BARNET RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

8 OCTOBER 2025

HELD IN THE PENNEFATHER HALL, ST ALBANS RD, BARNET, EN5 4LA

1. INTRODUCTION & APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:
   Simon Green, Co-Chairman, welcomed everyone to the Association's AGM and thanked them for coming.
   Apologies for absence had been received from: Owen Jones, Mervyn Jones, Cllr David Longstaff, Dawn and Bruce Mercer, Pam Smithard, Dan Tomlinson, Jeffrey Watson.

   45 members in attendance plus the Committee.

2. MINUTES OF AGM HELD ON 7 NOVEMBER 2024
   These had been posted on our website quite soon after last year's AGM. Proposed by Gordon Massey, seconded by Anna Watkins. They were voted on and agreed.

3. MATTER ARISING
   There were no matters arising.

4. ANNUAL REPORT

   Simon Green, Co-Chairman, reported that this time last year we had all been very concerned about The Spires. That concern had now receded a little because the company which had bought it had gone into administration. However, it would in all likelihood raise its head again and the Committee would be keeping an eye on that.

   There were two big things that were happening this year. One was the proposed development for Barnet Football Club where it would seem the decision would be made outside the borough. The second, which showed how residents' associations could work closely together, was the proposed development at the tube station. We had worked with the Barnet Society and other residential groups on that development to put our point across on that. There had been a large rally opposing it which Ken had attended. That had been a great example of how residents' associations and individuals could work together to protect what we have in Barnet.

   The important thing to come out of both those proposed developments was, if you wanted your thoughts on them heard, you had to be part and parcel of the consultation processes. Both those potential developments would be big items in the coming few months, with the tube station development being the biggest one.

   Simon reported that he regularly attended on behalf of the Barnet Residents Association the Community Action Panels meetings. He had been to the first CAP meeting since Covid held at Barnet Police Station last week. Sadly, no, that police station would not be re-opening. We now had a very good sergeant at Barnet Police Station – Glenn Parker – who had arrested and charged more people in the last 3 months than were arrested and charged in the previous 12

months under the previous sergeant. He was the best sergeant we have had in a long time by far and was cracking down on what was hurting our community. But it was important, if you saw criminal activity taking place, antisocial behaviour, verbal or physical violence particularly against women and girls, to report it. The resources we were allocated in High Barnet were based on the crime that was reported so it was important to report crime.

Simon reported that he travelled regularly around the country visiting high streets for his job and our high street was better than most in terms of the way it looked, the quality of the shops and the number of empty shops. He had managed a shop on Barnet High St in 1978 and the high street would never be like it was in those days but we were better than most. The Association would continue to look at the high street and do whatever we could to encourage people to take up units. There was a change in business rates coming from the Government, no one was sure what that would be at the moment but it would be a potential risk for retailers. The Post Office was moving, but thank goodness we had kept it because it could have been closed.

There was more detail about those issues in our newsletters and on our website.

The Association, via its various committee members, continued to look at planning, tried to ensure that planning rules were adhered to and that the conservation areas were protected, and that inappropriate applications were objected to in a fair and consistent manner.

The Committee had recently had some very sad news. A long-standing member of our Committee had suddenly passed away – Tim Sims. He was a gentleman very interested in, and with a lot of expertise in, health issues and Barnet Hospital. The Committee thought it would be appropriate to hold a minute's silence in his memory. (A minute's silence was observed)

Lastly, Simon thanked all those people who helped distribute our newsletters because that saved the Association a lot of money. (Applause) More volunteers would be very welcome. He also thanked Melvyn, our previous chairman, and Jeice, who was our previous membership secretary, who had both stepped down during the year. (Applause) He also thanked all the other Committee members for their work over the year. (Applause) He lastly thanked everyone for coming along as the Association had to follow due process and an AGM was an important part of that, and it was important our members were part of that.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR, ANSWERED BY SIMON GREEN:

Q. How do you report criminal activity if you do not have a computer or a mobile phone?
A. You would have to phone 111 and report it that way. There are links via computers or mobile phones.

