

greetsgreen

COMMUNITY MAGAZINE

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2007



STOP, LOOK & LISTEN

Community
Heroes recognised



Issue 28

Front cover: Local resident David New, with lollipop lady Denise Barry – our latest Community Hero.

The Greets Green magazine is distributed to every household in the New Deal for Communities area, and to other NDCs nationally. If you live in the Greets Green NDC area and do not receive a copy then please call us on **freephone 0800 953 0215**.

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এ তথ্যাদি অনুবাদে আপনার সাহায্যের প্রয়োজন হলে, দয়া করে ইংরেজী জানেন এমন একজন বন্ধু বা আত্মীয়কে আমাদেরকে 0800 953 0215 এ নাম্বারে ফোন করতে বলুন।

આ માહિતીના આપાંતરમાં જો તમને મદદ જોઈતી હોય, તો કૃપા કરીને અંગ્રેજી બોલતા કોઈ મિત્ર કે કુટુંબીજનને કહો કે અમને 0800 953 0215 ઉપર ફોન કરે..

ਜੇ ਤੁਸੀਂ ਇਸ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਦਾ ਤਰਜਮਾ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਸਹਾਇਤਾ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਕਰਨੀ ਚਾਹੁੰਦੇ ਤਾਂ ਕਿਰਪਾ ਕਰਕੇ ਅੰਗ੍ਰੇਜੀ ਬੋਲਣ ਵਾਲੇ ਆਪਣੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਦੋਸਤ ਜਾਂ ਆਪਣੇ ਪਰਿਵਾਰ ਦੇ ਕਿਸੇ ਮੈਂਬਰ ਨੂੰ 0800 953 0215 ਤੇ ਸਾਨੂੰ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਕਹੋ।

اگر ان معلومات کے ترجمے میں آپ کو مدد درکار ہو تو انگریزی بولنے والے کسی دوست یا گھر کے کسی فرد سے کہیں کہ وہ ہم سے 0800 953 0215 پر بات کرے۔

ان رغبتہم بالحصول علی مساعده علی ترجمه هذه المعلومات يرجى ان تطلبوا من صديق او من احد افراد الأسرة ممن يتحدثون اللغة الإنجليزية الاتصال بنا علی الهاتف 0800 953 0215

welcome

to issue 28 of the Greets Green Magazine.

Everything Greets Green Partnership does is aimed at improving the local area for residents, but how can we do this if we don't know what you want? Over the past few months, the Partnership has been busy getting your views. Read our main feature on page 4 and see what residents have been saying about our work and what they think should happen in the future. It's not too late to make your voice heard. Call us on freephone 0800 953 0215 and tell us what you think!

One of the Partnership's highly successful projects has been the Neighbourhood Wardens who have become familiar faces across Greets Green. Although the project is now coming to an end, the Wardens' work has led to many new initiatives being introduced so that their work will continue. See centre pages to find out more.

Throughout 2007 there'll be loads happening as usual. Kids can get active with the Fit For Life project or become a Library Explorer, while adults can help shape housing plans or even 'Walk to Beijing' – see page 8 for details. Make the most of the New Year.

Happy reading!

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What a difference!

Greets Green Partnership is now well over half way through its 10 year regeneration programme to improve the lives of local people.

More than 100 projects have received funding to date. Once up and running, successful projects are in a good position to look for alternative sources of funding so that they can continue after Greets Green Partnership comes to an end in 2010.

But how much of a difference has the Partnership made?

To find out, we've been inviting local residents to air their views and this is what you've been saying.

Watch out in the next few issues of the magazine where we'll be looking back at a number of individual projects to assess their impact on the local community.

Residents from across Greets Green came along to two high profile 'Citizens' Jury' events at the end of October to vote on how well they believe the Partnership's regeneration programme is progressing.

People from many different communities, and all ages from 16 to over 65, got involved in the events at George Salter High School and Guns Village Primary School using hand-held keypads to cast their votes. The top three answers to some of the questions asked are shown opposite.



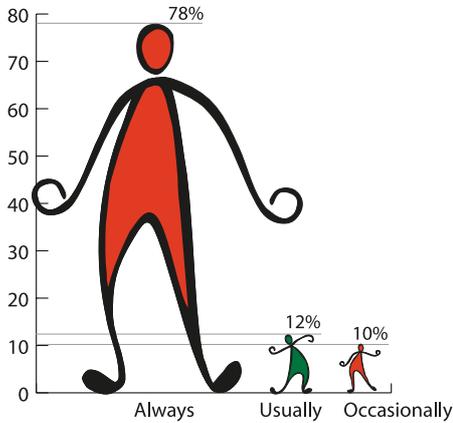
In addition, two 'Families of 99' discussion groups took place where residents talked through their own personal experiences and perceptions of the difference the Partnership is making. All participants in these groups have lived in the Greets Green area since 1999 – the year before the Partnership began.

"We've already used all the valuable feedback we received to shape the focus of the business plan for the remaining years of Greets Green Partnership," explained Katherine Hewitt, Community Empowerment Theme Leader. "And we're taking action on issues which residents said need addressing."

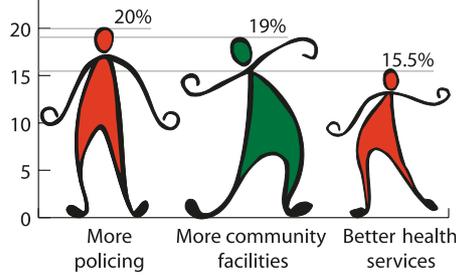
Outreach staff have also been out and about knocking on doors to complete the most comprehensive household survey ever undertaken across the entire Partnership area. Most of the neighbourhoods have now been completed – look out for the results which we plan to feature next issue.



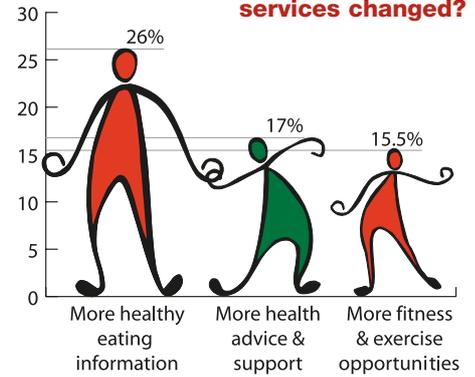
Do you read the Greetings Green Magazine?



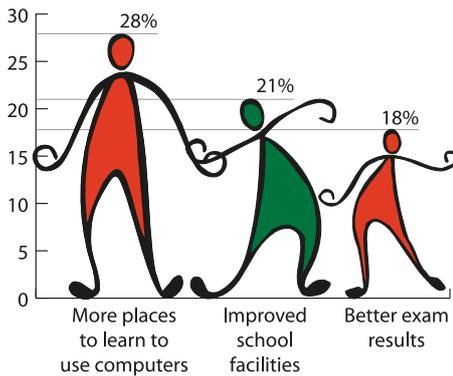
What has had the most positive effect in Greetings Green in the last 7 years?



