

Hackney Independent

www.hackneyindependent.org

Summer 2005 Haggerston & Hoxton Edition

HAGGERSTON SCHOOL UNDER THREAT



Hackney Independent's Peter Sutton asks 'Why does the council want to turn Haggerston School into a City Academy?'

Haggerston School is a popular and successful part of our community. The top schools inspector stated it was among the most successful schools in the country. Haggerston came third in the borough's "league table".

So why does Hackney Council want to force Haggerston School to become a privately-sponsored mixed-sex City Academy?

The government plans to bring in just 200 city academies across the country. So why have Hackney Council and their private "Learning Trust" company that runs our schools, made it clear they want every secondary school in Hackney to become either a City Academy or foundation school? Most councils will not even have a City Academy, but they want us to have four!

Looking around the country it is clear that other councils have run successful schools into the ground so they can sell them off as City Academies. Turning Haggerston into a mixed school is one way of doing this. It looks like it's a two-part plan - first change a popular girls' school to a mixed school, then offer extra funding if it goes over to being a City Academy. Whatever the pros and cons of mixed schools, we should oppose this change until the Council guarantee us that they will not make Haggerston a City Academy.

We know we are not alone thinking this. While the Council and the Learning Trust cook up their plans for Haggerston School, Hackney Independent went out to ask people what they thought. In a survey carried out across Fellows Court in June and July, we found 85% of people opposed the Council's plans.

Why are our Labour council trying to force this change to Haggerston School on us? It is because they are obsessed with privatising everything and getting rid of their responsibilities for everything from running swimming pools to cleaning our estates. They've already privatised our estate managers, now they want to shift the whole of council housing to an ALMO company. They've got rid of the running of our schools to the private Learning Trust, now they want rid of as many schools as they can to City Academies. Privatising and transferring responsibility from the council is their one and only answer to everything.

Our children are being used as guinea pigs in the biggest change in education since they brought in comprehensives. This time it is not about a fair deal for all our kids, it is about privatising our schools. We support the Haggerston School parents, pupils and staff and stand alongside them and Shoreditch tenants and residents in opposing the council's plans. As the girls' banner in our photo says: "Hands off Haggerston"!



4 Key Facts About City Academies

1. The ten person governing body will have seven people put in by the private sponsor and just one elected parent.

2. The government will put in over £25 million into each City academy. The private sponsor puts in £2 million. For this they get to own the entire school buildings and site. This is the sale of public land cheap to private companies. How much is the Haggerston site worth these days? Swiss Bankers UBS are taking control of the old Laburnum School site for the same knock-down £2 million.

3. The Unity City Academy in Middlesborough was put on special measures by OFSTED in May. "Leadership, financial management, standards of teaching and learning, attendance, punctuality and behaviour were all found to be sub-standard." Five out of 11 academies opened nationally in 2004 have not improved GCSE performance. For a policy designed to turn around "failing" schools, it has not been successful everywhere.

4. King's Academy, also in Middlesborough, is owned by car dealer Peter Vardy. He is a fundamentalist Christian and is introducing his version of Christianity into lessons. City Academy owners are allowed to influence what is taught to our kids.

Are these the kind of people we want controlling the education of our children? Should we allow the Council to hand over our schools to religious extremists or Swiss bankers? Or should we fight for democratic control of our schools, with real input from parents and teachers into how our children are educated, and the school itself owned and run by local people?

To get a copy of the "Hands off Haggerston" fact sheet, go to our website at www.hackneyindependent.org or call 0207 684 1743 and leave a message.

OLYMPICS: CAN WE WIN?

There's a lot of excitement that the Olympics are coming to Hackney and East London in just seven years time.

What we have to do now is make sure that local communities get what they deserve out of the Olympics - that we don't end up the losers while big business takes the gold medal. This should start with the re-opening of Haggerston Pool. We need to get London Fields Lido open and get the outdoor games court funded in the Blue Hut youth club.

We must not see any of Hackney Marshes lost to Olympic developers. This includes "temporary use", which we all know means that we'll never get it back. We must not let private developers use the Olympics for a land grab. If private housing is to be built there, then why not council housing as well? Small businesses should not be pushed out. And the site should be kept public when the Olympics are over.

We should get guarantees that local people are going to get jobs and training during the building. We are going to face the disruption, so East Londoners should see some of the benefits. And we should not see any increase in our council tax to pay for the Olympics. The stock markets soared on the day when we won the bid, as big business knew how much money they could make. They plan to cash in, so why should they not pay up?

Hackney Independent's Carl Taylor has called for Shoreditch to get proper funding for our public sports facilities. He says, "I may not do much sport myself beyond playing pool in the pub, but if we are to get the best out of the Olympics we need to see our young people with access to the best sports facilities and coaching. New Labour promotes private gyms for the few, while closing our sports centres. We need to see decent public leisure facilities for everyone in East London."