5. ADOPTION OF ACCOUNTS:
Proposed by Anna Watkins and seconded by Gordon Massey. They were voted on and adopted.

6. CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES

Simon reported these had been posted on the Association's website and there had been a link to them in the invitation to this AGM.

The changes were as follows:

Clause 8. Membership fees including any concessionary rates shall be fixed annually at the AGM and with immediate effect. A new flat rate of £7 pa will replace the current two tier pricing of £5 pa and £7 pa.

Clause 12. A quorum for a meeting of the Executive Committee shall be not less than three members. A reduction from five members as at present.

Clause 16. The AGM shall be called within 12 months of the end of the financial year rather than the current 7 months. An independent examiner shall be appointed rather than an auditor as the accounts do not have to be audited but they do need to be examined.

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR, ANSWERED BY SIMON GREEN UNLESS OTHERWISE STATED:

Q. On the change to the quorum. Presumably there are 7 committee members at present, so to change the quorum to 3 seems very low. I would have thought 4 would be more appropriate.

A. Quite often it was difficult to get 5 to attend because of holidays etc. Having 4 would mean there could be a split decision as no one had a casting vote.

Q. A quorum of 3 would mean that a decision was made by a minority of the Committee.

A. We cannot alter the proposed change now as that is what has been put to the membership, so we will have to vote on 3 and see what happens.

Q. There used to be family membership. Does the £7 per household now include all members of that household?

A. Yes. It makes it simpler and easier to administer.

The constitutional changes were proposed by Bill Foster, seconded by Peter Branch. The changes were voted on and passed.

7. ELECTION OF OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

The Committee members and officers were to be re-elected en masse.

The following members were standing:
Ken Rowland – Co-chair and Highways
Simon Green – Co-chair and Crime
Janet Littlewood – Secretary and Conservation Area planning
Anna Watkins – Communities and Culture
Anna Robins – Environment
Amanda Nartey – Communications
Emma Morgan – Membership

Proposed by Graham Paddon, seconded by David Cook. This was voted on and passed.

8. ELECTION OF INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:

The Association's Independent Examiner was Martin Taylor, an ex-employee of KPMG and an ACIB.

Proposed by Brian Addinall, seconded by Gordon Massey. This was voted on and the appointment was passed.

9. GUEST SPEAKER – ANNE CLARKE

Simon introduced Anne Clarke, London Assembly Member for Barnet and Camden and also a London Borough of Barnet councillor.

ANNE CLARKE:
Anne introduced herself as the London Assembly Member for Barnet and Camden which was an enormous constituency of 650,000 people. Last night she had been in Bloomsbury at the opening of a Nordic Art event at the British Museum and tonight she was in High Barnet. All her days seemed to look like that. She lived in the south of Barnet in Cricklewood. The area covered 118 councillors, two of whom were here tonight – Emma Whysall and Paul Edwards – 6 MPs including the Prime Minister, but also lots of faith groups, community groups like the Barnet Residents Association, schools, universities, and pretty much everything under the sun seemed to happen here.

Anne grew up north of Chicago in a town called Winnetka and came here in 1998 because her university of Wisconsin had (and still has) a study centre in Bloomsbury and she studied there for 6 months. While studying she fell in love with the City and decided if she ever had the opportunity to come and live here she would. Her degree was in geology and she had done one course in computer science which, back then, was enough to get a job in computer science and gave her the opportunity to do an internship and work on the Y2K project where she met her husband. They had two children, now in their early 20s, and lived in Cricklewood. Like so many parents, her daughter was back living at home after doing a master's degree. Being a politician was certainly not what she had aspired to do but she had been very active, a governor at two schools and active on the Cricklewood Town Team, and had been encouraged to stand for election. She ended up in 2018 winning in Child's Hill by 2 votes, so she always argued that every vote counted and there was every point in voting. She was terrified of being a new councillor. Child's Hill was a split ward, with the two other councillors being Conservative, and all the wards around were Conservative, so she felt like a little island, but she got lots of help and advice from Paul and other lovely colleagues across Barnet. Ironically, those other two ward councillors became good friends and, even if they did not agree politically, they all held together, which was particularly important during the pandemic.