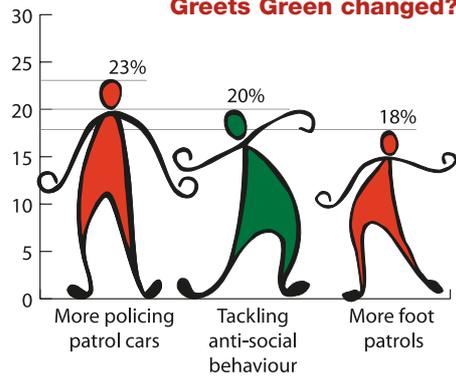
How have local health services changed?



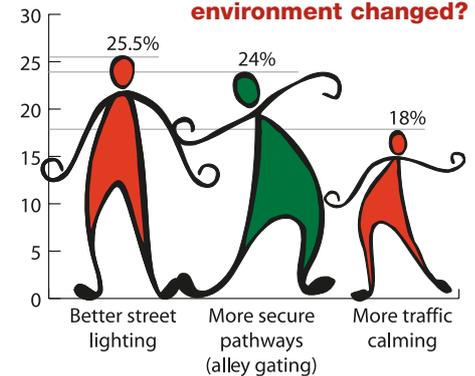
How have schools changed?



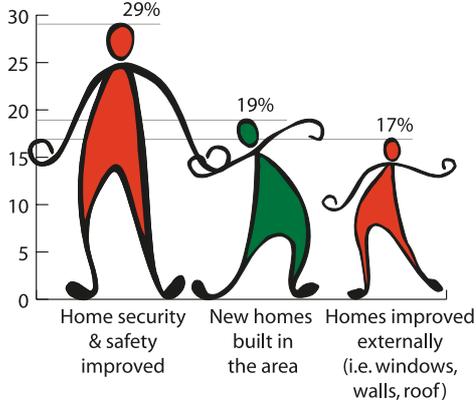
How has policing in Greetings Green changed?



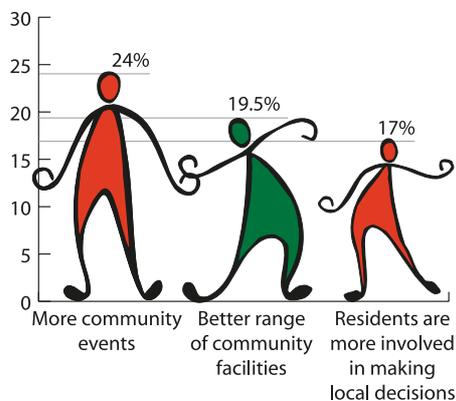
How has the local environment changed?



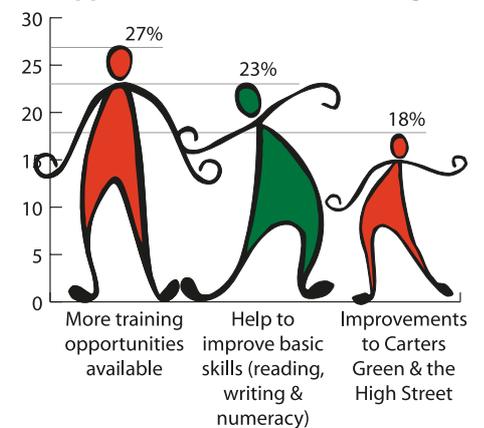
How has housing in Greetings Green changed?



How has community involvement in Greetings Green changed?



How has jobs and business support in Greetings Green changed?



Have your say

If you have any views about the work of the Partnership, come and talk to us! We'd love to hear what you think and are keen to get as much feedback from residents as possible. We will be undertaking more 'Families of 99' discussion groups. Let us know if you're interested in taking part. Come into the Partnership offices on the High Street or call freephone 0800 953 0215.

Hundreds become Library Explorers

More children in Greets Green are enjoying books thanks to the Library Explorers project.

This two year scheme funded by Greets Green Partnership involves about 600 children and is now well into its second year. More than 180 of them have got family members to join the library or brought them along to visit.

So far...

- 5,427 reward stickers have been given out for visiting the library, borrowing books, joining family members or bringing family members along to the library

- 180 children have already received prizes of pencil cases, books or T-shirts for collecting stickers in their special Library Explorers filofax

New prizes have now been introduced for Library Explorers including an explorer teddy and a pen that lights up when you write.

Diane Edlin, Service Development Manager at Sandwell Library and Information Service, explained: "The Library Explorers project has provided an opportunity to introduce the library to



families in Greets Green and I hope many will become regular users. Children's enthusiasm for reading certainly seems to have grown. I'm looking forward to even more families in Greets Green discovering that the library has good things to offer."

Since Library Explorers was launched, lots of activities have taken place including class visits to the library by local Primary Schools. Pupils exchanged books, learnt library skills and met authors and storytellers.

The Reading Voyage and Reading Mission, a Summer Holiday Reading Challenge, encouraged children to read six books during the holidays to gain a certificate and medal. And a Library Explorer Saturday Club and Family Reading Group offer many family activities and opportunities to read books together.

Shoo Rayner, author and illustrator of starting to read children's books, has been involved with the Library Explorers project

and remembers a deaf girl who was trying out her new radio hearing aid during a session in the Town Hall. "I felt attached to her through the radio microphone I was wearing," says Shoo.

"The girl sat in the middle of the hall, a radiant smile on her face - in fact there was almost a glowing aura around her. She was joining in for the first time."

One Library Explorer sums the whole project up by saying: "I didn't come into the library very often - but now I do!"

This year is the Central Library's Centenary and staff have put a Library Explorer filofax in a time capsule so that children in another 100 years' time will be able to find out about Library Explorers!



February Family Event

Come along to a family fun quiz with a fish and chip supper in the Central Library on Wednesday 28th February at 6.00- 8.00pm. Your host will be local magician, Ron Popple, who's always lots of fun. Tickets for the event are free but must be collected in advance from the Library. For tickets, or to find out more about Library Explorers, call **0121 569 4911** or **4904**.

by Neighbourhood Management Theme Leader, Rohit Mistry.

Q What are Neighbourhood Forums?

A Neighbourhood Forums are meetings for residents that have historically taken place in each of the nine neighbourhoods which make up the Greets Green Partnership area.

Q Who are the meetings for?

A Local residents – and everyone is welcome. It's a chance to meet your Neighbourhood and Community Reps and Partnership staff – and get your voice heard. The aim is for residents to let us know of any specific problems or issues affecting people in their neighbourhood. Representatives from organisations such as West Midlands Police, Sandwell Homes and Environment Direct are also invited to the meetings to hear people's views first-hand.

Q Can you explain the changes that have just been agreed in relation to Neighbourhood Forums?

A Two Joint Neighbourhood Forum meetings were held in December and

January where we discussed reducing the number of Forums to two, combining neighbourhoods as follows:-

North Neighbourhood Forum

Lodge Road Area, West Bromwich Central, Carters Green, Hamblett's (North & South) and Swan Village.

