





**Pay by Phone  
Parking**



To buy Parking Vouchers visit

**[www.barnet.gov.uk/parking](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/parking)**

## Driving services online

**B**arnet motorists are now able to take advantage of a number of new online features making it quicker and easier to buy parking scratch cards, apply for a resident permit or order resident vouchers.

The improvements to the council's website also include an option to register for pay-by-phone parking and a search feature to find the nearest PayPoint outlet, a cash payment alternative to pay-by-phone parking.

In the event of receiving a Penalty Charge Notice (PCN), motorists will be able to view photographic evidence and challenge a fine online.

Since pay-by-phone parking was launched across the borough in 2009, more than 162,000 motorists have signed up.

Registering via the council's secure online website is now the easiest way to pay to park. Once registered, motorists can simply text their car registration number, the location number (displayed in all car parks) and the amount of time they'd like to park for. The relevant parking fee is then automatically deducted from a linked credit or debit card, with no need to carry the correct change. You can extend your parking by simply sending another text message.

Transactions are instantly loaded onto handheld devices used by local Civil Enforcement Officers.

Residents can also buy a one hour or 30 minute parking scratch card, costing £2 or £1 respectively, online as well as from all libraries across the borough.

For more information on how to pay for parking in Barnet, visit [www.barnet.gov.uk/parking](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/parking)



# COMMUNITY PROJECTS RECEIVE BACKING FROM COUNCIL'S £600,000 INNOVATION BANK

**C**ommunity-minded residents have been handed a slice of a £600,000 fund set up by Barnet Council to help fund local projects.

The Big Society Innovation Bank was launched last June as a way for residents and not-for-profit groups to find creative solutions to local challenges.

The first portion of money, £200,000, has gone to nine winning bids across the borough, focusing on support for young people, environmental projects and health care. The remaining £400,000 will be allocated to other bids over the next two years.

In total £200,000 was divided between: Jesus House and Elevation Networks (£50,000), London Ambulance Responder Group (£28,350), Energise Barnet (£37,500), Barnet Federation of Allotment and Horticultural Societies (£16,000), Barnet Voice for Mental Health (£13,000), Age UK Barnet (£30,000), Barnet Community Projects (£21,000) and Life Skills Workshops (£4,150).

Barnet resident Haley Blackman was successful in her Life Skills Workshops idea.

The workshops are aimed at teaching young people and first time tenants how to budget and manage their money as well as providing help with basic life skills including personal health care and simple DIY.

Haley, a youth worker and life coach, said: "I do a lot of work with young tenants moving into social housing and it struck me there's a need to help people who have no idea how to pay a bill or put up a shelf. I heard about the Big Society Innovation Bank and thought this was a great opportunity to provide much needed support through a Life Skills Workshop. I'm delighted my project has been chosen and all the hard work has paid off."



For more information, visit  
[www.innovationbankbarnet.org.uk](http://www.innovationbankbarnet.org.uk)







## New trading company set to offer greater choice for residents

**B**arnet Council is to become one of the first local authorities in the country to launch a 'trading company' to help deliver some adult social services.

The move will see a Local Authority Trading Company (LATC) established with Barnet Homes, the organisation which manages the council's social housing. This is a key step as more disabled adults choose to receive direct payments which they can use, with the right support, to arrange and pay for the care they need.

While direct payments mean more control for residents over how their needs are met and where money is spent, they could not be used on services provided direct by the council.

That is why the council, with Barnet Homes, has set up Your Choice Barnet to manage these services and allow people to use direct payments on them.

The LATC will be launched in February. It will be wholly owned by Barnet Council but will have its own board of directors and will manage its own operations.

The board of Your Choice Barnet will include experts by experience - disabled people and family carers - to make sure it is responsive to the needs of its customers.

The staff who will run the new LATC will be drawn from both the council and Barnet Homes.

Councillor Sachin Rajput, Cabinet Member for Adults, said: "This is an important change to the way the council gives a key group of our residents greater control over the services they receive and, by giving them that greater choice, empowers them to make decisions which will improve their care and support needs."

For more information, visit  
[www.yourchoicebarnet.org](http://www.yourchoicebarnet.org)  
or call 020 8359 3456



## My Barnet



**G**ail Laser laughs at the suggestion she is the Mary Portas of High Barnet. “Well I guess we do come from similar retail backgrounds,” says Gail, chairman of High Barnet Traders Association and the Barnet Town Team.

Using her experience in fashion retail and as a psychotherapist, Gail is clearly someone who understands what makes a business tick. And it’s this acumen she’s using to help breathe new life back into her high street.

Born and raised in Finchley, Gail moved to High Barnet 12 years ago with her husband Ronnie, and her now grown up children.

“We wanted more green space,” says Gail. “There are good schools, you can walk to the supermarket and hop on the Tube into central London.”

Wanting to help make High Barnet a better place, Gail joined the Barnet Society and soon became a committee member.

“I could see our high street was dying with traders feeling very downtrodden,” she says.

Using her business nous and drive, Gail met with Barnet Council three years ago to discuss ways of reinvigorating the high street.

“We agreed to work together and develop a town centre strategy,” she says.