In 2021 she was elected to the London Assembly when her predecessor, Andrew Dismore, retired. The election had been delayed because of Covid but she had been lucky enough to be re-elected in 2024. She was also a councillor in Cricklewood. Ten London Assembly members were also councillors and one was also in the House of Lords.

The London Assembly was founded 25 years ago. There had been a referendum in London about having a Mayor of London and the system London voted on was to have a directly elected mayor and to have an assembly to hold the mayor to account. Of all the jobs she had held, it was by far the most interesting with lots of interesting challenges. Fourteen members of the Assembly had constituencies and all those constituencies were very large, but there were 11 other members who were elected on a PR party basis.

While the Mayor set the agenda, on issues like transport, policing, housing and climate, the Assembly was there to hold the Mayor to account, to scrutinise decisions and to make sure Londoners' voices were heard. There were lots of very robust conversations and members do not always agree. There were completely different perspectives even in the same party. Members also oversaw the budget and could put in budget amendments, recommend changes and highlight concerns. Members voted on the budget and could veto the whole budget with a two-thirds majority.

Anne led for the Labour Party and was vice-chair on two committees. One was the Economy Committee which she been doing since May. They focused on London's economy, about making it stronger and more inclusive. They looked at challenges to small businesses, the high street, innovation, tourism, the cost of living. There were two current investigations. The first was prison leavers, which she knew very little about at the beginning, but a prison leaver going into work on the day they leave prison means the likelihood of them going back to prison reduces from about 70% to under 30%. It has been interesting not only listening to prisoners but also the charities that support them. The second investigation was London's declining birth rate. While we were a large city, we do not have a lot of babies any more. That was partly a western phenomenon but it was also acutely a London phenomenon so the investigation was looking at the economic impact of that and any policies that would change that, if changing that was the positive thing to do.

Anne was also vice-chair of the Fire Committee. She chaired the Fire Committee for 3 years and was now vice-chair. As the name suggested, that looked at the work of the London Fire Brigade. The LFB was put into special measures because the Fire Brigade was found by an independent investigation to be institutionally racist, misogynistic and homophobic which was really damning, plainly unsuitable for the city, for the people who worked in the Fire Service but fundamentally left the Brigade unable to respond to London's needs and to recruit and retain. There had been major change there and Commissioner Andy Roe had been given international recognition for his work on that but it was a changing and changed institution; "changing" because cultural change was never done. The other big headline for the Fire Brigade was climate change because the Fire Brigade respond to flooding and fires, and within the fire category there were wild fires. Wild fires did not use to happen but there were over 100 this summer and 118 last summer and there were even things like parks catching on fire. When temperatures reach 40 degrees, that is really hot and the grass gets very dry and fire spreads. There were so many wild fires in 2022 the Fire Brigade had more call-outs than at any time since the Second World War. These risks meant that the Fire Brigade had to constantly adapt; the training had to adapt, the equipment had to adapt. The unions had come to the Mayor and said that their uniforms were essentially winter uniforms and were too heavy for when it was 40 degrees. That was something the Committee were listening to.

Anne said she thought the two biggest challenges for London were (regardless of your views on Brexit) post-Brexit and post-pandemic London facing a challenge to stay a world-leading city. That was an economic reality. Secondly, London does not have enough homes. In Barnet there were 2,384 children living in temporary accommodation which meant they were living in hotels, houses of multiple occupation so a room in a shared house, and it meant there were not enough social homes.

One of the things she was most proud of, apart from representing Barnet and Camden, was that the Assembly now delivered free school meals to every primary school child in the state system. It did not matter whether you lived in High Barnet or Kilburn, it was the same story. Head teachers were saying that behaviour was better, children were learning more, and it was amazing to see that shift and see children eating the same thing as their friends and everyone eating together. It had already made a big difference.

