



Friends say farewell to Sue

By Barbara Mullins

Residents and friends at Homefield Gardens Sheltered Housing Accommodation held a farewell buffet lunch along with live entertainment for popular member of staff Sue Cox.

Sue left in December after seven and a half years as warden/sheltered housing officer. She is pictured above with Liz Caldwell, another popular sheltered housing officer. Residents value these

two ladies highly both on and off duty.

Sue has plans for an active future. Residents and friends wish her well in her forthcoming retirement and she will be missed by all.

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The true story on grit

We all remember the awful road conditions in December and this month or next may well bring us another cold snap. When we asked in our last issue whether your road had been gritted in the snow, we got plenty of responses, all saying no. Here we print a small selection of your messages and weigh them against what Barnet Council says it can and can't do on gritting roads.

"Brim Hill was not gritted once. This made driving very difficult and in places impossible because of the three short but steep slopes along the length of the road. It was also difficult to get up from the A1 to Brim Hill because most of the side roads also remained ungritted." **Peter Blackstaffe**

"We live on Southern Road at the corner of Springcroft Road so are in Haringey. This road was not gritted, despite the fact that there are two doctors' surgeries in the road, which means numbers of vulnerable users would be on the roads. Nor was Fortis Green gritted. Both roads, not to mention other roads, were like ice rinks, with accompanying spills!" **Ros Goldfarb**

"I live in Sedgemere Avenue, off East End Road. Our road and pavements and the ones in East End Road were more like a skate rink. That also includes Park Hall Road where there is a GP surgery." **Simon Astrop**

"I live in Oak Lane and was appalled by the state of my lane and surrounding area. We have a children's clinic with pregnant women, young mothers with babies, toddlers and disabled children struggling to get there. We also have Age Concern's Ann Owens Centre for vulnerable elderly and disabled people. What a state. I pay my service charges and my council tax without fail each month and enough warning was given regarding the weather in December so why weren't they prepared?" **Aruna Bhatt**

What the council says

Barnet Council says it is responsible for 680km of roads and therefore has to use a priority system to spread its limited gritting resources and keep the main traffic arteries moving.

Priority 1 are main commuter routes and bus routes. Priority 2 are roads in the vicinity of shopping centres, railway stations, hospitals, public buildings and schools, along with cul-de-sacs with steep gradients. Priority 3 are all remaining routes.

The council says it takes its winter maintenance activities very seriously, but can only be reasonably expected to react within its available resources.

Its policy is as follows: "In times of snow, once all Priority 1 routes have been treated and found to be safe and running, treatment of the Priority 2 routes commences, subject to having sufficient resources. Priority 3 roads are only dealt with in times of heavy snow and then only when priorities 1 and 2 have been completed. Under Priority 3, one footway in each side road is also treated in times of heavy snow."

On the question of whether footways are gritted, only one in our area is marked out for special attention. The High Road leading up from the tube station to East End Road will be pre-treated before the morning rush hour if snow or ice is expected.

Pledge project to harness people power

Barnet Council is hoping that a new website will help residents to find enough volunteers to keep streets free from snow or ice or take on other tasks like painting over graffiti.

Barnet Pledgebank lets people make an online pledge to which neighbours or other residents can commit to help. They can print off flyers to publicise the pledge and encourage others to get involved.

The council says this facility is ideal for projects such as mobilising a group of neighbours to paint over graffiti, setting up computer classes in their area or helping to keep pavements in their street free from snow and ice.

Leader approves "neat" scheme

Council leader Lynne Hillan said: "I think there is a real willingness among residents to get out there and organise all sorts of projects for the good of the community. That desire has always been there but it's not always easy to turn a good idea into reality.

"Perhaps you're prepared to step up with a group of neighbours and paint a community centre near you, or to help clear snow and ice from pavements during spells of bad weather like we've experienced recently.

"Barnet Pledgebank is a really neat way of making it as easy as possible for people to get their projects off the ground."

Saving public money

The new website comes at a time when Barnet Council is looking to promote the idea of the "Big Society" and also to cut back on non-essential services in a bid to save public money.

Pledgebank has been developed in conjunction with mySociety, a not-for-profit organisation responsible for public involvement websites such as the Number 10 petition site and FixMyStreet which is already in use by Barnet residents. The website can be found at pledgebank.barnet.gov.uk.

Will you be making a pledge and what do you think of the Pledgebank website? Let us know by writing to the-archer@lineone.net or The Archer, PO Box 3699, London N2 8JA.

Turn to page 11 to read Joyce Arram's letter on gritting

Is it safe to clear pavements yourself?

By Daphne Chamberlain

Some people are still hesitant about clearing snow and ice from the pavements outside their homes. The fear persists that they could be sued if someone had an accident there. The January newsletter of the Muswell Hill and Fortis Green Association carried this advice from its "legal eagle" Peter Thompson.

"Most of the law regarding liability for personal injuries requires proof of fault and, most usually, negligence. There is nothing wrong with clearing snow off a footpath: it is a decent, neighbourly thing to do. A pedestrian who slipped on the cleared footway would not normally have a case.

"But there might be liability if the householder chose to clear the snow by pouring hot water on it, thereby turning the cleared path into an icy slide. This would be a negligent, not to say silly way of clearing the snow and exposing pedestri-

ans to risk that was not there before.

"Otherwise I adopt the general line that Government agencies are putting out: that wherever snow-clearing would benefit the public the citizen should not withhold his (or her) shovel for fear of being sued."

Meanwhile, John Hajdu, MHFGA chairman, has been meeting with Haringey's contract manager for gritting roads. Haringey readers who find that their nearby grit bins are not being refilled should contact John on 020 8883 8114 or hajdu.clarion@talk21.com.