South Neighbourhood Forum

Oak House (North & South) and Greets Green

We hope that reducing the number of overall meetings will make them more effective - encouraging more residents to get involved and ensuring service providers invited to attend give the meetings top priority.

Q What is the Small Sites project?

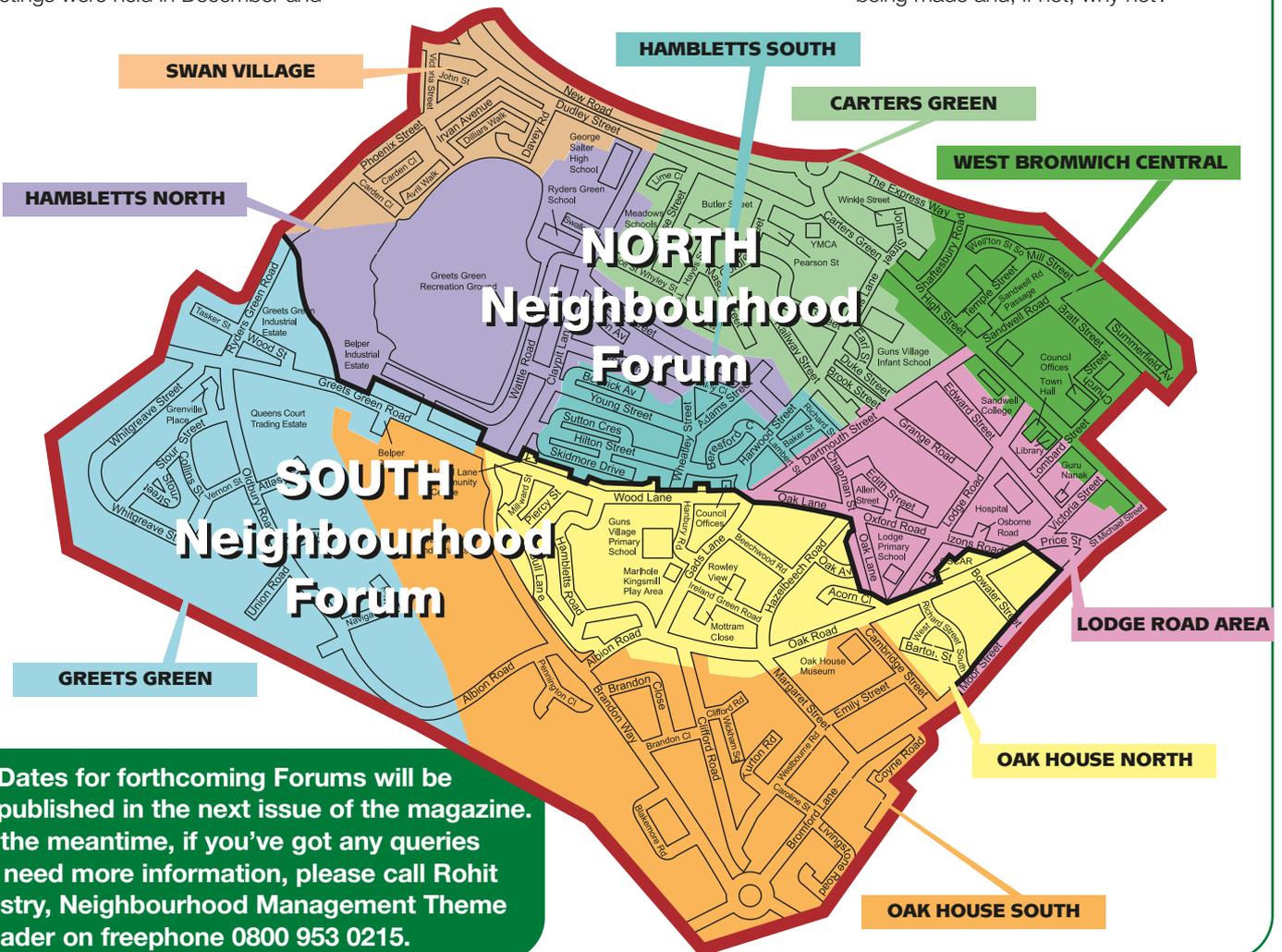
A Last year, we introduced the Small Sites project for Forums to identify small environmental or community safety projects that residents would like to see undertaken in their area. Our total budget for the year (which ends on 31st March 2007) was £70,000 and work has included

clearing of overgrown shrub areas, tree pruning, fencing and improvements to some general open spaces. We'll be explaining more about the kind of work we've been doing in the next issue.

We anticipate having a similar amount available next financial year, so we need residents to come along to the Forums and let us know where they would like to see the money spent.

Q How does the Greets Green Cleaner & Safer Environment Charter fit in?

A The Cleaner & Safer Environment Charter, developed by Greets Green Partnership, is a joint commitment from Sandwell Council's Groundcare Services and West Midlands Police to the standards residents can expect in terms of keeping the streets of Greets Green clean and safe. The Neighbourhood Forums are key to the success of the Charter. It's at these meetings that residents can feedback to service providers on progress – are improvements being made and, if not, why not?



i Dates for forthcoming Forums will be published in the next issue of the magazine. In the meantime, if you've got any queries or need more information, please call Rohit Mistry, Neighbourhood Management Theme Leader on freephone 0800 953 0215.

Getting fitter step by step!

Walking is one of the easiest ways to improve your health. So in the run up to the 2008 Olympics in China, the 'Walk to Beijing' project has been launched by Sandwell Primary Care Trust to encourage you to get fitter – one step at a time!

Residents are being encouraged to take part in the project, which starts with a mini health assessment measuring blood pressure, hip-waist ratio, height and weight. You'll be given advice about keeping fit and a step-counter to measure your progress over the subsequent three months, after which you'll receive another health assessment.

Anyone who has shown improved fitness will qualify for a reward which includes shopping and leisure gift vouchers. 'Walk to Beijing' Co-ordinator, Lindsay Manford, said: "This is something residents can do to improve their health and we're hoping it will catch their imagination."



BOSSSES MEAN BUSINESS

Businesses in Greets Green are so enthusiastic about a local health project that plans for a health screening event have snowballed.

Sally Sandel, Greets Green Partnership's Health Theme Leader, had been looking at ways to get involved with businesses in the Albion BID Company Ltd, in conjunction with Chair Stuart Fell, Business Consultant Geraldine Thomas and Workwell.

The plan had originally been to hold a health screening event in January where workers could check their Body Mass Index (BMI), height, weight, blood pressure and cholesterol.

But when the team started planning the project, they found over 60 businesses, with more than 1,000 employees, who wanted to get involved.

Sally said: "We were originally talking about a couple of health screening sessions, but it's turning into a much bigger project and we're thinking long term now. There are so many opportunities – the smoking ban comes into force in July and people in workplaces are going to need support to give up smoking."

