

COMMENT

by Sue Hessel

Crouch End resident
and community campaigner

Why the sight of council bin lorries is making me see red

Every time I see a Haringey bin lorry now I see red. Their sides have been repainted to feature Haringey Council's rebranded logo – in its new giant playskool font. The symbolism is not lost: they are carrying not only our waste but reminding us all of the stupid waste of the £86,000 taxpayers' money that it cost.

How many times have Haringey councillors told us they had no money, that it was all the government's fault. To think they chose to close lovely Abyssinia Court Day centre which served 115 frail isolated elderly residents here in Crouch End. That only cost £50,000 a year!

Having now voted to close all their remaining day centres, bar one, and hack £24.5m off their care budget, the council's most recent tack has been to invite devastated carers and disabled to workshops to "co-design" what they would like to do now. What a cheek! Haringey needs reminding it still has statutory duties. They cannot parcel everything off.

Charities beware. In 2009 the Haynes Trust generously gave Haringey £750,000 to ensure "a service to dementia sufferers in the western part of the borough".

It formed a crucial part of the bid to replace our cottage hospital and build Hornsey Neighbourhood Health Centre, with a longstanding agreement for a dementia day centre here.

In a conscious attempt to redress the balance for the neglected west, documents at the time set out that it would be "jointly managed by the Barnet Enfield and Haringey Mental Health Trust and the London Borough of Haringey." Scandalously only six years on, this day centre is already under threat, for a second time.

The Haynes Trust also donated £10,000 to the existing Grange Dementia Centre in the east. The proposal was always that there would be two day centres – rightly, as vulnerable people with deteriorating conditions require familiarity in their own communities. This too is marked for closure.

Haringey council does not need a re-brand, it needs a re-think.

It will not save any money by closing its day centres. Not only do they provide well-being, they are preventative; they enable families to cope, carers to catch up with sleep, and keep themselves well. Cynically they help to keep frail and vulnerable people out of expensive residential care and from unnecessary hospital bed blocking.

There is one other very good reason for day centres, and that is staff supervision and support. Vulnerable people in their own homes for long periods of time become vulnerable. Their carers become vulnerable – to allegations of abuse.

As one carer recently said, "Haringey had a Baby P. How long will it be before there's a Granny P?" And no amount of rebranding will put that right.

“They are carrying not only our waste but reminding us all of the stupid waste of the £86,000 of the taxpayers' money the council's rebranding has cost. How many times have councillors told us they had no money?”

! What do you think? Have your say at streetlife.com

Euro referendum

Gang of four's plea to keep Britain in the EU

Cllr Lazzaro Pietragnoli (Labour), Keith Moffitt (former Liberal Democrat Leader of Camden Council) Cllr Sian Berry (Green Party mayoral candidate) and Cllr Andrew Marshall (Conservative) write:

We are writing on a cross-party basis to urge people to join us in campaigning in Camden to keep Britain in the European Union in the coming referendum.

We believe that the UK should stay in the EU and work constructively with our neighbours to tackle together the big challenges we cannot sort out at a national level in an increasingly globalised world. Withdrawal would bring unquantifiable economic and financial risks, and substantial loss of British influence around the world.

The EU is certainly not perfect, any more than any organisation. It needs reform, and working together as 28 countries with their cultural, social, economic and institutional traditions, we believe that we can get the EU focused on the right priorities, with more democracy and transparency at EU level, while preserving national and local decision making and diversity.

The process of European integration has fulfilled its original aims of maintaining peace and promoting democracy and co-operation in the continent, and our membership of the EU has contributed greatly to Britain's - and London's - prosperity and success, despite all the press scare stories and Euro myths. Since joining in the 1970s, Britain has greatly contributed to the reform of European institutions, the enlargement of the EU, the modernisation of the common market, and the promotion of a competitive and dynamic knowledge-based



■ The EU flag flying high in Brussels

economy. By remaining part of the EU, Britain can further contribute to its development and future reform.

Above all, Europe is about increasing opportunities: opportunities for young people to travel, study and work; for businesses to trade and grow; for better ways of tackling climate change and environmental problems; for combating cross-border crime; for greater freedom and social progress for us all. And especially in this period, the EU should also be about a coordinated, generous and farsighted response to the unprecedented refugee crisis, and greater support for countries outside the EU suffering from poverty, underdevelopment and war.

In Camden in particular we rightly celebrate the contribution of our many citizens who have moved here from other EU countries. We all benefit immeasurably from the opportunities to live, work, trade and travel all across our continent that membership of the EU gives us; our culture and society are enriched by the breaking down of artificial

barriers.

We know people can feel overwhelmed when faced with conflicting arguments and facts on the EU. That's why, as the national campaign to keep Britain in Europe gears up, we intend locally to provide information, to talk to people and to discuss the issues publicly. We don't think we have all the answers and will value hearing your views.

We also know that in Camden many people have a great deal of knowledge and experience about Europe, and will want a grown-up debate without simplistic slogans.

So have a look at our website – www.camdenineurope.blogspot.co.uk, let us know if you want your name added as a supporter; follow us on twitter at @CamdeninEurope, and get in touch with any of us to see how you can help or feed into the campaign.

We all write in a personal capacity. We hope local people of all parties and none will be enthused to lend their support as the country starts to consider a decision that will be critical to Britain's future.

Heath review

Young will benefit from change

Sue Ireland, Director of Green Spaces, City of London Corporation writes:

To reassure readers, we are not closing services on the Heath and we will continue to provide a first class experience for our visitors across the site (*Heath job losses could lead to rise in playground crime, October 15*).

Like any accountable public services provider we have a responsibility to make sure we are providing an efficient and effective service, in order to

achieve the best results for our local communities in the long term.

A review of services on the Heath has identified some that could be run more efficiently, supplemented by income generation in some areas, which would be re-invested back into Heath services.

We are now running a staff consultation asking for their views, ideas and suggestions on how they think we can do this in the best way.

We will continue to operate the

Parliament Hill Playground and education services and we are proposing to create a new post of Play and Learning Project Officer to run children's play sessions at the One O Clock Club and Adventure Playground with a stronger focus on wildlife and the Heath's natural environment.

This will be a real benefit for young people from the Heath's surrounding communities.

We will continue to deliver a net spend of over £4million a year through the Hampstead Heath charitable trust.