



Advice service faces closure

By Linda Sansom

An advice service that has been serving the needs of East Finchley residents for almost 30 years faces closure within the next few months.

East Finchley Advice Service, which has been under threat of possible budget cuts, has been told officially that Barnet Council will not renew its funding from the end of December. As



Ruby Joseph: "We are in big trouble."

the lease of the centre's Church Lane premises runs out in February, it may also have to find alternative accommodation.

Set up in 1982 by Barnet Social Services in response to increasing demand for benefit and housing advice, EFAS has faced closure before when funding was withdrawn in 1994. A successful application resulted in a £15,000 grant, leaving the centre with around £10,000 annually after paying rent.

Big Society

"We are in big trouble," says manager Ruby Joseph. "The council say we have to compete in the third sector like you do in business, and that they have to go out to tender. And instead of funding lots of advice centres in the borough they are going to give all the money to one."

"Ours is exactly the kind of service David Cameron talks about for his Big Society, and it is already here and doing well. It seems as if the trend is to smash us down and reinvent us."

Ms Joseph has been the full time manager at EFAS, based at the neighbourhood

centre in Church Lane, since last October and would face redundancy along with a training co-ordinator and two other part-time employees. There is also a band of volunteers who bring expertise to a variety of social and financial problems facing local residents.

Council response

A Barnet Council spokesman said existing grant funding to current advice providers was coming to an end, including that for EFAS.

He said: "The council is now recommissioning a more clearly defined advice service for residents across the borough. EFAS and other local providers have been asked to help develop new contract arrangements over the last two years and they will be able to bid for the contract when it is advertised."

However, Ms Joseph said EFAS was in no position to bid. They have now applied to the National Lottery and have a petition available for signing at the Centre as well as in local shops. If there is no guarantee of funds, however, the outlook is bleak.

Glory of the new Phoenix

By Sheila Armstrong

An old-style commissionaire, on loan from the Ritzy Cinema in Brixton, welcomed everyone to The Phoenix when it opened its doors on Sunday 12 September so East Finchley could see just how well the refurbishment project had gone. A host of staff, trustees and stars were on hand too.

The auditorium has been restored to its original colours, two previously unseen Mollo and Egan art deco panels have been rehanging at the back of the auditorium, and bare 100-watt light bulbs no longer hang from the ceiling having been replaced by discreet modern down-lighters.

On time and on cost

The attractive new café bar cleverly uses space from the full height entrance hall, and essential behind the scenes refurbishment has also been done. Building contractors and architect Nick Weedon brought in the £1 million job on time and on cost.

Trustee and actor Bill Patterson declared himself "genuinely delighted" with the improvements and similar favourable comments were heard all round the café bar, a small but perfectly formed space with a balcony overlooking the High Road.



Jenny Lee of Cherry Tree Road dressed up for the occasion.. Photo by Diana Cormack



The Archer's Sheila Armstrong and Phoenix patron Bill Paterson. Photo by Diana Cormack

Actor Alison Steadman opened the new interactive Phoenix Centenary Timeline and Gerry Turvey introduced an afternoon of vintage films from the 1910s. Gerry has written *The Phoenix Cinema: A Century of Film in East Finchley*, with profits going to the cinema. There will be other *Free From the Archives* events on Sundays as well as tours of the building.

The website for information, programmes and bookings is www.phoenixcinema.co.uk.

Have a cake break

The second National Baking Week takes place from 18-24 October. Sponsored by a variety of companies involved in the food industry, the idea is to encourage people, whether at home, in the workplace or at school, to enjoy a cake break.

Why not combine it with National Apple Day on 21 October by using a suitable recipe from their website? Visit www.nationalbakingweek.co.uk for more information. If you do take part, THE ARCHER would like to hear about it. Our contact details are on Page 2.



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