Anne appreciated there would be different views in the room about ULEZ and that had been a very difficult decision. Despite all the controversy, London was now a city where air quality had improved by 50% which meant that the chemicals that caused dementia, early death and asthma in children in Barnet were down by 37%. Other major cities in the UK like Liverpool and Manchester still had air quality that was legally poor, but London's air quality was now on the legal side of good, the first time since 2010. It really had made a difference.

Despite the challenges London, as a city, had 1.5 million visitors to women's sport over the summer, which was absolutely phenomenal. The West End out-sold Broadway 2:1 and was still consistently a top-rated tourist destination.

Anne wanted to make a slight political point before taking questions but there were two things she was pleased about coming from the Government. The first was that TfL now had a multi-year settlement from the Government. This allowed TfL to plan improvements, things like the super loop, more trains on the Elizabeth Line, and it meant TfL was not going from emergency to emergency budget. That made a huge difference.

The other thing was giving powers to councils to do things to control gambling applications. Previously, someone could put in an application for a 24-hour gambling establishment and the assumption was always to permit it and there were very few reasons for a council to refuse it. Then there was the banning of single use vapes which were littering high streets. She did not know why they had not been banned before.

Those were her positives and her challenges. She was happy to take questions. (Applause)

QUESTIONS FROM THE FLOOR

THE 84B BUS ROUTE

Q. I have a question about people living on the northern edge of High Barnet. There used to be a bus that TfL partly funded and now it does not and we rely on Hertsmere to fund it. It has already failed once and it is possibly going to fail again. Because of this thing about TfL and country buses, TfL will not even put the bus number on the bus stops so nobody knows the new bus is available and it is a ridiculous situation. We basically have not got a reliable bus

service. We went a whole year without one. It was the 84B but that failed and it is now the 243.
A. It has not been a TfL bus for some time and Hertsmere were subsidising it, you are right, and now it is taken over entirely by a private company. I am not sure about TfL not putting the number on the bus stops because you can get things like National Express buses on TfL bus stops. Is this a question that has been asked?
Q. It took about 9 months to get the 84B number on the bus stops.
A. I will take that away. I think that is something TfL can do. I will raise that tomorrow.

HIGH BARNET TUBE STATION DEVELOPMENT

Q. Do the TfL people who count and make the decisions go to all the underground stations where they have decided they want to build over the carparks to make houses for Londoners? Do they then discover, even if they do build them against all our wishes, they are going to be advertised so people can buy in and be landlords who are buying to let and are therefore not for local people? Why would we support any development at High Barnet Station so people who are not Barnet people are going to live here?
A. The question is, do they visit. It is done by Places for London, which is a subsidiary of TfL. They get the evidence from the number plates and find out where people live. In terms of marketing abroad, anything on TfL land needs to be 50% affordable, so that means 65% of the market value either as a social rent or a purchase price. You would not qualify for social rent if you lived abroad. This is not just TfL but also councils, and as a council we have looked at putting on restrictions on the other 50% on where things are sold on the private market, but there does not seem to be a legal way to say where you can market a property and where you cannot, that is the law. As a Council we have looked at putting a restriction on marketing abroad within the planning permission but the answer is, we cannot. That is a commercial reality. There is nothing which states where developers can market or not market these properties.

Q. In all the consultations about building on the carpark, everyone is very keen to say "You can get on your bike or walk to the tube", but we are too far away and it is a very steep hill for coming back particularly if you are carrying shopping. We have one bus an hour, if you are lucky and it turns up, and nothing on Sundays. The buses stop fairly early at night as well. If the carpark is being taken away, I think the number of tube passengers from High Barnet is going to drop.
A. I got off at High Barnet tonight and there is the steep hill and it is not the easiest station to access. It is often quite dark and it does feel a very distant station from everything. Most stations are on high streets but that does not apply here. Would the number of tube passengers fall? This is a bit philosophical because if you had flats there you would have people living there who did not have cars, so they would be using the tube.
Q. The people who live in those flats will only be travelling into London; they won't be going up the hill.
A. I do not know if that is true.
Q. Also, the carpark is always full. There is a reason why end-of-the-line stations have carparks.