Workwell have already done a lot to help workers at William King steel service centre to give up smoking, which has been very successful.

I If your business wants to get involved, call Sally Sandel on 0121 612 1663 or Marie Carroll at Workwell on 0121 557 4733.

More than 380 residents have registered to take part so far and the steps taken by all of those participating in the project, which runs until March 2008, will be added up at the end to see if Sandwell succeeded in walking to Beijing!

It will also be possible to work out which of the area's six towns walked the furthest, so let's get West Brom going!

Greets Green Active Lifestyles

Co-ordinator, Nathan Moore (pictured) explained: "Walk to Beijing is a great way for people to become active and stay motivated. They can set themselves goals and there are rewards at the end. I think it's a fantastic initiative."

I If you would like to take part in the 'Walk to Beijing', call Lindsay Manford on 0121 612 1651, or Nathan Moore on 07817 009 062.

STOP & THINK BEFORE CALLING 999

The sight of an ambulance rushing to an emergency call is always worrying – but in Greets Green the crew often find there isn't an emergency after all.

Greets Green, or the B70 postcode area, has the highest number of unnecessary ambulance call outs in Sandwell. This means people are calling 999 when it's not an emergency.

As well as costing a lot of money, this could also slow down a response to another call which might be a genuine life-or-death emergency, such as a heart attack or road crash.

Sandwell Primary Care Trust and West Midlands Ambulance Service are urging people in Greets Green to think twice about calling 999 when other types of health care are more appropriate. For example, when people are suffering from Winter complaints such as earache, colds,

coughs, flu and minor sprains from falls in icy weather.

Sally Sandel, Greets Green Partnership Health Theme Leader, said: "There are lots of alternative things people can do rather than call an ambulance. If people want to find out more about minor ailments or conditions, they can go along to one of the sessions which are being rolled out across Greets Green.

"Residents can also look for chemists showing a Pharmacy First sign where they can get advice about treating minor ailments, as well as appropriate medicines. You can also call NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 at any time."

Learning about the alternatives available before calling 999 will save the ambulance service money and could even help save somebody's life.



KIDS GET ACTIVE

Youngsters at Newtown Primary School are among those being encouraged to enjoy sport through the Active 5, 6 and 7s project funded by Greets Green Partnership. Children from the school took part recently in a special activity session to launch a 10 week programme due to start in all of Greets Green's primary schools in March.

The scheme is aimed at children in Key Stage 1 of primary school and their teachers, and is organised by Hat-Trick Community Football Officer, Rus Smith. Primary school children took part in the project last year and are now looking forward to making the most of this year's sessions as well, which will be led by local lad Ray Shelton.

Ray has spent two years on an apprenticeship with West Bromwich Albion FC and is now employed as a community coach under the Hat-Trick project in the Greets Green area.

"The Department of Health recommends that young people should be participating in at least one hour of moderate exercise every day," explains Rus Smith. "This project will help to tackle obesity and raise skills in young children."

To find out more, call the Hat-Trick project on 08700 662 840.



Another boost for LACE

The Looked After Children in Education (LACE) project is celebrating the success of its 'virtual school'.

The school offers additional education support for 'looked after' children - those who are in care and children from outside the area who live in foster homes in Greets Green - and is a joint project between Greets Green Partnership and LACE.

It has achieved such good results that it's been highlighted as an example of best practice in the Government Green Paper 'Care Matters: Transforming the Lives of Children & Young People in Care'.

Roger Cunningham, Greets Green Partnership's Jobs & Skills Theme Leader, says: "The most pleasing thing is to see the children who are getting support from our work with LACE, being given the opportunity to make up for some of the inevitable disruption to their education.

"It is also important to let people know that good work is recognised - right up to a senior government level."



Paula Rushton (pictured above) from LACE added: "Feedback from young people has been positive, particularly from the Study Zone and residential activity, so to get this additional recognition from Whitehall is a real boost."

To find out more about LACE, call Paula Rushton on 0121 588 8337.

CRIME

TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT IT!

Ongoing work by Greet's Green Partnership and West Midlands Police is continuing to make the area a safer place to live and work. Latest initiatives range from better quality street lighting to making it easier for residents to report crime.

Lighting the way

Residents in Greet's Green have seen the light and are feeling safer thanks to a project which has replaced hundreds of old lampposts.

New stainless steel street lights now shine down on many roads in Greet's Green, some of which were chosen for the initiative because they had a higher incidence of road accidents and crime.

So far about 235 lampposts have been replaced thanks to funding from Greet's Green Partnership and a further 201 new lampposts are due to be put in place by the end of March 2007.

Greet's Green Partnership's Crime and Community Safety Theme Leader, Phil Hartley, said: "We're replacing street lights which are 20 to 30 years old with better quality new ones which are easier to maintain and provide better quality, brighter light."

Phoenix Street resident, Pam Jackson, who is the new Neighbourhood Rep for Swan Village, said: "It's been a big improvement. Before it was dark and there were people hanging around and it was really frightening sometimes. People don't hang around as much now and it feels safer."





ADVICE TO STAY SAFE

Residents from several streets in Greetings Green have been offered wide-ranging advice to help make their homes safer from fires and crime.

The Greetings Green Community Safety Initiative was carried out over two days in January.

Representatives from West Midlands Police, West Midlands Fire Service, Greetings Green Neighbourhood Wardens and Urban Heart housing association joined forces to knock on doors in the Hamblett's South neighbourhood.

Police officers provided security advice and Urban Heart was able to arrange to fit extra security equipment to properties that needed it.

The Fire Service offered free Home Fire Risk Assessments in which residents are given practical advice to reduce the risk of fire in their homes and are shown how to get out safely if a fire does start. Any homes which didn't already have a smoke alarm were given one for free.

Phil Hartley, Crime and Community Safety Theme Manager, said: "The Home Fire Risk Assessments are available to all residents. Fire fighters come round free of charge and help you develop an escape plan in case of fire.

"Very few people are taking up this free service and we're trying to let more people know about it."

I To request your free Home Fire Risk Assessment, call freephone 0800 389 5525.

WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Do you want to reduce crime in your area?

The Greetings Green Crime Fighting Team has created a simple form so you can pass on information about crimes and anti-social behaviour in your area.

You don't have to give your name, address or telephone number if you'd prefer not to. Just write down any information you have and send it to the address at the bottom of the form.

There are other simple ways you can report crime too. If you have any information about drugs or drug dealing, call the Hitback drugs information line anonymously on **0800 850 2206** or call your local neighbourhood Police team on **0845 113 5000** Ext: 7912 6391.

If you experience any problems with anti-social behaviour, you can call the anti-social behaviour hotline on **0845 359 7500** or call your local Police.

