



Priorities for our ward councillors

This May's local elections left Barnet Council divided between the main political parties separated by just one vote. **Geoffrey Davies** has been talking to the ward councillors for East Finchley, longstanding member and former Mayor Alison Moore and our two newly elected representatives Katy Minshall and Ajith Das Menon.



Newly elected: Councillor Ajith Das Menon and Councillor Katy Minshall. Photo Geoffrey Davies

Losing overall control of Barnet Council in May's local elections might be seen as a blow to Labour. But according to Councillor Alison Moore, the important July Cabinet meeting was attended by the leader of the Conservatives "leading to a sensible discussion".

"We need to co-operate across the parties," said Cllr Moore, the night after the meeting. "While Labour hold the cabinet positions, opposition members chair committees, which is as it should be. We are still finding our feet and the July meeting is often difficult after elections."

Labour had an overall majority on the council before May but now governs with 31 seats, the same as the Conservatives, with one seat held by the Greens. A majority is 32. All three seats in East Finchley were held by Labour.

As Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health, Alison Moore is responsible for 28% of the council's budget to cover the 60,000 older people in the borough which she describes as "a significant and growing population." "A good proportion are living 20 years of their lives in poor health," she says. "Much of our work is to focus both on the immediate and long term, to keep people healthy with more connected lives, trying to remain independent and active."

She highlights the Reablement Service giving short-term support to residents to relearn daily living skills after an illness, injury or a stay in hospital. "80% need no further support after six weeks", she says. In her role as a ward councillor, Alison Moore says she is proud of her and her colleagues being able to support the Market Place Playground regeneration and the Barnwood Community Forest on Tarling Road, and improvements to the High Road, road safety and 20mph zones.

Big shoes to fill

"These are big shoes to fill", says Katy Minshall of her recent election as a councillor for the East Finchley ward. Her colleague Ajith Das Menon agrees. Referring to their predecessors Claire Farrier and Arjun Mitra, the newly elected pair tell stories of campaigning and how people said they voted for the individual, not the Labour party. "And of course we will be working with Alison Moore," says Ajith, "who is very experienced." Not only do these new

councillors have an academic grounding in public administration - both have MAs from prestigious American universities - but they clearly have a strong feeling about working in the community. "It is about representing the views of the people, being engaged and offering support," says Katy, who works for the Competition and Markets Authority.

Ajith agrees. "I stood because I want to give something back and provide roots for my children for when they grow up." He is a father to three girls under four and a half.

"The Labour Party are very supportive of our family situations," says Katy, who has two children under three.

The pair met five years ago as trustees of Mapledown School in Cricklewood, a secondary school serving those with Special Educational Needs. Katy had a long interest in education and her first role in politics had been as a researcher for David Blunkett in 2011. Ajith has worked in schools, teaching maths and physics in London.

"My father injected the theme of public service through his work when I was a child in Kerala," says Ajith, a consultant engineer with a background in the oil and gas industry. His other interests include opportunities for young people, especially those in their late teens, and reducing anti-social behaviour.



Long-serving: Councillor Alison Moore

Both new councillors are clearly very focussed on the job in hand and want to see the state of the High Road in East Finchley improved, in the words of Ajith "to make it better for business". Katy, a Youth Champion for the borough, sits on the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. "Clearly there are financial challenges and I will be looking for additional sources of funding," she says. "But there are areas like rubbish collection that can be improved and better managed."

War memorials rescued from neglect

By Micaela Blitz

For years, two First World War memorials have stood outside the United Servicemen's Club at Tally Ho Corner in North Finchley.



One commemorates employees of the Metropolitan Electric Tramways of Finchley depot (closed in 1993) who lost their lives during the First World War, while the other honours staff from the London General Omnibus Co Hendon bus garage which was closed in 1987.

Exactly how the memorials came to be at the club remains somewhat of a mystery. London Transport and local historian Doug Rose became increasingly concerned about their condition in 2020. Years of lying almost flat on wedge-shaped plinths had left the Grade II listed memorials stained by rain, pollution and grime from the constant stream of traffic passing through the busy junction.

Having grown up in North Finchley, Doug remembered the memorial on the external Finchley depot wall, placed there by the Metropolitan Electric Tramways after the First World War, and knew the important significance of the memorials and so was determined to get them restored and preserve them.

He wrote to the club suggesting they be cleaned and mounted vertically, making the inscriptions easier to read and protecting them from further weather damage. Although the memorials were cleaned a few months later, they remained on their original wedged plinths.

By the autumn of 2024, they had become dirty again. Undeterred, Doug continued his pursuit. With the aid of Andy Savage, Chairman of the Railway Heritage Trust, permission was secured from Barnet Council, and Doug commissioned local specialists Robertson Memorials to restore and remount both memorials.

In May 2026, they were carefully removed, cleaned and installed on bespoke vertical rusticated granite plinths, designed to improve both their appearance and long-term preservation.

Thanks to Doug's determination, these memorials to local transport workers now stand proudly once again. Reflecting on the completed project, Doug hopes "the futures of these two

memorials have been secured for another 100 years" ensuring that the sacrifices they commemorate will not be forgotten. Find out more about the restoration at www.dougrose.co.uk

From The Archer archives...

By Jane Marsh

10 years ago: September 2016

East Finchley became one of the first areas in London to receive a second dedicated police officer as part of a plan that the Mayor of London's office claimed would restore neighbourhood policing. East Finchley PCSO Jan Lovell, who is still in her post, said of the initiative: "This will be a big boost for the ward, as it will enable us to address crime and anti-social behaviour more extensively."

15 years ago: September 2011

This month saw the closure of long-established local charity East Finchley Advice Service (EFAS). The charity, based at the Green Man Community Centre in Strawberry Vale, had supported thousands of local residents on issues like debt, housing, benefits and legal advice over many years. It then became a victim of budget cuts by Barnet Council, which withdrew its core funding, resulting in the charity closing after failing to obtain alternative funding from other sources.

25 years ago: September 2001

September 2001 saw publication of the 100th edition of the Archer newspaper, a landmark we celebrated with a front-page article by the then editor Kevin Finn. In his piece, Kevin described our local paper as "a quite remarkable phenomenon", going on to highlight its humble beginnings as the brainchild of East Finchley resident Andrew Taylor. With over 30 years of publication now under our belts, we continue to be an entirely volunteer-led organisation bringing local news to all residents and businesses in East Finchley.

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