



Beverley Smith, who has lived in the area since 1962, and right Andrew Sanalidro



Fr Damian Mason and Fr Andrew Meldrum



Hampstead & Highgate MP Tulip Siddiq

by DAN CARRIER

FROM scaling a climbing wall to joining a cookery school, a revamped community centre is looking to meet its ambitious tagline: *Something special for everyone.*

Nobody could have left the official launch of the new Highgate Newtown Community Partnership headquarters in Bertram Street on Friday not feeling impressed by the aims of its manager and supporters – and the “five star” facilities which have been created.

The new facility includes a sports hall, kitchens, an affordable hair salon, a pottery space, a wellness area, classrooms and a tasty café too.

Guests were told how it aims to cater for people of all ages and backgrounds, as they sat down to listen to choirs from Channing School and La Sainte Union sing at the opening ceremony.

They included Hampstead and Highgate MP Tulip Siddiq and Dame Margaret Hodge, whose brother-in-law Stephen Hodge had been a key player in the fundraising.

The build has taken six years and did not come without complaints from neighbours about

Something special!

After six years of determination, visitors are left marvelling at ‘reborn’ community centre at official opening – and there’s no leaking roof!



Above: Pupils from La Sainte Union

Right: Dame Margaret Hodge, centre, with guests at the opening ceremony



Above: Highgate ward councillor Anna Wright
Below: Andrew Sanalidro and Robert Aitken, chair of HNCP



construction dust and noise. But now its complete, manager Andrew Sanalidro said everybody should feel they can get involved.

He told the *New Journal*: “What struck me as I looked around the hall was seeing so many people who made a difference – not just now, but in founding the centre all those years ago. I looked at how the residents nearby raised £120,000 of their own money to make this come true.

“The residents around here roll their sleeves up when they need to. What people said as they came in was how the centre was of real quality.”

The centre replaced a former base for the Territorial Army unit which had been the old home of the Highgate Newtown Community Centre, set up in the 1970s. But the leaking roof was just one problem in recent times which made the council and the centre’s trustees dream up this fresh start.

HNCP treasurer Stephen Hodge said: “Money has come from larger donors and hundreds of individuals – funds from Camden Council, the Mercers Company, the National Lottery, Channing School, Lady Gould’s Trust and the City Bridge Trust, St Anne’s Church have all helped.”

Robert Aitken, chair of trustees, triggered two huge rounds of applause for Mr Sanalidro, as he said: “His persistence, ambition, imagination and through to producing this has been five star for the community centre and the community here that deserves it.”

Ms Siddiq said: “This centre embodies the spirit of Camden, embodies the multicultural society we have in our community that I am so proud to represent.

“The centre is the jewel in the crown of the neighbourhood and you can see the dedication, time and energy that has gone into making it a success.”

Ward councillor Anna Wright added: “The spirit is reborn in this amazing place, built to the highest spec. It is sustainable and fit for the future – and has a roof that does not leak.”

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Staff of Terroni of Highgate in the cafe at the Community Centre