INTELLIGENCE SUBMISSION FORM

You do **NOT** have to give your name, address or telephone number

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel no: _____

Subject: _____

Information: _____

How did you find out this information? _____

Please return this form to:

**PC 5085 Carter at Greetings Green Crime Fighting Team,
West Bromwich Police Station, New Street,
West Bromwich, B70 7PJ.**



FAREWELL TO FRIE

The outstanding work of Greets Green's Neighbourhood Wardens is coming to a close but their legacy will certainly live on.

The Wardens have become key figures in the community, patrolling the streets, providing practical help to residents and groups, helping them to access services and initiatives, and generally making Greets Green a better place to live.

When the team disbands at the end of March, they will be missed by many, but residents will continue to benefit from their work for years to come. Many new initiatives have already been introduced as a result of their work and others are in the pipeline.

The Wardens demonstrated the benefit of neighbourhood-based patrols. Many organisations are now following their example including the Police and the Council. Closer links are being developed with residents and more responsive services provided.

The award-winning Greets Green Crime Fighting Team, which is dedicated to reducing crime and anti-social behaviour locally, is funded directly by West Midlands Police with a contribution from Greets Green Partnership. Over the last two years total reported crime in the area has reduced from 72% to 50.3% which is not only below the Sandwell average but also below the England average, showing the impact of the Crime Fighting Team.

In addition, the introduction of the Partnership's Cleaner Environment Team, working with the Sandwell Enforcement Wardens Scheme, will continue the good work of the Neighbourhood Wardens in responding to issues such as litter and fly-tipping.

Neighbourhood Support Workers have been focusing on building links with local people through the 'Down Your Street' initiative, and the Neighbourhood Forums provide opportunities for residents to raise any problems or concerns.

Greets Green Partnership's Crime and Community Safety Theme Leader, Phil Hartley, said: "The community has clearly benefited from the Neighbourhood Wardens over the past four years. There have been real and lasting changes in the way services are delivered and the links which have been forged with residents. These will continue to be developed so that the excellent work of the Wardens will continue."



WARDENS ON THE STREET

Residents raise issues

Greets Green Neighbourhood Wardens have been working to empower residents so they have the confidence to raise their concerns directly with the Police, Council and other local services once the project ends.

The introduction of the Greets Green Cleaner & Safer Environment Charter is also helping residents to identify which agency is responsible for different issues and who they should contact. Senior Neighbourhood Warden, Neil Woodfield, said: "Over the last 12 months we've tried to empower people to use the information we've got to help themselves. We'd like to think there's a lot more people out there who know a lot more than they did before."

"I want to say thank you to the community for supporting us over the last few years. The entire team would like to say thanks to all local residents for their help and support."



REMOVING GRAFFITI

THANK YOU!

The Wardens project is overseen by Accord Housing and managed day to day by Greets Green Partnership. It was due to have finished a year ago but gained a 12 month extension thanks to the support of residents and local organisations.

Here are just some of the comments local people have made about the Wardens...

"Many older people from this Centre have benefited. Wardens have supplied personal alarms and Christmas hampers. Perhaps the most important contribution they have made is to those who are older / housebound. There have been many occasions where they have been the link between the housebound person and the community."

Pat Briscoe, Manager, Ryders Green Methodist Day Centre

"They have brought pleasure and understanding of older people when visiting our clubs and also bringing small gifts useful to their safety at home. They will be missed by many people just for having a friendly chat or the faithful cuppa with those who are lonely and out of touch."

A Payton, Royal Navy Over 60s Club



PROMOTING HEALTHY EATING

"My family and I are very grateful for all the effort the Wardens have put into solving our problems. They have also made our area feel safe by offering advice in resolving problems. Thank you."

Mr Joki Uddin, local resident

fact file

From 2003 to 2006, the work of the Neighbourhood Wardens included dealing with:

- 1,938 anti-social behaviour counter patrols
- 1,685 environmental issues
- 442 housing issues
- 380 abandoned/untaxed vehicles
- 85 drugs cases
- 35 fires
- 287 faulty street lights
- 7 racial incidents
- 1,634 information visits (to individual residents and surgeries)
- 349 road safety incidents

Reported & sorted!

During their time on the streets, the Wardens have been kept busy helping residents with a whole range of issues, from dealing with crime and anti-social behaviour to tackling fly-tipping and sorting out broken street lights.

During the first six months of the financial year starting in April 2006, the Wardens:

- supported 64 victims of crime
- dealt with 770 anti-social behaviour incidents
- carried out 10 joint Police patrols
- were involved with 3 youth and 28 older person's initiatives

The last two years have also seen them:

- co-ordinating the alley gate project which has installed about 90 gates in the area
- collecting approximately £450 for charity
- distributing 2,000 datalink boxes
- handing out 1,350 CO₂ patches
- giving 1,100 stubbies to smokers
- offering 250 time switches
- providing 800 burglar alarms



SARAH MAKES HER MARK

Sarah Webb, Service Improvement Officer for Sandwell Homes, is leaving the area and will be missed by many residents in Greetings Green where she has made her mark.

She's well known in the area, having visited every single local tenant! Sarah explained: "I carried out a survey of all Sandwell Homes customers and visited every one in the area along with the Housing Officer. We compiled a detailed report based on residents' ideas for improving the housing service."

Sarah has also been involved in running customer care training sessions for staff and has represented Sandwell Homes at housing and Neighbourhood Forums in Greetings Green. Plus she responded to customer complaints that the office needed improving by getting it refurbished.

The work Sarah has been doing so well will be continued after her departure. We wish her all the best in her new job.

Housing Latest!

The Government has now approved Urban Living's £44.5 million capital programme for the next 18 months, which will ensure that plans to redevelop key housing sites in the area will be able to move forward.

PUPILS RAP AGAINST ASB

Youngsters in Greetings Green are busy working on a computer 'blogging' project focusing on anti-social behaviour and how it affects them.

The Year 5 pupils from Guns Village, Ryders Green, Newtown and Lyng Primary Schools have access to a website set up by the Menzies City Learning Centre which contains information from the Police and other organisations. Each of the schools are looking at different aspects of anti-social behaviour and are recording their thoughts and experiences on the blog.

Pupils from Ryders Green visited Menzies City Learning Centre and used a special computer programme to record what they had learned from the blog, and turned it into a cartoon-type feature. The school was the first to add something to the website, putting poems and recorded raps on it.

Paul Gregg, Leader of e-learning at Ryders Green Primary, said: "As part of the curriculum and anti-bullying week, some of the children wrote anti-bullying raps which we recorded. They also did plays about emotions and how it feels to be bullied. These have been put on the website and people can post responses to them."

The youngsters are also looking at ways to improve the environment to make it less likely to encourage anti-social behaviour. All their thoughts have been passed to their local councillor and to Greetings Green Partnership so that the local area can be improved.

If you'd like to find out more about the blog, call Ryders Green Primary School on 0121 553 0658.





NEW LOOK FOR PARK

Ideas are being put together to give The Rec a new lease of life as Greets Green Park.

Birmingham-based landscape consultants, Fira, have been appointed to come up with some designs for what The Rec, which is part of the Claypit Lane clearance area, could look like in the future.