INDEPENDENT KIDS' CINEMA

Presents



Shark Tale

Film + Drink + Crisps 50p

Wednesday 10th August

Two Showings:

HAGGERSTON

10.30am

Goldsmiths Community Centre
Goldsmiths Row E2

HOXTON

3pm

Geffrye Estate Community Centre
Falkirk St NI

Closures on Broadway Market

Recent issues of Hackney Independent have looked at the pricey Farmers Market run on Broadway Market on Saturdays and its exclusion of local residents. It's time we had a look at the shops there as well. Over the last few years many of the ordinary shops have been closing and have been quickly replaced by trendy boutiques and estate agents, and the Cat and Mutton is now a "gastropub." In the last few months two long term traders have both been forced out due to increasing rents and pressure from a private landlord. Kenny's newsagent was the first to go. Now we have lost Francesca's Cafe as its owner Tony, has been evicted. Tony was someone who knew everyone in the area, and who worked extremely hard to survive. Hackney council like to keep on telling us what a success Broadway Market is and even have the cheek to use a picture of Tony on their 'Invest in Hackney' website! But it is clear that their 'investors' are destroying the local area as they rush to gentrify the market.



Tony's Cafe: Closed for business

Hoxton Election Result

After a hard-fought campaign the Labour Party won the Hoxton by-election on May 5. Hackney Independent's Tony Butler picked up a respectable 310 votes. Coming on the same day as the General Election, it was hard to compete on a local level when both the Sun and the Mirror had front-page splashes calling for a Labour vote! Labour activists disappeared as soon as the election was over, as usual. However, as we promised on the doorstep, Hackney Independent and Tony Butler will not be going away. The campaigning continues, election or not, with the Blue Hut youth club being the first major campaign. Tony Butler and Hackney Independent would like to thank everyone who supported him.

We are not Alone!

Hackney Independent helped organise a "Community Action Gathering" in Bethnal Green in June. It was attended by more than 50 people from around the country who are involved in community politics. People came from as far as Glasgow, Lancashire and Bristol. Most of these areas are facing the same sort of problems as us - Labour councils running down council housing, building private flats and closing down community facilities. It was a successful event, which we hope to repeat, and we will stay in touch with other working class community activists around the country.



Hackney Independent members ran a stall at the recent Laburnum Street Party (see Carl Taylor's column)



The View from Hoxton

by Tony Butler

Council tenants in Hoxton pay up to £300 million in rent every year. Add leaseholder service charges and council tax and the council get quite a tidy little sum.

But Hackney Council only want to spend £17 million in Hoxton on bringing our homes up to the government's 'Decent Homes Standard.' Where has the rest of the money gone? If the Stoke Newington Clissold Pool fiasco is an example of how they spend money, then I fear for the real answer.

What we do know is that Labour have said they will make the money up by selling council land - land that once sold can never be publicly used again for the people of Hackney. This means more private development at the expense of

what we actually need - things like schools, health, youth and senior citizen provision and leisure provision.

Rather than invest in youth facilities, they prefer to turn kids into criminals by dishing out ASBO's. This can't just be about saving money - leaving it to the courts and jails to solve our problems is far from cheap.

It is about time we stood up for our youth by ensuring they have safe and worthwhile places to meet, run by trained and qualified youth workers. Labour promised to be tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime. Eight years of talking "tough on crime" and we are no better off. We have seen little of Labour being tough on the causes.

Want me to look into any problem in the Hoxton area? Contact me at tonybutler@hackneyindependent.org or on 07950 594036.



The View from Haggerston

by Carl Taylor

The Laburnum Street Party on July 3rd was a big success. Activities included music and dance, a bouncy castle, clowns for kids and the Boat Club ran canal trips.

Our Independent Kids Cinema contributed to the Street Cinema event, showing Tasmania cartoons. We also had a Hackney Independent stall and provided the majority of stewards for the day. The street party started last year as part of the campaign to re-open the Haggerston Pool.

Although the event has a lot of support locally Hackney Council seemed to be doing its best to sabotage it. The official council newspaper Hackney Today was distributed a week before the event with a front page piece stating that

the Street Party would take place on the Saturday rather than the Sunday. The council also removed any mention of the pool campaign and portrayed the event as just "a good day out" with no political content.

I thought this showed the contrast between what we are trying to do and Hackney Council. Hackney Independent got stuck in to support this both as a community event and because we want our pool re-opened. The Council, on the other hand, seemed to do their best to undermine it. Its no wonder the Council were ashamed to mention the Pool given that when they shut it in 2000 they said it would re-open in a few months.

If you want to get in touch with me about any issues in the Haggerston area you can call me on 020 7684 1743.

Problems with
Repairs, Benefits
or Debts?

**Hackney Independent
Advice Surgery**

**Wednesday 10th August
6.00-7.00pm
Geffrye Estate Community Centre
Falkirk St N1**

We are told that things are getting better by papers like 'Hackney Today' and 'In Shoreditch'.

THEY SAY the council is now improving. **THEY SAY** millions of pounds are being spent on this area. **THEY SAY** the Council is empowering the community and you should get involved.

WE SAY nothing has changed for the better. The council is as badly run as ever. They do what they want and never improve our lives. Any new money is just for the short term to replace what the Council used to pay for directly. They only look out for the interests of middle class settlers - getting private flats built and supporting their new bars and restaurants.

Hackney Independent wants to drive the Labour Party out of Haggerston and Hoxton - they don't represent working class interests. We want to block the development of private flats. We want to defend what we have got from being cut back or sold off. We are trying to build an organisation that can take on and beat Labour in elections, play a part in community campaigns and try to do practical things like advice sessions and run kids' films shows. You can help.

To get in touch phone Carl Taylor on 020 7684 1743, write to us at Hackney Independent, PO Box 47000, London E8 4WW, or email us at info@hackneyindependent.org.