



Poet Joshua Seigal reads a special poem to the marchers. Photo Mike Coles



The marchers set out along East End Road. Photo Mike Coles



The marchers, accompanied by a brass band in Finchley Central. Photo Mike Coles

Libraries: what happens next?

By Daphne Chamberlain

The results of last winter's consultation on libraries have been published, and the next step is the Council Meeting at 7pm on Monday 12 October. This is when the final proposals for Barnet's library service will be announced. Except that "final" does not appear to be quite the right word.

Cllr Reuben Thompstone is saying that any new proposals coming up at that meeting will go out for further consultation in the autumn. He adds that the Council "will explore ways to keep the same number of libraries across the borough, whilst reducing the overall cost of the service. To do this, the service will need to change and adapt, meaning it could end up looking significantly different from how it is today".

Attending the Town Hall meeting on the 12th may give a better idea of what this means. There is an indication in the consultation report that Barnet might propose a mixture of elements from all the options.

Council options rejected

There were over 3,000 responses to the consultation. All three options put forward by the Council were rejected. So reduced library sizes, closures and unstaffed opening hours were all given the thumbs down. The general public and focus groups agreed on this, although there were differences between the two sections.

The most popular suggestion was the use of more volunteers, although it should be noted that the majority of people said that volunteers should supplement profes-

sional staff, not replace them.

Regarding the option of setting up community libraries, it is worth bearing in mind that the Council proposed a handover of building and existing stock, with no further help or specification.

The full report is on www.barnet.gov.uk and some print-outs may still be available in libraries. Make sure your views are represented at the Council meeting on 12 October.

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