Neighbourhood Representative, Janet Sayce, was on the shortlisting committee which chose the consultants. Janet was born in a prefab on The Rec and now steps out of her door in Wattle Road straight on to it! She said: "Some of the houses in Claypit Lane and Wattle Road were demolished to make a gateway on to the park. Any plans have got to fit in with the way new houses will be built which will come slightly on to The Rec.

"I'd like to see a nice open way through with the trees thinned out and the bracken cleared. It would be good to have a seating area, a proper play area for the kids, and for The Rec to become somewhere the whole family can be involved. It should be a pleasure to walk across it."

The consultants are expected to come back with their designs in the Spring. Their proposals will feed into the new Developer Panel, which will identify potential opportunities on site.

For more information on any local housing issues, call the Greets Green Housing Team on freephone 0800 073 0798.

£6 million plan to improve homes

Plans for spending on housing in Greets Green have now been approved by the Greets Green Partnership Board for the next few years. And it's good news for residents.

More than £6 million will be spent on improving housing in the area between 2007-10 and residents will have lots of opportunities for influencing what goes on. Planning for this work was included in the original Greets Green Housing Plan, which was approved after a public consultation in 2003/04.

The aim is to ensure that by 2010:

- Council and housing association properties meet the Decent Homes Standard
- More privately owned homes meet the Decent Homes Standard
- More homes have central heating
- More residents are happy with their accommodation

There are plans to work with partners to bring empty and unfit properties back into use, provide larger family homes by extending or converting properties, offer support for self-build housing schemes and help young and vulnerable people moving into accommodation by providing furniture and household items.

Others initiatives include:

- Greets Green garden enhancement service to help residents redesign, improve and sustain their gardens
- Small sites improvement scheme to identify and improve areas of land
- Providing housing advice and support to local residents most in need of help
- Energy generation project to tackle fuel poverty
- Home maintenance project to offer residents construction and practical skills training
- Landlord accreditation scheme to improve private rented housing
- Developing additional Community Charters aimed at bringing residents and organisations together to improve local services
- Recreation Ground improvements
- Community alarm service to provide 24-hour care services to privately owned homes
- Encouraging young people to take part in housing and planning decisions

All the projects within the housing programme will be fully developed over the next few months and residents will be able to influence them every step of the way.

To find out more, call the Housing Team on freephone 0800 073 0798.



If you would like your community group to be featured on this page, contact Communications Officer, Brian McKinstry, at Greets Green Partnership on Freephone 0800 953 0215 or email brian_mckinstry@sandwell.gov.uk

GREETS GREEN COMMUNITY ENTERPRISES... be a part of the future

Greets Green Community Enterprises Ltd (GGCE) is taking its first steps to carry on the work started by Greets Green Partnership. And the exciting news is – you can be part of it!

The Board of GGCE has agreed to offer membership status to local people who come forward. This means you can attend Board meetings, vote on the election of directors and stand for election as a director at the Annual General Meeting, which will be held this Spring.

“It’s really important that the people we want to work with get involved now – it’s your community enterprise and you can help shape our future,” says Andrew Rainsford, Chief Executive of



Susan Bartleet-Cross is a long-time supporter of Greets Green Partnership, having represented the local business community on behalf of West Bromwich Building Society. For Susan, already a Board member herself, getting local people involved is

crucial. “To make Greets Green Community Enterprises really work we need local input,” said Susan. “We have the business expertise, we have the management experience, what we need are people with the ideas and inspiration to help us to ensure that Greets Green keeps changing for the better.”

Gurbachan Dhinsa, who is presently the Chair of the Greets Green Community Enterprises Board is clear that it’s an exciting time. “We’re going to be making some important decisions about just what kind of things GGCE can get involved in and how we can help to continue the Partnership’s work,” he said.



GGCE. Andrew also confirmed that membership of GGCE is free and is open to adults living or working within the area covered by Greets Green Partnership’s New Deal for Communities programme.

The first GGCE Annual General Meeting will take place on 10th May 2007 from 6:30pm at the Guru Nanak Community Centre, in Victoria Street. Look out for more information in future issues of the Greets Green magazine – we’ll keep you right up to date.

For more information, contact Andrew on 0121 525 5810 or email ggce@btconnect.com

Communities celebrate together

Greets Green residents joined people from throughout Sandwell for an evening of fun and food at a recent ‘Celebrating Each Other’ event at West Bromwich Town Hall. Organised by Greets Green Partnership’s Diversity Team and Sandwell Together, the aim was to bring people together from different cultures. And what a huge success it proved to be!

Syeda Nessa, from the Confederation of Bangladeshi Organisations, said: “A few of the young people sang some nasheeds, which are devotional songs. There was a very good atmosphere.”

Gurcharan Mall took along his group the ‘Bhangra Blasters’ who play dhol drums, and there was Punjabi singing and

Bhangra dancing. He said: “It was fantastic. There was a mixed audience from different communities with young, middle aged and old people. Everyone had a good time.”

Irene Ellis from the All Nations steel band said the 10-strong group had really enjoyed the evening, and performed a number of songs including Under a Blue Moon, Unchained Melody and The Wonder of Me.

In the kitchen there were Cook, Look and Try sessions where residents could cook dishes then take home recipe cards so they could try them at home.

Afrah Muflihi, Health Education Officer with the Yemeni Community Association,

said: “We held a samosas making demonstration which was very successful. Some of the parents and their children wrapped up the samosas and I fried them. Then they went away and ate them!”

An African-Caribbean resident also did a cooking demonstration and showed people how to prepare ackee and salt fish.

A local resident from Oakhouse North, said: “Greets Green Partnership is good at bringing people together from different communities. We need more things like this event.”

For more information about this event call Diversity Officers Ruphsana Nahar-Qayyum and Sam Watts on 0121 532 6978.

Crossing Heroes

The crossing patrol staff of Greets Green have been nominated by local resident, David New, as our Community Heroes for this issue.

David doesn't think lollipop men and women get enough recognition for going out there in all weathers to make sure youngsters cross roads safely on their way to and from school. He said: "They have got to be reliable and the kids look up to them."

David has watched his neighbour Denise Barry, and her colleague Tracey Richards, at work outside Guns Village Primary School and sees how important they are to the children. He wrote to Greets Green Partnership commending the crossing workers, saying: "I am sure you will agree with me that lollipop men and women do a fantastic job and are not recognised enough for all the good work they do for the community. Parents rely on them to cross their children safely over these increasingly dangerous roads.

"I personally know three lollipop ladies in the West Bromwich area, two of them with at least 20 years of service. Listening to what local children and their parents say to them about what they do, warms my heart. They are a vital part of our community."

I Do you know someone who deserves to be recognised as a Community Hero? Call Brian McKinstrie at Greets Green Partnership on 0121 532 6835 or email brian_mckinstrie@sandwell.gov.uk



MUSICAL EVENING MAKES AN IMPACT

Young people showed off the fruits of their work for an African Caribbean music history project at a glittering evening at West Bromwich Town Hall.

