



Every vote will count in May

By Neil McNaughton

As we have been warned, this year's general election is on a knife edge and a close result is almost certainly assured. Voters in East Finchley, which makes up a large part of the Finchley and Golders Green constituency, can content themselves in the knowledge that how they vote is likely to tell us about how the rest of the country will go. There are three reasons why Finchley and Golders Green can be considered a 'bellwether' constituency.

First, it is a mixed area, containing a range of income groups, from the very wealthiest at The Bishops Avenue and Garden Suburb end to more deprived social groups like those in the northern part of East Finchley. There is also a lively ethnic mix in the area.

Second, there are five parties, each of which can hope to win substantial numbers of votes. Third, it is not a safe seat so every vote will count. The Conservative majority of nearly 6,000 looks fairly comfortable, but opinion polls tell us even this majority may be vulnerable.

This is how voters in Finchley and Golders Green voted in the 2010 General Election on a turnout of 61%:

Mike Freer, Conservative, 21,688 (46.0%)

Alison Moore, Labour, 15,879 (33.7%)

Laura Edge, Liberal Democrat, 8,036 (17.0%)

Susan Cummins, UKIP, 817 (1.7%)

Donald Lyven, Green, 737 (1.6%)

This May, Mike Freer is defending a 5,809 majority and will have four opponents (at the time of going to press; late entrants in the race may be nominated at the last minute). The Conservatives gained the seat from Labour in 2010, although the 2007 boundary change confused the significance of the result. The boundaries have remained unchanged since then.

These are the candidates at the time of going to press (in alphabetical order):

• **Jonathan Davies, Liberal Democrat:** A solicitor by profession, he is a former Barnet councillor and unsuccessfully contested the parliamentary seat in 1997. He has lived in the borough of Barnet for 20 years.

• **Mike Freer, Conservative:** He is a former Barnet councillor and led the council for several years. Before becoming an MP he had a career in management in the food industry and then in financial services and banking. He lives in Finchley.

• **Richard King, UKIP:** A civil engineering graduate, he is now a self-employed IT and investment planner, and has had a career with various financial institutions. He has lived and worked in various countries but now lives in North London.

• **Sarah Sackman, Labour:** A barrister specialising in public interest law, she also lectures part time at the LSE and offers legal advice on a voluntary basis. She is a native of East Finchley.

• **Adele Ward, Green:** She is a writer, publisher (having founded her own publishing company, Ward-Wood) and campaigner on environmental and social issues. She lives in London.

There are big questions to be asked about the prospective result. Can Labour make inroads into the Conservative majority or will the Tory vote hold up? How successfully will the Liberal Democrats hold on to their support when national polls suggest otherwise? Will UKIP make any significant impact and can the Greens maintain their recent progress?

While it is hard to see anything other than a Conservative or Labour win, the three other candidates promise to have a decisive impact on the outcome. So East Finchley will be at the centre of national attention on May 7. There is all to play for. Every vote will count!

Don't lose your right to vote

With the General Election coming soon, Barnet residents are being reminded that they must first be registered in order to vote. Eligible residents must have registered to vote by April 20 in order to vote on May 7.

If you are a young person and turning 18 on or before May 6 you are eligible to vote and you can register to vote before you turn 18.

Chief Executive of Barnet Council and Returning Officer, Andrew Travers, said: "Every household was recently sent a notification letter showing the names of

everyone on the electoral register at their property. If you have recently moved into the borough, or are turning 18, you still have time to register to vote and I would urge you to do so soon."

Eligible residents can register at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote or contact the helpline by phone on 020 8359 5577.



Way ahead: Visitors tour the careers stands at the job fair in the Green Man Centre.

Breaking into the jobs market

By Stepan Stepanenko

The Jobs and Apprenticeship Fair at the Green Man Centre on Strawberry Vale is in its fourth year and attracts hundreds of local residents looking for opportunities with local and national employers.

This year's fair on Friday 13 March, which coincided with National Apprenticeship Week, welcomed residents from the Army, the Metropolitan Police and the Royal Free Hospital as well as large commercial organisations including McDonald's and Starbucks.

The Fair is predominantly directed towards the 16 to 24-year group. Young job-seekers were invited to discuss their career prospects with potential employers as well as the Barnet Council Careers Service, who brought along 15 young people from local schools who they believe could benefit from the event. Young people were also given an opportunity to see the range of courses offered by Barnet and Southgate College.

More experienced job seekers had the chance to look for a new start in administrative roles presented at the event, with one attendee searching for a part-time position to fit around his child care needs.

Organisations present at

the event saw this as more than a recruitment drive, with the Army and Royal Free representatives disclosing to *THE ARCHER* that for them the event was predominantly a promotional event designed to showcase the variety of roles within their organisations and answer some of the "burning questions" being put towards them by the job seekers on working hours and pay.

Tea dance

Bishop Douglass School will have a team of their sixth form students organising an afternoon Tea Dance at the school in Hamilton Road. The students will look after guests at the event on Wednesday 6 May from 2.30pm to 4.30pm. There is an entrance charge of £3 to include afternoon tea.

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