

# Barnet

## Trades Union Council

Supporting trade unions and public services in LB Barnet

Newsletter issue 5: December 2008. [www.barnettuc.org.uk](http://www.barnettuc.org.uk)

*Next Trades Council meeting: Wednesday 7 January 2009.*

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### Trade unions and Barnet residents:

# We can defeat this plan!

BARNET COUNCIL HAS published its latest report on the 'Future shape of the Council'; the report was passed with little discussion at the council cabinet meeting on Wednesday 3 December. It gives the green light to developing a new model for council service delivery that will involve large-scale outsourcing of services. Work done in the next period to develop the model will cost £250,000, and, if the administration gets its way, the final decision to go ahead with the model will be taken in June 2009. That gives us six months to defeat this monstrous scheme!

#### **What's wrong with Future Shape?**

The administration had said that they were examining different models for service delivery. In fact the report outlines only one model – and that is the worst one they could choose,



*Dexter Whitfield addresses 11 November public meeting. Photo: B. Laattoe*

### **If the Council won't tell people, we will!**

For several weeks past Barnet TUC has been informing Barnet residents about the council's Future Shape plans through leafleting and street stalls. On Saturday 29 November we were out in Burnt Oak, East Barnet, Finchley Central and High Barnet. *Picture: J. Burgess*



from the point of view of services, council staff and local democracy. It envisages large-scale outsourcing of services, with the vast bulk of council staff transferred out of direct council employment. It is a scheme that has been pioneered in the UK in Somerset county council where the council has a 10-year contract with multinational IBM to deliver services, through a joint venture called Southwest One. The problems associated with setting up that scheme have been explored in a prize-winning ITV Local documentary, 'Public Money, Private Gain'. The difference between Southwest One and the scheme envisaged by Barnet 'Future Shape' is that Barnet plans to outsource even more services: its own report admits "...it is unproven at this scale".

The council has given no guarantees that transferred staff would en-

joy the TUPE plus conditions that council unions are demanding. Without that, transferred workers might see their pay and conditions drastically reduced and their pensions threatened – this is what has happened to Barnet council care home workers transferred out of the council to work for Fremantle.

The report shows that the council has given no consideration to the unions' proposed alternative to 'Future Shape': improved in-house provision, developed in consultation with users and council staff.

Professor Dexter Whitfield, of research organisation the European Services Strategy Unit, has been working with council unions to examine the process and implications of Future Shape. He spoke about his findings to a packed meeting of more than 300 council workers and Barnet residents on 11 November at

# What is Barnet Trades Union Council?

Barnet Trades Union Council (Barnet TUC) is a group of people from across the borough of Barnet who support trade unions and want to defend and improve public services.

We are part of the structure of the national Trades Union Congress (TUC). Our constitution includes the aim:

"To improve generally the economic and social conditions of working people, including seeking improvements to the social services, public education, housing and health."

Our activities include sharing news and ideas about trade union issues, and discussing wider questions, such as social justice, and opposition to racism and other forms of discrimination.

## How can I get involved?

You can attend Barnet TUC meetings as a non-voting visitor if you live or work in Barnet and you agree with our aims.

To become a voting member of Barnet TUC, you should ask your union branch to join us (affiliate). Your union branch can affiliate if you live or work in Barnet.

It will cost your union branch 10p per member per year to

affiliate, with a minimum payment of £10 per year. Your union branch needs to pass a motion agreeing to affiliate, and elect a delegate to Barnet TUC. If your union branch is large and you think that the joining fee will put the branch off joining, let us know — we can work something out!

## How is it run?

Our monthly meetings last 1.5 hours. Before each meeting there is an executive meeting for half an hour. The executive were chosen at our launch meeting in April 2008. They will be re-elected or replaced at our annual general meeting in spring 2009. The current executive is:

*Chair:* Helen Davies, Unison

*Vice-chair:* John Burgess, Unison

*Secretary:* Austin Harney, PCS

*Assistant secretary:* Ken Montague, UCU

*Treasurer:* Alex McRae, PCS

*Assistant treasurer:* Gloria Pereira, PCS

*Youth officer:* Kieran Crowe, RMT

*Publicity officer:* Vicki Morris, NUJ

*Committee members:* Deana Hamed, PCS; Paul Coles, GMB; Maggi Myland, Unison; Craig Diggins, RMT; Keith Nason, NUT; Colin Tull, CWU.

**For more details, visit [www.barnettuc.org.uk](http://www.barnettuc.org.uk) or email [info@barnettuc.org.uk](mailto:info@barnettuc.org.uk).**

the North London Business Park.

So far the councils have submitted six briefings to the administration, but the administration has not responded to any of them. Professor Whitfield's analysis of the 3 December Future Shape report, which is entitled 'Failure to assess options for future shape of the council', is available at [www.barnetunison.me.uk](http://www.barnetunison.me.uk).

## What public consultation?

The trades council has sent the appallingly written 'Future Shape' report to the Plain English Campaign. We believe Barnet council is failing in its duty adequately to inform Barnet residents about its plans. When they do say something, it is in a language barely anyone understands.

We have been campaigning for several weeks now, telling the public what the administration refuses to tell them. The impact we have had has been reflected in the considerable local press coverage we have received. And the public response so far convinces us that there is no appetite for the large-scale outsourcing that council leader Mike Freer's administration is ramming through.

On the contrary, there is deep concern that 'Future Shape' plans would erode and jeopardise public services

and democratic accountability.

This is reinforced by the profound upheaval in the wider economy: financial turmoil, the credit crunch, the public bailout and semi-nationalisation of banks, the demise of familiar household names, such as Woolworths and MFI, and a looming recession, with three million people predicted to be out of work, all show that the private sector cannot be relied on to meet public need. And Barnet's very own financial crisis in the shape of the £27 million deposited in collapsed Icelandic banks shows the risks a council runs when it strays too far in the free market.

## Campaigning ahead

The trades council, especially the council unions, together with concerned residents will be active over the next few months to promote our positive alternative to the administration's 'Future Shape'. Our future shape for Barnet involves improved in-house provision, with improvements coming through wide consultation with service users and council workers. We are pledged to resist the future that Mike Freer's administration is shaping for us and invite you to join us in our campaign.

We can use as much or little time as you have to spare, and can find a role for anyone. Campaigners have already organised public stalls, leafleted homes, talked to neighbours about the issues, attended meetings, asked questions at council meetings, blogged, signed petitions, and made suggestions for future campaigning.

Please get in touch at any time if you think you can help or if you would like more information: email [info@barnettuc.org.uk](mailto:info@barnettuc.org.uk) / tel. 07719 283132.

*Barnet trades council*  
[www.barnettuc.org.uk](http://www.barnettuc.org.uk)

## Diary \* Diary \* Diary

Tuesday 9 December

### London Trades Councils Christmas party.

Guest speaker: Christine Blower, NUT acting general secretary. 6pm till 11pm. NUT HQ, Mabledon Place, then Mabel's Tavern. *Details:* [info@barnettuc.org.uk](mailto:info@barnettuc.org.uk)

Tuesday 16 December

### Barnet Unison branch meeting. 12 noon-2pm.

Conference room, building 2, NLBP. Buffet lunch. *Details:* [contactus@barnetunison.org.uk](mailto:contactus@barnetunison.org.uk)