The Young Black Impact Music Heritage Competition saw young people aged 13 to 20 of all ethnicities researching the contribution made by African Caribbean people to the UK music industry from the 1950s to the present day.

They then put on a display of their work and an evening of entertainment, which was attended by more than 250 delighted

spectators, including Sandwell Mayor, Sadie Smith. Musical heroes whose music was performed on stage included Nat King Cole, the Three Degrees, Chaka Khan, Dennis Brown and Bob Marley, plus several popular bands and singers of today.

Rachel McFee, Greets Green African Caribbean Development Officer, said: "We had themes from different decades and some people thought the performers were professionals. It was really positive and people said they'd like to see something like this again, which is great. We gave out certificates to all the young people

who took part and created a catalogue of the whole project."

The project also involved some youngsters interviewing Stan Simms, a Greets Green resident since 1960 when he came over from Jamaica. They asked him about the music he listened to in the Caribbean and what he liked to hear over here.

I The catalogue, which features an interview with Stan Simms and a synopsis of the whole project, is available from OSCAR Sandwell, priced £5. To contact OSCAR, call 0121 525 0556.





FUN, FUN,

Residents young and old got into the festive spirit at the Greet's Green Christmas Festival at the Memorial Gardens with carols, Santa in his grotto and plenty of fun and games.





FUN!

Despite the Winter weather, there was no reason to get cold as the event on Saturday 9th December also offered a chance to score a goal past Baggie Bird, learn some badminton techniques and even have a go at ice-skating.



TEA DANCE WITH A MESSAGE

More than 100 older people in Greets Green got together for a Christmas tea dance as well as watching a play with a serious message.

The Healthier & Safer Older Age team organised the event for over 50s, which started with a performance from Fizzog Theatre Company called "I've Come to Read the Meter".

The play features characters Hilda and her neighbour Bert and uses comedy to look at issues that can affect older people, including how to deal with bogus callers, fire safety, falls prevention, safety in the home and mental health issues. After the performance, residents tucked into some festive food before the dancing started.

Terry Chikurunhe from the Healthier & Safer Older Age team said: "We tried to use the event not just as a tea dance, but also to address some of the issues that affect older people."

The Healthier & Safer Older Age team can be contacted on 0121 612 3143.



There's a new place to get your hair done in Greets Green!

Kit's Hair Design in Bromford Lane has been set up by Karen Abercrombie with the help of a Business Start Up grant from Greets Green Partnership, administered through Business Link Black Country.

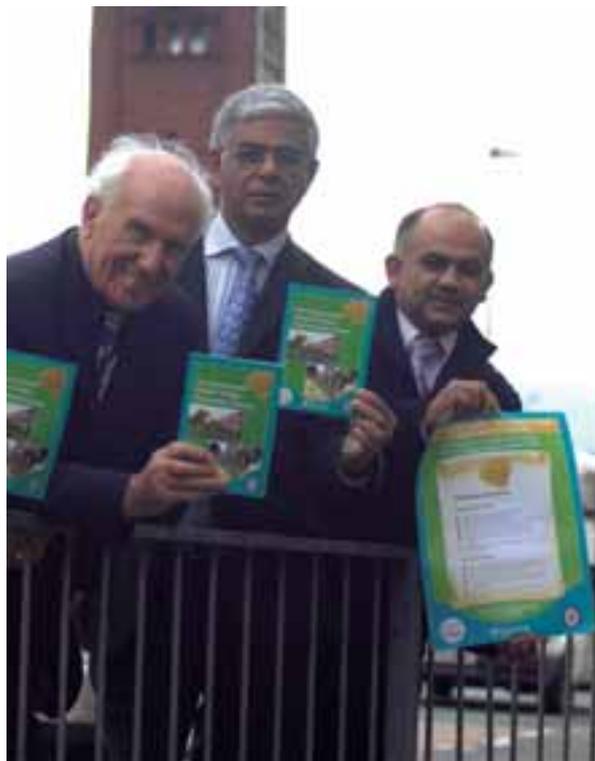
Karen, aged 38, has been a hairdresser for 18 years, 14 of them in Lodge Road. She said: "I wanted the satisfaction of having my own place, plus hopefully I am going to build a future for my children and offer job security to people. The Start Up grant was brilliant.

It paid for all the solicitors' fees. Without it I would have struggled. It was really useful."

Four local women are working with Karen in the salon. Judith Bayliss from Business Link said: "This is Karen's first venture and she's supporting the local economy, which is the purpose of the grant."

For more information on starting your own business, call Judith Bayliss on 01386 552619.

Cleaner & Safer Environment Charter launched



The Greets Green Cleaner & Safer Environment Charter has now been officially launched and all 5,000 local residents have had their own copy delivered to their door.

The Charter is a joint commitment to the standards residents can expect from Sandwell Council's Groundcare Services and West Midlands Police, in terms of keeping the streets of Greets Green clean and safe. "It's important to say to people 'these are the standards of service you should expect', but like any contract, it's a two-way thing," explained Geoff Fisher, Chair of the Greets Green Partnership Board, pictured left with Councillor Mahboob Hussain and Neighbourhood Management Theme Leader, Rohit Mistry.

"The Charter was developed through our Neighbourhood Forum network where local people can talk through issues around management of their area on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis," added Rohit Mistry.

"It is important to have the backing of Sandwell Council's Groundcare Services and West Midlands Police, but it's also about what local people can do themselves. The information in this Charter gives people the contacts to help them speak up and ask for the services that will make Greets Green a cleaner and safer place to live."

For more details about the Charter, call Neighbourhood Management Theme Leader, Rohit Mistry on 0121 533 1866.



SPOTLIGHT ON HEALTHY EATING

Women attending a healthy eating workshop became the stars of a Midlands Today programme focusing on the Fit for Life project in Greets Green.

TV cameras filmed women at the Shree Krishna Mandir listening to a talk on healthy eating before seeing a low-fat Indian recipe being prepared. Shaleen Meelu, Fit for Life Development Officer, said: "Midlands Today ran a series of special features about the work we are doing and how we are trying to stop obesity and other diet-related illnesses." Crews filmed at George Salter High School, where Fit for Life is based, and the Hindu Community Centre.

Shaleen said: "The Visamo Gujarati Hindu ladies were filmed and within that community there's a high incidence of diabetes and heart disease. Our aim is to run events which are a fun, friendly social gathering around food, rather than focusing on the medical side. We're raising awareness of healthy eating and how to enjoy it."

There are now plans for similar events with Sikh and Yemeni women, and any other small groups of women who are interested.

I For more details, call Fit For Life Development Officer, Shaleen Meelu on 0121 612 1554.

National award won

Local decorating store, Decoron, beat off stiff competition to win the title of Britain's Best Décor Retailer at the Retail Awards in November.

This is the second time the family-run store, based on High Street, has been recognised, as they came second in last year's awards. Judges made their decision based on the store's strengths in customer service, choice and value for money.