CLLR EMMA WHYSALL: We did raise this when we saw TfL at the Labour Conference in Liverpool last week, that we need more buses to the station. It is something they are aware of and it is something we as councillors are raising with them.

Q. You have to bear in mind that we have a fantastic transport system around here apart from going northwards. Going north there is one bus an hour and a restricted service. So, for anybody who comes to live here with a job outside London, the transport opportunities are poor and therefore having a car is necessary to get to their job. And vice versa coming in from areas on the edge of London, coming in to use the transport system.
A. I want to be clear that I am not here to talk about the application. There have obviously been meetings with TfL but I do get your point.

CLLR PAUL EDWARDS: Perhaps I can share my experience with you. When we met with TfL about the then Wimpey plans for the tube station, we were told that the Number Plate Recognition cameras had identified that 75 per cent of the people who parked at the station had EN5 postal addresses. What that tells you is that most people who live in Barnet were parking in that carpark. You can shake your head but that is what they told us. Based on that information you have to draw the conclusion that people are not driving very far to park all day in the carpark. I can understand that if they have a job which does not finish until 9 o'clock at night. I am not saying it is not an issue but that is the basis on which they decided to replace the carpark with housing.

Q. People like us, who live on the north side, do have to park at the tube station carpark especially on a Sunday when there is not a bus. I do not think the TfL transport side are connected to the TfL development/property side.
A. There are TfL Buses and Places for London. Normally what happens with planning applications is there will be a travel plan but buses are constantly changing and they sometimes decrease or increase how many buses run per hour and they do not decide how many buses will run ahead of time, that is not how planning works. Even if the application was approved tomorrow, other transport is changing and they do not plan out many years in advance because they cannot project passenger numbers 7 or 8 years in the future because people change the way they travel and buses change. While these people are working in the same building they won't be talking about particular developments. I see your point but there are not that number of connections.
Q. Do they consider the need for a link between the bus and the tube? Do they ever look at a map and ask, "What area does that bus serve to get residents to the tube station?" Or is it completely divided and Buses do not talk to the Tube?
A. If you go to a tube station there are lots of buses outside. I take your point that the 84B needs looking at.
Q. Also, for disabled passengers, a huge amount of money was spent making a level walkway around the platforms so you could get on and off the tube without steps but when you turn up to the exit, how are you going to get away from it? There is no bus that goes down to the station itself and you need to be a mountaineer to get up the hill. If you are in a wheelchair, what are you supposed to do? Grow wings?
A. Are there any other questions apart from the station because I would need to have a TfL person here to answer them.

Q. I think we are all agreed that everybody needs homes but at a tube station where the trains are going day and night, where you cannot open your window, it does not seem very sensible. Suely they could have found somewhere to build that is a bit nicer than near a tube station, especially when there is a winding road down which is not safe. I just despair.

SIMON GREEN: On the tube station, there will be opportunities for everybody to state their opinions and you have to take those opportunities.

A. What I would say is that the way Planning Committees make decisions is that they are based on Local Plans and National Plans and those are the areas where you might want to make observations.

Q. There are better places to build than a noisy hot tube station.

A. I take your point.

HOUSING

GORDON MASSEY (BRA Planning Consultant): A document has just been published setting out the parameters for the next London Plan. I am assuming you have read it, Anne, and may have even contributed to it. It is predicated on economic growth, keeping London as a world city. Underlying that there is a population growth of 9 to 10 million and it has been blithely accepted that that is the way London is going. From that figure we get information on what will happen. It will mean many, many thousands of new homes and it means all those homes will be in the suburbs, not Central London. It means they will all be in high rise blocks. That is quite clear from the document. My first question is, does the GLA have any thoughts about having a policy to reduce the population, to reduce the economic growth and passing that economic growth to the regions where it is desperately needed? I see nothing about that at all in the document, it seems we have to keep that economic growth to London and keep London growing.