In January 2011 the High Barnet Traders Association was formed and a Town Team founded in July 2011. The Team worked closely with Barnet Council and submitted a successful bid for £416,000 from the Mayor of London’s Outer London Fund.

“We were delighted to receive the money and have been working hard using it to make a difference,” says Gail.

As well as decluttering and updating several shop fronts, the team are planting new trees making St. John the Baptist Church’s garden a focal point. Some of the money has already been put to good use with a number of events helping draw more shoppers in.

“Things are starting to improve but it’s a long process. People have to get behind their local traders, but local traders also have to help themselves.

“This is a golden opportunity for them to take stock and see what they can do differently,” says Gail.

In her spare time, Gail likes to enjoy a cup of tea at Café Pacino. “They make delicious homemade cakes as well as great pasta,” she says. She also loves taking her grandson to play in Courthouse Gardens and looks forward to showing him Barnet Museum.

She is keen to promote the excellent productions put on by students of Suzi Earnshaw at The Bull Theatre and enjoys shopping locally at The Present, Victoria Bakery and Butchers Hook.

“We all want a thriving high street, but we have to put our money where our mouths are and support our traders by shopping locally,” Gail concludes.

\*North Finchley and Cricklewood town centres are also set to receive a £3.7m boost to their high streets. The Mayor’s Outer London Fund will provide £2.75m to create a Cultural Quarter in North Finchley and reinvigorate Cricklewood town centre.

**Tell us your story.** If you would like to be featured in future issues of My Barnet, please email [barnet.first@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:barnet.first@barnet.gov.uk) with no more than 100 words describing your life in Barnet.

At the sweet shop



Nothing but the best from the Butchers Hook

Browsing for gifts at The Present



Gail's favourite café

Suzi Earnshaw students at The Bull Theatre



# Barnet's Diamond year

**T**his year marks the 60th anniversary of the Queen's anniversary of ruling the nation – an incredible milestone only achieved once before in our monarchy's history.

Celebrations started at the end of 2011, with more than 70 borough schools planting a tree and plaque for the Diamond Jubilee (pictured on the front cover) and the planting of a commemorative Black Poplar tree in Sunny Hill Park.

Barnet is playing host to many other celebrations in the coming months and we'd like you to join in.

A multi-faith 'Civic Service' is planned for Golders Green Parish Church on Sunday 5 February to mark the anniversary of the Queen's accession to the throne.

The council is cutting red tape to help residents throw a street party over the extended Diamond Jubilee Bank Holiday weekend of 2 to 5 June 2012.

All you need to do is visit [www.pledgebank.barnet.gov.uk](http://www.pledgebank.barnet.gov.uk) and register your street. If three or more of your neighbours pledge to join in, the council will arrange public liability insurance and guidance on road closure.

The Diamond Jubilee Festival at Golders Hill Park is the main showpiece event from 3 to 10pm on Monday 4 June culminating in a firework display and beacon lighting. There will also be music, children's entertainment, food and drink (bring your own picnic or buy food at the event) and much more. Plans are also underway to recognise the achievements of some of the borough's longest serving volunteers.

## How else can I get involved?

### Apply for a stall at the Diamond Jubilee Festival

We are looking for residents or small businesses who want to sell their wares (for example, arts and crafts, homemade food) or publicise their community group. There will be a charge per stall. Email the address on the right to apply.

**Or you can** email us details of someone who is aged over 60 and has been involved in voluntary work in the borough for a long time. Let us know why they deserve to be recognised for their work.

For more information, visit  
[pledgebank.barnet.gov.uk](http://pledgebank.barnet.gov.uk) or email  
[diamondjubilee@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:diamondjubilee@barnet.gov.uk)



# London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

**B**arnet residents will be able to share in the excitement of the Olympics when the torch is carried through its streets this summer.

The borough is one of more than 1,000 villages, towns, cities and London boroughs announced by the London Organising Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games (LOCOG) through which the Olympic Flame will be carried by torchbearers during the London 2012 Olympic Torch Relay.

The exact route of the Olympic Flame will be announced in the next couple of months; it is expected to travel from Brent in the west of the borough on Wednesday 25 July and is anticipated to pass by Hendon Town Hall, through a number of town centres and by a number of parks before moving into Enfield in the east.

Some 30 torchbearers will have a chance to carry the flame as it makes its journey across the borough. A number of these are expected to be Barnet residents with their own stories to tell.

Register your event online at  
the London Events Coordination  
Calendar; [lecc.visitlondon.com](http://lecc.visitlondon.com)



## Register your events now

If you are considering staging a public event in a Barnet Park or Open Space in the year of the 2012 Olympics Games you need to register your intention in the London Events Coordination Calendar (LECC).

Barnet Council is now collecting information on behalf of the Greater London Authority about events taking place in the borough between 15 July and 16 September 2012. It is crucial that anyone holding an event which involves 499 people or more during this period informs the council immediately so that emergency services can be planned.

This is a vital process in the city's preparations for the 2012 games and you are urged to register details to be included in the diary.

