

Add caddss: perfect example of joint users (residents) & staff together – same interests

Coordinator's report to BAPS 2nd AGM 1st July 2013

I can open by saying that since the last AGM which was our first, in which we adopted our constitution, we have followed by consistent actions each and every one of our agreed objectives. It fills me with satisfaction to realise that – and here is the place to thank each and every one of the fabulous people with whom we had the privilege of working, within BAPS and around it. I almost want to thank the Barnet Tories for bringing the community together by rallying us against them, and for giving me personally, the opportunity to meet so many wonderful people in this borough.

What are BAPS objectives:

- ⤴ To defence and improve public services
- ⤴ To campaign for equality within the local services across the borough
- ⤴ To achieve a functioning local democracy – through the council or people's assembly
- ⤴ To oppose local and national government cuts and the austerity
- ⤴ To strengthen the links between the various components of the community.

In a strategies setting meeting held in February we identified again that our Medium Term goal is to

Defeat OBP & other privatisation

and the

Short term objectives are to

Inform residents of what the council is doing, and becoming a link between residents = users of public services, and council workers = the providers of these services, all of whom are fighting together to maintain the services and retain public control over them.

Our activists and supporters distributed many thousands of leaflets and newspapers over the past year, spoke with hundreds of residents in weekend street stalls and community festivals and gathered thousands of signatures on petitions (We currently run two petitions – to stop the privatisation of the DRS, and to bring back in-house Your Choice Barnet). I guess that one of our bigger achievements was collating over 8,000 signatures calling for a referendum on the OBP and presenting them to the full council; needless to say, however, that this voice of 8,000 residents of Barnet was disregarded by the Conservative majority in the council despite an excellent speech of our representative, Dr Azi Khatiri, that accompanied the petition, and despite some passionate speeches of opposition councillors. During the past year, as BAPS profile was raised through intensive activities of members and supporters, who successfully spread the word about One Barnet and Barnet Alliance, so grew the realisation of the complete disregard and contempt of the Tory councillors towards residents. I dare say that we would have liked it to be different.

The highlights of the year of our activities:

- ⤴ the alternative community torch parade
- ⤴ last summer lobby
- ⤴ referendum petition
- ⤴ 6 December cabinet
- ⤴ The JR
- ⤴ Barnet Spring march

Our ongoing activities are:

- ⤴ website & newsletter which according to accumulating evidence are becoming more and more a trusted source of information for residents and council workers alike.
- ⤴ letters to the press – many of our members have been writing them, but increasingly, more readers who are **not** BAPS members are writing to the press with similar concerns. And **this, in my mind, is the main achievement of our objectives.**

Without bragging, we know that we can take at least part of the credit for the growing awareness of Barnet residents to the OBP, as we have been - together with the Famous Barnet bloggers – an instrumental source of information about the One Barnet Programme. When it comes to informing residents on council's policies we certainly don't have a competition from the council...

- ⤴ scrutiny of council meetings
- ⤴ engaging with residents in the streets

And we naturally also have weaknesses. The main ones of these are:

- ⤴ fund raising (*sadly, our accounts which Ruth will present are evidence for this*)
- ⤴ recruitment of more activists
- ⤴ more networking with other local campaigns, residents' associations, community groups and local businesses (*we started a sponsorship scheme to link up with local businesses, but this fell by the sidelines because we don't have enough members to go around and talk with the traders; we recently started a series of talks we give to community groups and even had an excellent workshop about public speaking – again: we need more activists to do this*).
- ⤴ Our email discussion group is not functioning as it should and I hope the resolution of the problem will be through the newly launched discussion forum on our website (**Rony to explain**).

All these weaknesses that I highlighted here are activities that we do – but not enough. With more funds and especially with more active members we would be able to do SO MUCH MORE! And so much more is needed...

IN THESE WE NEED THE HELP AND INVOLVEMENT OF EACH AND EVERYONE OF YOU. Let me plea especially for someone who can take on coordinating the fund raising (doesn't need to be a professional fund raiser – we had an excellent training and got some good and simple to implement tips – just someone to focus on this in order to enable the organisation to grow and gain more influence over our life in this borough).

From the local to the national and back to the local

We started from the local, and this has remained the focus of our activity. However, throughout the past year we could not help realising more vividly than ever the bigger picture in which we operate – the attack on the welfare state, on people with disabilities and on working people and those on benefits, and the pretext of the economic crisis that is caused by the banks and big corporations.

We always knew that Barnet is just a pilot to radical privatisation and mass dismantling of public services and that this will be rolled out to other parts of the country if we'll let it happen here. In that we have always felt the onus is on us to do **whatever we can** to stop it. But during the past year we became part of the national movement against austerity.

We have been doing our best to support other campaigns and took part in London-wide and in national actions like the Benefits Justice Summit, The 1000 Mothers' March, national demonstrations called for by the Trade Unions Congress against the pensions

cuts, two UK Uncut actions, and recently - the People's Assembly Against Austerity. In the latter our delegation was part of 4000-strong national conference and our Barbara introduced BAPS from the panel of one of the sessions.