Secondly, the point you made about a declining birth rate, about 100,000 families are leaving London every year. Here in the suburbs what we are seeing is houses being converted to flats and houses being demolished for flats, so how are we going to encourage middle income people and families, who are the backbone of the suburbs, to stay when the Mayor has said that a two-bedroom flat is a suitable home for 4 people? Do you really think middle income families are going to stay on the back of that? (Applause)

A. I do not think the Mayor said that a two-bedroom flat is adequate for a family of four. I have not seen that.

Q. It is in the current plan.

A. The number one reason for 100,000 people leaving London is the cost of housing. When I visit Colindale Station, which has been completely rebuilt by TfL, Barnet Council and the Government, all chipping in to completely rebuild that, all the evidence points to the fact that when you invest in London, the whole country benefits. New trains on the Elizabeth Line are made in the UK outside London. If you deadened economic growth in London, it would be catastrophic, you would not have an exodus of 100,000 families but a lot more. As a Londoner myself, I would find it difficult to say stop investing in London because it means investing in the whole country. My husband comes from South Wales and there was nothing better than an innovation centre in his town which brought jobs there and now there are buses. I do not think we do that by taking growth away from London; I do not think that is the way to do it.

Q. What about middle income families and converting houses to flats?

A. That does happen a lot. When we bought our first home, and I am not well advanced in years, we bought a flat which had been a house because that was what we could afford and then after my children were born we had to move to a house two miles away. I do not think that opportunity now exists for people who are in their early or mid-careers because the cost of housing is so high. The cost of a house in many parts of Barnet is £1 million, £700,000. How can you afford that if you are on a middle income? It is just not possible. But deadening economic growth in London would not help because if people did not have money there would be even more houses turned into flats. It wasn't so long ago you could be two teachers and could buy your own home but that is not possible any more. For my own children, the thought of them leaving home before they are in their 30s is unlikely as things stand. It is a very difficult situation. We do not have the housing that Londoners need. If you look at the cost of housing in, say, Liverpool compared to how much they earn, there is a divide. It is definitely a problem of our time; the cost of housing versus how much people earn. Re-balancing the economy though may have undesired side effects.

Q. Why doesn't the CPI include the cost of housing? It seems as though we are getting gaslighted.

A. I think it should. Our Council has said it should be included. It is the way it is measured.

Q. I know it is the way it is measured but it is wrong. The feeling is that there are so many things where the authorities are pulling the wool over people's eyes. That is just one of them.

A. There is also the cost of child care which is not included.

Q. And what we call core inflation is something that excludes food.

A. When you look at the basket of groceries that everyone is always looking at, it includes all sorts of things that I would not include.

Q. You wonder why people are losing faith in politicians. That is the reason.

A. That is not necessarily down to me.

Q. Sorry, I am not necessarily blaming you!

CLLR EMMA WHYSALL: Something that Anne has not mentioned is that most young people these days have huge debts that young people did not have 20 years ago. My nephews have graduated with 5 figures of debt and they want to go into law or the medical profession. When I graduated, some time ago now, I had friends who did not take pay rises because it would put their student loan up too much and they then could not afford to live in London. That situation could only have got worse. There is a huge barrier to saving to get a mortgage. Given the average salary in London is £80,000 and the average deposit is £160,000 for a home, and the average price of a house in London is over £1 million, it is impossible if you are under the age of 45 to buy a house. People of my age in their mid-40s have had to choose between having children and having a mortgage and that is part of the reason for the declining birth rate. My partner has children but does not own a house, I have a mortgage but don't have children.