For more information  
call 020 8359 7293



# contact your councillors

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Cllr Alan Schneiderman  
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For details of surgeries, call 020 8359 2000  
or email [first.contact@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:first.contact@barnet.gov.uk)

# Look out for City Read London



**B**arnet Libraries are hosting a range of events to promote the City Read 2012. City Read London is a campaign to spread a love of books and reading to the widest possible audience throughout our capital.

By choosing one book – ‘Oliver Twist’ – for the whole city to read, discuss and debate, we can bring Londoners together in a series of special events, across London and online. City Read London will launch on 2 April 2012 and events will take place across London. For more information visit [www.cityreadlondon.org.uk](http://www.cityreadlondon.org.uk)

Look out for the travelling display of ‘Oliver Twist in Barnet’ set in the period around its publication 1838, using historical resources from Barnet’s Local Studies Collection and circulating to three libraries: East Barnet 2 – 8 April, Chipping Barnet Library 10 – 18 April and Hendon Library 20 – 29 April.

The following events are taking place, booking is required. Please contact the relevant library at the web address below.

## **Dickens virtual tour - Paul Baker**

Chipping Barnet Library, Friday 20 April, 6.30pm – 7.30pm

## **Oliver Twist and Barnet – Archive reading event**

Local Studies Hendon Library, Saturday 21 April, 2pm – 4pm

## **City Read: Oliver Twist Comics Workshops**

Children aged 8 –12 are invited to join comics and manga creator Karen Rubins to create their own characters and comic strips based on Oliver Twist

## **Dickens’ London**

Mill Hill Library, Wednesday 4 April, 2.30pm – 4.30pm  
Find out all about what it was like to live in Charles Dickens’ London. Look at examples of comics and cartoons, and create your own comic strip about the funny side of living in the 19th century

## **Character Design**

East Finchley Library, Wednesday 11 April, 2.30pm – 4.30pm

Contact details can be found at  
[www.barnet.gov.uk/libraries](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/libraries)



What’s on  
**in Barnet?**

*February –  
March*

## **The Snail and the Whale**

Date: Thursday 16 February, 12pm and 3pm, Friday 17 February 3pm, Saturday 18 and Sunday 19 February 12pm and 3pm, artsdepot, £9 / £32 Family ticket (admits four)

A tiny snail and a giant whale go on an amazing adventure.

Presented by Tall Stories. Ages 4–10.

Box Office: 020 8369 5454

## **The Klezmer Festival Band**

Date: Thursday 23 February, 7.30pm, artsdepot, £16 / £14 conc

A six-piece band of true klezmerium described as “very jazzy, very upbeat and fun” (Folk Roots).

Box Office: 020 8369 5454

## **Piccadilly Dance Orchestra: Midnight in Mayfair**

Date: Saturday 10 March, 7:30pm, artsdepot, £20 / £15 conc

A splendid evening of nostalgic entertainment with Michael Law’s ten-piece band.

Box Office: 020 8369 5454

## **Middlesex University Literary Festival in association with Hendon Library**

Date: March 27, 28 and 29

A celebration of new talent blooming at Barnet’s best University. Laugh, cry and be intrigued. A student-run event since 1996.

For more information contact Farah Mendlesohn at [farah.sf@gmail.com](mailto:farah.sf@gmail.com)

## **The Story of Friern Barnet Town Hall**

Date: Friday 30 March, 10.30am – 12noon  
South Friern Library Coffee Morning.

For more information call 020 8359 3946

# Working hours

Jo Wright is an Intensive Family Focus Officer within the council's Children's Service. Barnet is one of 16 national Family Intervention pilot projects funded by the Department for Communities and Local Government.

**Q** How would you describe the council's Family Intervention Project?

**A** As the most effective way of supporting change, empowering families, and changing lives with very positive outcomes. It builds stronger communities whilst saving the public sector money.

**Q** What are the main aims of the Family Intervention project?

**A** It's all about intensive family support, whether it's reducing crime and antisocial behaviour, helping develop parenting skills or co-ordinating various agencies who can also help. With all cases we aim to build a family's confidence and resilience to help them cope with future challenges.

**Q** What is the most challenging aspect of your role?

**A** It's probably getting a family to engage in the first place.

**Q** What drew you to becoming a Family Intervention Officer?

**A** I was subject to a Police Protection Order (PPO) at 11 months old and then a Child Protection

Plan before being adopted at the age of eight. My foster parents were the longest serving foster and adoptive parents of children with challenging behaviours and so I think that's why I now like being able to work with whole families in such a holistic way.

**Q** What's been the most rewarding aspect of your role?

**A** Helping one parent find volunteering work and then a job was very rewarding. Also seeing a child's school attendance go from 38 per cent up to nearly 90 per cent was also a great achievement. It just shows how we've been able to empower them to take control of their own lives, which is just fantastic.

**Q** What are the most common situations you offer help with?

**A** Reducing anti-social behaviour and crime, offering one-to-one parenting support, supporting families through difficult initial appointments and liaising with other services and professionals who can also offer the most common ways in which we can make a real difference.

For more information, visit  
[www.barnet.gov.uk/directme](http://www.barnet.gov.uk/directme)

