



Cold comfort for Strawberry Vale residents

By Adam Castledine

Christmas should be a time of relaxation and fun yet for the residents of Strawberry Vale even the prospect of a simple Christmas dinner has become an unnecessary worry and a distinct uncertainty.

People living in the estate's 265 homes lost their gas supplies at the end of October. Repair work started on 12 November but was scheduled to take a minimum of 12 weeks. With 95% of residents left with no cooking gas, normally included in their rent payments, each home has been supplied with an electric cooker.

Costly cookers

But at a meeting with estate owners The Peabody Trust, on 11 November at the Green Man Community Centre, residents reported that the ovens were too small, their doors were fragile and they were difficult to fit safely into existing kitchens.

Another pressing matter was their cost. The cookers are using more electricity than expected and, with many families on small incomes, the cost is becoming increasingly prohibitive, especially for those with a meter system.

Compensation has been promised by the Trust. A weekly sum of approximately £6 was mentioned although, to the

derision of those present at the meeting, it was suggested that this would be paid in arrears.

Tracy Jones, 27, who has two children aged two and five, said: "It's ridiculous. I just wanted to spend my first Christmas in a new home, but we simply can't use the cookers they have given us." Ms Jones said £10 on her meter usually lasted two weeks, but she is now using that amount within four days.

Peabody Trust response

Residents claimed that they found it hard to contact the Trust to report problems because phone lines were often jammed. The Trust said this would be addressed and a permanent estate manager would be appointed by December.

Peabody Trust spokesman Sean Gallagher said some residents could have gas in their homes by Christmas. He also stated that the Trust was sorry for the problems encountered by residents with the electric ovens but would address residents' concerns on an individual rather than a collective basis.

Monday Club milestone

The Monday Club has celebrated its third birthday with a special party and hopes to be a meeting place for even more young people in the year ahead.

The youth club is run by volunteers and meets once a week on Monday evenings at St Mary's Catholic Church Hall, High Road. It has done an excellent job of providing youngsters with somewhere to socialise, play games and sport and develop fun hobbies like dancing and DJing.

The party evening had more than 150 guests including John Parker, from the Youth Justice Board, East Finchley councillor Andrew McNeil and Father Tony, of St Mary's, amongst many

others.

Local businesses Chorak, Budgens, Casa Pepe, Iceland and all three local pizza outlets supported the evening by providing food and drink. Gift and flower shop 2 Destino arranged the décor.

Maureen Antoinette, one of the club's organisers, said: "It was a wonderful evening, with performances from our X Factor youngsters, and a visiting youth group. We look forward to the club growing and continuing to support young people."

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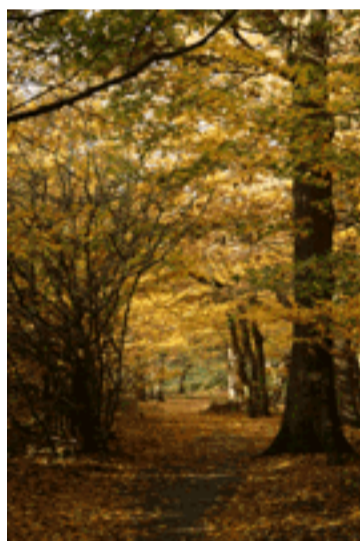
We're hoping to raise plenty of money to support Contact's crucial services, which include a befriending scheme, lunches and social events, and a free shopping bus.

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Thank you for your support.



Snowball fights in Sedgemere Avenue. Calendar photo by Craig Johnson



Cherry Tree Wood. Calendar photo by Debbie Bartlett

Rivron and the angels

By Sheila Armstrong


Kaos Children's Choir for the integrated deaf and hearing is based in North London and the only choir of its kind in the UK. Celebrities Emma Thompson, Desmond Tutu and Roger McGough, to name but a few, donated drawings of angels to Kaos for this autumn's fabulous fundraising event at Ally Pally, which raised around £4,000 for the choir's next CD.

Celebrity auctioneer Rowland Rivron presided over generous bids for the often quirky drawings, with great enthusiasm. An angelic drawing of Gandalf by Sir Ian McKellen fetched £610, the successful bid coming from East Finchley's Roger Chapman, and an angel by Archbishop Desmond Tutu raised £600. A letter from Tutu observed that he thought he probably prayed better than he drew. The best artist was Joanna Lumley: she

really can draw. Many other celebrity drawings went for over £200 each.

Friends and supporters of the Signing Choir enjoyed a buffet and were entertained by their adult counterparts The Angels of Kaos sang their hearts out. This Crouch End-based choir sang pop songs with evident enjoyment. Many of its members can sign and their songs were signed on the night. Find more information on the choirs at www.thekaos.org.

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