Q. I am speaking in connection with what this lady has just said. My daughter has a one-bedroom flat, she has one child and she will be moving out of London because they cannot afford a 2-bedroom flat or, more suitably a 2-bedroom home suitable for a family. Thousands

of young peoples will be doing this and leaving London. In the area my daughter lives, Hackney, there are plenty of nurseries, there are places for childcare but the children are not going to be there. No young family wants to live at the top of a tall building. As has been said, this is the kind of building which is going on in London. It is not suitable for young families. So, looking ahead to the future of London, what kind of population is it going to be? My daughter has a good job, her partner has a good job, and I gave them a substantial deposit in order to get the one-bedroom flat, but I cannot do any more for them to get the 2-bedroom place they will need with just one child. That's another thing, young people want children but they are confining themselves to one child. I just want the Government to really think about young families and this nonsense of affordable homes. There is no such thing for a young family; for them there are no affordable homes in London. (Applause)

Q. I would like to take you up on the point that people moving out of London is a bad thing. I would have thought it was a good thing because it frees up housing. It must be because it reduces the tax take presumably? Perhaps the answer is the people who can afford the houses can afford to pay a bit more tax?

A. In terms of people leaving London is a bad thing, I think they are leaving London because they cannot afford to be here. If they are contributing to the economy, that is a good thing. It is a bad thing if they are pushed out because it is too expensive. The concern is not so much about the tax take, and someone else can talk about council tax, the problem is that people move out because it is too expensive. In terms of being a capital city, we need people who are contributing to the local economies, who are working in the City. If it is too expensive, something has to change there. My point about our investigation into the decline in the birth rate is exactly that, why are people leaving, where are they going, what are they doing instead? That is what we are investigating. A lot of people are choosing between having children and owning a home. Even if they are leaving London, it is cheaper outside but it does not make it cheap, it is still expensive. That is a reality of the country and it is certainly a reality of our city.

SIMON GREEN: Can I just make the point that council tax gets paid whether the house is empty or not because the owner has to pay. So, for councils it does not make any difference whether the building is empty or not. If the Council does not have a financial incentive to fill a building, then often they do not. That is particularly highlighted by the number of empty properties above shops. Councils have legal powers to make things happen there but none of them do it. They can force owners to convert, they can convert them themselves and then charge the owners, but none of them do it, they want to build new. Actually, if you are a young family with children, living above a shop in a town centre is a good place to live. I do not see that as a joined up thing because there is no economic benefit for councils to do it.

THE HIGH STREET

KEN ROWLAND: Changing tack, a bit but talking about small businesses. Whilst our high street is doing reasonably well, there are still 10 coffee shops, 10 barbers, 10 charity shops. In other countries I know they curate their high streets a bit better. You go to a council and they will say, "That is the ninth barber shop, we are not supporting that, you cannot open another one." Has the GLA or the Mayor got any plans to do anything like that to breathe a bit more life into the High St?

A. There are two things on high streets. You may have seen there is a government review on high streets. At the moment, high street legislation comes from a time when people were buying everything on the high streets and because there was competition the high streets balanced themselves. That obviously does not happen in the same way it did. One thing that is coming from Government is that they are looking at business rates. I hear some concern about that but their stated aim is to rebalance business rates on the high street and shopping on line. The other thing about the Council's power to balance the high street, is the Government will give councils more power on licensing. What that will look like is another question. High Barnet is a bit of an outlier because you could find some empty shops but it is pretty much fully occupied. That said, one thing we do need is people wanting to open shops and we do not have queues of people wanting to open shops. There is not a lot the Council can do if someone comes forward and wants to open a coffee shop because they do not have powers to say we have too many. There are some powers for a council around too many fast food outlets near schools, but it is not something that is devolved to councils and it really rests on the landlords. I am optimistic because the announcement around gambling, especially when you are losing banks and the obvious thing to come in is a 24-hour gambling establishment and clearly that might not be wanted. More definitely needs to be done around what a council can refuse and accept.

SIMON GREEN: I think that is all the questions we have.

ANNE CLARKE: If you want to write to me with a question, please do so. I try to answer them every day but if not I will certainly get to them every two or three days. My email address is anne.clarke@london.gov.uk.

Thank you.

SIMON GREEN: Thank you, Anne. (Applause)

I think it is great for our democracy that our elected representatives come to talk to us and accept questions off the cuff, they are not given them in advance. It is very much appreciated. (Applause)

10. ANY OTHER BUSINESS:

A SPEAKER: What are your views on the parking zones in Underhill?

