



Photo by Femke van Iperen

What happened to our local bobby?

By Femke van Iperen

Crime is on the rise in East Finchley. Last month's issue reported on incidents of street crime and shop robbery. One troubling question remains; just what are the police doing about it?

Over the last years, the number of local police on the beat has decreased. The use of cars also makes them less crime preventive and approachable. Some local High Road businesses, East Finchley tube workers and various residents have voiced their concerns to *THE ARCHER*. Mike Blan from Flowers by Josephine on the High Road, said, "The days are over when I used to know local police by their first names. For the last six years, I haven't seen them walking up the High Street".

Beating a retreat

A spokesman for the Police Federation said, "We have been campaigning over a number of years for an increase in patrolling police officers. Since 1993 the number has fallen, and accelerated [downwards] in the last three years". He added that at a May conference in Blackpool, Jack Straw was asked for additional police, and an increase by the next election is being discussed. Unfortunately, the Police Press Office that deals with East Finchley could not comment on the issue so far. A spokeswoman said that speculations around existing numbers of police on the streets could not be made, due to relocation of

police divisions.

A far cop

Locals seem also concerned with the lack of police response to crime offences. About last month's organised High Road shop-crime Sergeant Glyn Clarke of Golders Green Community Team said, "We made a conscious decision not to attend. This case was dealt with as a Telephone Crime Report." He explained how it was reported that the criminals had left in a car. "Arguably there are cases where, depending on the circumstances, we feel there is a benefit in taking details over the phone. It can be a quick and efficient way for those incidents and it frees up police for presence where it is necessary."

Meanwhile roaming kids have reportedly been terrorising the streets of East Finchley and are rarely caught in action. Sergeant Clarke said that in many cases there is not enough evidence for the police to act. Although the police recognise the increase in other areas of crime, Sergeant Clarke added that East Finchley has had reductions in some youth crime-related figures this year. Incidence of criminal damage, for example, has declined from 13 to 12, and robbery from four to three.

Street lighting

East Finchley is one of the areas included in Barnet Council's £450,000 investment in lighting improvements.

£300,000 will be spent on the installation, replacement and upgrading of lights in seventy-five of the borough's streets. So some local streets will be benefiting from these improvements, which include the latest in lighting technology.

The rest of the money is to be spent on new lighting in specific areas, such as car parks, where crime or the fear of crime is a major concern.

Fiddler on the Roof

A police helicopter was used in East Finchley last month to help arrest a teenage boy from the roof of a house in Elmfield Rd.

A resident noticed a young man break into a house further down the street and called the police. It was believed that there was a court order preventing him from returning to this house where he had once lived.

When the police arrived the young man climbed onto the roof and along the terrace of houses to the house where he was seen clinging to a chimney.

The emergency services

were then brought out in force - police vehicles, dogs, an ambulance, the fire brigade, and a helicopter. The area was cordoned off while the helicopter circled ceaselessly and crowds gathered. Many bystanders expressed concern that the effort to make the arrest and/or to make sure that the boy did not fall were more than necessary.

After about an hour a fire ladder arrived and while being put up the youth descended by the way he had climbed up and was taken away by the police.

At the time of going to press the police were unable to give a statement about the incident or the need for the helicopter. However, Sub-Officer Bol from Blue Watch Hornsey explained that the wait for the ladder had been due to the need for it to come from Islington as other, more local, appliances were already engaged elsewhere.

Lifeline cut

The Homes Project which has been running for two years looking after the elderly and vulnerable in the East Finchley area (as well as in N3, N11 and N12) was set to close at the end of August.

This service, based in East Finchley Advice Centre offices has been a vital lifeline for housebound and disabled people to access information on welfare rights, Social Services and information on benefits, local and government grants.

Many elderly people had not been aware of benefits available to them and the homes project Manager liaised with Social Services, doctors surgeries, hospitals, voluntary agencies, social security offices, local trades people and council offices to help people with any enquiries or difficulties they might have.

Volunteers also helped with small jobs in the home.

No help

All these services are to end due to cuts in Agenda 21 Government Grants. Despite appealing to the local council no further viable funding has been made available. The volunteers have been laid off and the manager is out of work. East Finchley Advice Centre is still open for business but The Homes Project will cease to function due to the short-sighted vision of Barnet Council. Many people who have been supported by the project are to be left with no help whatsoever.

The Cost of Free Time

Making leisure activities available to all is the aim of Barnet's new pricing scheme for sport and leisure facilities. Children, the elderly and those on restricted incomes will find discounts extended to all activities, which include swimming, badminton, golf and tennis as well as fitness classes.

Payment options will be simpler. Including casual "pay and play" and monthly direct debit.

For regular users, a Leisure Card has been introduced. Different cards will provide different options, ranging from the Registration Card enabling you to book by phone to the Premier Card, which gives unlimited access to casual activities at all centres. The Standard Card, designed espe-

cially for keen swimmers, allows unlimited access to casual swimming sessions at all of Barnet's pools.

Applications for cards can be made at all sports centres and staff will be on hand to provide advice and further information on the new pricing scheme and leisure card.

Kumon Maths in N2

Enrol between Aug 21st - Oct 20th in the most successful after-school maths programme and save the assessment fee of £15. For more information call your local instructor on 8361 9705. Classes held at East Finchley Library.

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