

Our Barnet

barnetalliance.org/
[@barnetalliance](https://twitter.com/barnetalliance)

“Barnet Independence Day”

5.30-7pm, Tuesday 13 September, Hendon Town Hall, The Burroughs, NW4 4BG
Lobby of Barnet council to demand no cuts to public services, and to support
Barnet Council staff striking against the One Barnet Programme

Barnet Council local residents' forums

YOUR MONEY, YOUR COUNCIL: are they doing the right thing? Barnet Council Residents' Forums are a chance to have your say – use it or lose it!

- how much for a road sign?
- how much to park your car?
- incinerator or nature reserve?
- close museums?
- end the youth service?
- hand over the council to a private company?

Hendon

Monday 12 September, 6pm
Copthall School, Pursley Road, NW7 2EP

Finchley and Golders Green

Wednesday 14 September, 6pm
Trinity Church, 15 Nether Street, N12 7NN

- run social care for profit?
- privatise schools?
- restrict free speech at residents' forums?
- close libraries?
- get rid of sheltered housing wardens?
- cut children's centres?
- put up allotment charges?

For or against? What do you think? Any better ideas? Queries? Complaints? Suggestions?

Chipping Barnet

Tuesday 20 September, 6pm
All Saints Arts Centre, 122 Oakleigh Rd North, N20 9EZ
Didn't get the answers you wanted? Want to take it further? Unrestricted questions and discussion of all Barnet issues at...

Our Barnet residents' forum

7-9pm, Tuesday 4 October, Greek Cypriot Community Centre, 2 Britannia Road, N12 9RU

We are inviting Barnet councillors, MPs and senior council officers to hear and answer your questions on any topic about the future of our borough. Questions can be submitted on the night or emailed in advance to barnetalliance4publicservices@gmail.com.

Free speech in Barnet matters

Residents of Barnet, as elsewhere, have come to expect a certain minimum level of services as a right: something they, their children, the young, the old, the sick, the disabled, the underpaid, were entitled to as members of the community (i.e. most of us at some stage in our lives). The columns of this paper are full of examples of how our rulers are trying to cut, charge for and sell off these services.

A council that wants to destroy them has got to destroy free speech first. And this is just what they are trying to do in Barnet.

The public has a right to ask them questions at cabinet meetings. But when there are too many of us, and when we vocally demand real answers they threaten to call the police and even close the meeting down.

The public has a right to sit in the gallery and witness what goes on at full council meetings, but when there is likely to be controversy they have brought in uncertified bouncers to remove citizens by force.

There are local Residents' Forums, where citizens have a right to question councillors and officers of the council – but they have severely restricted what you can cover. You have to submit questions in writing in advance. No discussion is allowed, no criticism, no suggestions. That is why we are holding our own **Our Barnet residents' forum on 4 October** (7-9pm, Greek Cypriot Community Centre, 2 Britannia Road, London N12).

The council are obliged to consult the public on certain issues. At great expense they hire experts to devise questions which are confusing/misleading. On every issue their plan is rejected by residents but, on every occasion, they ignore the results.

Barnet Alliance for Public Services has a banner which tells everybody what we stand for. It reads: Our libraries, our NHS, our schools, our homes, our wardens, our streets, our land, our old, our young, our past, our future – Hands off our Barnet! This idea so enrages them that they have seized the banner and given no indication that they will return it.

Their attacks on the citizens are framed in huge documents, sometimes 500 pages long, written in almost incomprehensible language. Most of them are headed by their declared aim: a new relationship with citizens. That is what we want too!



WHO WE ARE: Barnet Alliance for Public Services is a coalition of residents, campaign groups and trade unions in the London Borough of Barnet. We welcome involvement from groups and individuals defending public services.

Website: <http://barnetalliance.org>

Email: barnetalliance4publicservices@gmail.com

Twitter: [@barnetalliance](https://twitter.com/barnetalliance)

Save our libraries!

by Save Friern Barnet Library campaign

At a council meeting in March, a Strategic Library Review proposed the closure of three libraries in the borough – Friern Barnet, North Finchley and Hampstead Garden Suburb – with a new pie in the sky “landmark library” to be built in the Arts Depot.

This is over a mile away from the present Friern Barnet library site, while residents in HGS would be offered a self-service collection of books located at the Institute, next to East Finchley station.

Recently, it was revealed that the Institute has not held any detailed meetings with the council, and that the Institute has now rejected the proposal to house books there. The chief executive of the Arts Depot has said there has been no progress made in talks with the council since June. The Council, it seems, is planning to shut our libraries without putting any replacement provision in place – affecting thou-

sands of local residents.

The Save Friern Barnet Library campaign was launched in April and we've gone from strength to strength. So far we have had four very successful campaigning events, starting from an initial raising awareness day on 7 May, followed by a “Read In” later that month, attracting more than 400 people.

To build pressure on the Cabinet prior to decision day, our group ran a “walk to the library” week-long event, inviting local schoolchildren to visit the library and participate in craft activities and puzzle competitions, run by students at Holly Park School and Woodhouse College. The week ended in style with a huge summer party on 16 July, featuring a 1.5m long bookworm cake celebrating the library's 77 years of service. Many children dressed up as their favourite story characters and live music was provided by local bands, packing the event full of community spirit. That week was a record breaker for the library's footfall figures – more than 1,700! With more than 3,000 petition signatures handed in to the Council, we will fight to keep our library open.

At the Cabinet meeting on 26 July – where a 10-year-old girl asked a public question with huge confidence and authority – the cabinet members passed the strategy. However, a recommendation was added: “Subject to the consideration of the feasibility of any community initiatives that come forward from residents on or before 31st October.” This may just be a delaying tactic for the Council to start proper negotiations with the two proposed venues.

Our group is looking at all the options in saving our library and preserving the historic values of the building. We are keen on the idea of a community hub (similar to Haringey's model) to maximise the use of the library while keeping paid staff. A subgroup is also looking at bringing the case to Judicial Review.

To support us in our fight to save our only community centre in Friern Barnet, please get in touch! And look out for our next event in September!

- Website: tinyurl.com/savefblib
- Email: savefriernbarnetlibrary@gmail.com
- Twitter: [@SaveFriernBTLib](https://twitter.com/SaveFriernBTLib)
- Facebook: [Facebook.com/SaveFriernBarnetLiby](https://www.facebook.com/SaveFriernBarnetLiby)



Friern Barnet Library summer party, 16 July 2011
Photo: © Zofia Walczak