SIMON GREEN: The problem about the Residents Association giving too many thoughts on CPZs is that it is down to the local population to give their views on it. There are two sides to every argument. I live in a CPZ and I gave my thoughts when it was first brought up and my thoughts were not taken into account. You have to engage in the process. Gordon has something to say on CPZs, he is pretty much an expert on them.

GORDON MASSEY: Down the years every new CPZ has always expanded but the Council does go through a consultation process which involves taking votes street by street. I have found in the past the Council is disposed to introduce them, they like them, because they make money out of them. Some of the results of street votes have been interpreted in ways that others of us would not have interpreted and in fact the local population was not in favour. So, what I would say to those who live in Underhill is look very carefully at how the vote is

conducted and what the results are so you can be very clear that the population is indeed in favour, and you are not being bounced.

SIMON GREEN: CPZs are very emotional subjects and we all understand that. One of the problems is when very low numbers pass opinions and the minute you have a low number who pass an opinion, saying yes or no becomes irrelevant. There were 250 households in my CPZ area and only 17 passed an opinion. If all 250 had passed an opinion, we might not have had one. 8 people said no, 9 people said yes, so it was a yes. Encourage everyone to pass a comment, accept that some may want it and others may not, but low numbers passing comments does not mean anything. Do not give the Council a reason to implement them.

CLLR EMMA WHYSALL: You do have to participate if you want your voice heard. Silence is very difficult for a council officer to interpret. Paul and I had an extension proposed around the hospital and there was one road that petitioned not to go in but six months later they were petitioning to go in. They were warned by officers what would happen, that if they were the only road there would be problems, and there were and within weeks we were being asked to put them in the CPZ which of course took time and took another 6 months. So be very careful what you wish for.

SIMON GREEN: Your Committee will not comment on CPZs other than say engage in the process, because 8 people objecting is not an objection. I live in a CPZ a minute's walk from the hospital and QE Boys' School so I know what it is like. I have had people park on my drive.

GORDON MASSEY: Can I say something about Barnet Football Club and their refused application? I exchanged an email with the football club today and there has been some confusion. Those who have read what the Barnet Society has said will think that the Club has appealed the refusal of planning permission. That is not so. They are in discussion with officers, and maybe councillors but they told me officers, to try and find a solution rather than go to appeal. They have until January to appeal. They are still considering that but they are hopeful they will do some kind of deal with the Council. I would have thought the BRA position was that we would love that to happen.

A SPEAKER: Is that on the proposed site?

GORDON MASSEY: They are being very, very close about what those discussions entail, so I would not make any assumptions.

SIMON GREEN: We have two councillors here so I am sure they will tell us what happens.

A SPEAKER: I would be very interested to know how the story that the Club had appealed came about. I do not know whether either of the councillors here this evening can tell us anything but it seems like the Leader of the Council is feeding misinformation into the media with regard to the Football Club. After we had the "3 or 4 sites" debate which side-tracked the planning meeting in July and immediately after the stadium was rejected by the Planning Committee, suddenly there were no 3 or 4 alternative sites and Councillor Rawlings who was on record saying there were 3 or 4 sites said there were no sites. So, it seems there is a lot of peculiar messaging getting into the public sphere from the Council. I hasten to say I have been a Barnet supporter for almost 40 years and I am involved with the Bring Back Barnet campaign.

ANNA ROBINS: Nick Jones said he got it directly from Barry Rawlings.

A SPEAKER: Barry Rawlings is pumping misinformation out.

SIMON GREEN: The councillors are here.

CLLR EMMA WHYSALL: It is not in our ward.

CLLR PAUL EDWARDS: Can I say something on what Gordon has said? I had no idea about this. If that is happening, that is constructive. I had not heard that before and that is helpful to know.

SIMON GREEN: The Football Club will run and run and we are not going to resolve it here today. It is a very wide political, social, cultural challenge for everybody in this part of Barnet.

Can I thank you all for coming, thank the councillors for coming, and see you next year. (Applause)

END