Mark Welch, Director, said: "Winning this award is a reflection of the choice, quality, value and service we offer our customers. Over the last 40 years, we have firmly established ourselves as the area's leading decorating store and have now been recognised as the country's best. It is a



proud feeling for all our staff who have contributed to the success of our business."

Comedian Ed Byrne presented staff with their award at a ceremony at the Hilton Hotel.

I Decoron is based at 466 High Street and is open Monday to Fridays 8.30am to 5.30pm and 9.00am to 5.00pm on Saturdays. For more information, telephone 0121 553 3707.

NEW HEAD WELCOMED

Pupils at Lodge Primary School have started the new year and new term by welcoming a new Head Teacher.

James Pearce joined the school this term from Summerfield Primary in Birmingham. The school wishes former Head Teacher, Mohinder Riat, all the best for the future. Staff and pupils alike are now welcoming Mr Pearce to the school and to Greets Green.

USE YOUR VOTE

Council chiefs in Sandwell are launching a study into why only a third of voters bother to turn out for local elections.

Councillor Simon Hackett said: "The biggest chance for the people of Sandwell to have their say in the running of the Council is by voting in the local elections each May.

"Staggeringly, only about 34% of people who are eligible to vote bother to turn out. We want to find out what we can do to encourage more people to register on the electoral roll and to vote in local and general elections."

"The select committee, therefore, wants to hear people's views on all aspects of elections."

I For more details, visit the Council's website at www.sandwell.gov.uk and follow the link from Council and Democracy to Elections to Select Committee on Electoral Participation. Or email sue_phelps@sandwell.gov.uk with your views, or call 0121 569 3183.

**Flip
magazine
for 'Young
Greets
Green'**

young greets green

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2007

YOUNG PEOPLE COME TOGETHER

Activities for all communities



Have a go at our prize competition, open to all ages see page 23

GETTING SPORTY!

Youngsters across Greets Green are making 2007 the year to get fit and have loads of fun! If you've not got involved yet, what are you waiting for?



Having fun GETTING FIT

What's in your lunchbox?

Children at Newtown Primary School are taking healthier food to school after enjoying some sessions which looked at what they eat.

The Fit for Life project, which encourages people to eat healthily and take part in physical exercise, is now being taken into three primary schools including Newtown with the help of part-time project worker Julie Nichols, funded by Sandwell Children's Fund.

In the summer, the school held a Fit for Life health week, with a sports day, visitors from West Bromwich Albion 'Sport in the Community', a run in the park and a

penalty shoot out. There have also been healthy lunchbox sessions and cookery lessons for Years 5 and 6.

Julie said: "I'm also speaking to local shops about a food discovery day which will look at where exotic fruits come from and how to prepare them. We're trying to encourage parents a lot more this term. We'll be organising lots of things aimed at having fun, getting healthy and keeping fit."

Plus, a Birmingham University team will be taking pupils' measurements such as height, weight and waist and the results will be analysed to see if the project is making a difference over time.

Newtown Primary has also been involved in lots of other healthy activities recently including:

- **Walk to School day.** It was so successful that a 'Walk to School bus' is now planned so pupils can walk to school together in safety every day
- **Multi-sports.** Year 6 are enjoying sports twice a week including football, tennis, basketball and, from this term, trampolining
- **Monday 90-minute club.** Pupils take part in 45 minutes of physical activity and receive 45 minutes of help with homework
- **Triple S.** A group from Sandwell Leisure Trust run sports sessions

I Want to find out more about Fit for Life? Call Shaleen Meelu on 0121 612 1554.

SUCCESS FOR SCHOOL FOOTY PLAYERS

The newly formed sixth form at George Salter High School has scored a goal with its very own football team. The team has entered the Sandwell Sixth Form League and won its first two games against Sandwell Academy and Tividale High School.

It is run by George Salter's Jon Morris and Steve Moore. Steve recently earned his FA Level 2 Coaching Certificate as part of the Hat-Trick community football programme in Greets Green, which is jointly funded by the FA, Sandwell Council, West Bromwich Albion and Greets Green Partnership.

In addition, the school has a newly qualified Level 1 coach in PE teacher Simon Evans, who is also using his FA coaching skills to benefit youngsters in the school. He too gained his qualification via Hat-Trick.

The school has seen more football success with the Year 10 team getting to the final of the Midland area Playstation cup, beating teams from Wolverhampton and Wales to get to the London



national finals. Greets Green player Shaun Geddis won 'player of the tournament' on the day. The school also has girls' football teams and a busy extended schools sports activity programme.

I To find out how you can join in the footballing opportunities in Greets Green, call Rus Smith from Hat-Trick on 08700 662 840 (local rate) or 07904 588095.

YOUTH BROUGHT TOGETHER

Young people in Greets Green are being asked what activities they want run in their area in a project aimed at bringing communities together.

A lead youth worker, Parvinder Singh Chadha, has been taken on by the Sandwell Community Youth Network to co-ordinate the scheme, which is funded by The Big Lottery. The Sandwell Community Youth Network links together the Guru Nanak Community Centre, which is leading the project, with the Yemeni Community Association, the Confederation of Bangladeshi Organisations and the Jamia Community Association.

Guru Nanak Community Centre Manager, Baljit Singh, said: "Parvinder will be working with all four community centres and speaking to the young people to find out what their needs are and how we can support them."

"He will be promoting healthy sport for young people, as well as safety aspects, and learning about different cultures. The aim is to bring communities together and build community cohesion." Parvinder only started his new role in January but is already getting to know young people across Greets Green.

Find out what Parvinder has planned by calling him at the Guru Nanak Community Centre on 0121 525 6923.



COMPETITION CORNER

Simply send your entry by 16th March 2007 to: **Magazine Competition, FREEPOST GREETS GREEN PARTNERSHIP (no stamp required).** The first three correct entries out of the hat will each win a £10 voucher.

Congratulations

to **Mardiyah Begum, Cassondra Herman and Jacqueline Grant** who each won a £10 voucher from the December/January competition.

Find these winter weather words in the wordsearch grid to be in with a chance of winning one of this month's three £10 shopping vouchers. The words can appear up, down, across, diagonal or backwards.

- FOGGY**
- SLIPPY**
- RAIN**
- CLOUDY**
- SNOW**
- ICE**
- COLD**
- WET**
- CHILLY**
- DULL**

F	O	G	G	Y	Q	K	E	Q	C
A	O	F	V	U	J	K	L	Y	O
D	S	D	D	J	C	X	B	V	L
S	N	H	U	W	H	H	J	C	D
A	O	G	L	F	I	G	N	M	X
P	W	I	L	M	L	W	E	T	Z
I	E	L	T	Z	L	I	K	M	R
C	L	O	U	D	Y	O	D	U	A
E	R	R	W	N	S	B	T	P	I
C	S	L	I	P	P	Y	A	N	N

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel No. _____

This competition is open to all ages