We have been supported by sister campaigns across London and the country like DPAC, Taxpayers Against Poverty, Defend Wittington Hospital campaign, Social Workers Action Network and a long list of other campaigns and trade unions – as witnessed in the bitterly cold and snowy day on the 23 of March, which we called The Barnet **SPRING** march...

Locally we actively support the campaign to Save Barnet NHS as we have been supporting the Traders' Parking campaign and the CPZ one, and as we supported the Save Friern Barnet Library campaign. We are delighted with the achievement of the community in forming the People's Library – the Friern Barnet Community Library. We enjoy this thriving community centre which it turned into, and we are hoping the day will come when – with the change of administration – the library will go back to the public service network of Barnet libraries whilst retaining the new thrilling atmosphere it had gained through the active community involvement.

We have made it a point to be an **inclusive** community campaign, and I am proud to say that – in this we succeeded: We make sure to find the funds for a bus to accompany all our demonstrations and marches, to allow those who are frail or with mobility problem to take part, we take care not to use jargon in our meetings and in our written materials, and we benefit from the active participation of members across the board.

What we achieved so far:

- BAPS was instrumental in removing Brian Coleman from his seat in the GLA, resulting in him losing his place in Barnet Cabinet as well;
- We supported the traders' campaign, in which they got the parking charges lowered and scratch cards introduced – not all we wanted but at least some movement in that direction
- Our campaign helped overturn a Tory majority in the Brunswick Park by-election and get in a young, enthusiastic and diligent new councillor
- We were part of the ultimately successful campaign to save Friern Barnet Library
- We actively supported Maria Nash to bring the legal challenge against the council
- We maintained positive pressure on the councillors through active attendance at council committee meetings, forcing the council to engage with us. A positive example of this are the Residents Forums' questionnaires that you found on your chairs today.

I maintain that a borough council is not naturally the enemy of its residents and

workers!

We would have very much liked to work **with** the council **for** the benefit of all; sadly, it is the Tory councillors led by Mr Cornelius, who make themselves the enemy of the people. (Most of them: I have to pay tribute to Cllr Kate Salinger, who gave a powerful speech recently against the renewal of the contract with Fremantle, the trust that runs elderly care homes, following the death of one of their residents; and to Cllr Suri Katri, who came out courageously against the lack of consultation about the OBP).

- We succeeded not long ago in stopping the Tories from revising the constitution to exclude the public from asking questions at certain overview and scrutiny committee meetings
- Our constant criticism of the restrictive nature of the council-run Area Forums helped the opposition councillors get those restrictions listed for review on the 8th of July – which we now hope will be postponed until a proper consultation is run, as the current consultation is a sham. **Please make sure you fill and return the questionnaires you found here.**

We are far from having won all our battles, but what we have done is not insignificant, even if we say so ourselves. There are many things that need changing and our campaigning is one way to help effect change.

What lies ahead

In the immediate term:

1) We need to gain a victory in the YCB case: CADDSS campaign has already saw an interim victory when, following a vocal lobby of parents-carers, support workers and residents and following a threat of legal action, the board of directors reversed their former arrogant refusal to consult parents about major changes to staff pay and condition, that will be detrimental to the quality of services of those most vulnerable among us.

We now need to ensure the consultation is genuine and meaningful, and that it results in bringing those services back in-house & under our control.

2) Fremantle is a scary story which we have to fight, for the safety of our elderly. **If you can – please come to Willesden Magistrates' court on Tuesday 9th July where our (thankfully still in-house) Environmental Health will prosecute the company for breach of Health & Safety that caused the death of 72 years old Yuk Kiu Lee.**

3) Then we need to bear in mind that the year ahead is an elections-year in Barnet:

BAPS don't do elections – we are not aligned to any political party and we do not endorse any party. We will work and have been working with anyone who supports public services and the good for the community.

The discussion about our strategy during the elections-year is still ongoing and we **invite everyone here to come to the weekly meetings and take part in this strategic decision and subsequently in the actions** it will lead to. But what is already agreed is that we are going to use the heightened alert of residents during this year as another opportunity to inform more residents about the council's plans and policies and fight against them. **And we will definitely use this elections-year to hold the ruling Conservative councillors to account and fight them in their wards and will do our best they will pay the political price for the sell-off of our borough, for their disrespect of residents and for their smug arrogance.**

At the latest Cabinet meeting, when resident after resident got up to address the Cabinet prior to their sorry but not unexpected decision to award the DRS contract to Capita Symonds, I realised that - without planning or prior liaison - we all gave up on the sziphic attempts of the last two years to convince the councillors in the folly of their looming decision. It seems that we all just lost any remaining trust if there ever was some in the Conservative councillors' integrity.

I would like to hope that the May 2014 local elections will see those councillors out of the door and bring a change of administration – after which we will have a council that actually works **FOR us** and **WITH us**.

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