

HAVERING **FABIAN** SOCIETY

HAVERING FABIAN

Volume 2 Edition 63 January 2026

Havering Fabian Society covering Mike Davis obituary, David Marshall and David Ainsworth retiring as Secretary and Press Officer, Councillor Julia Williams on why we pay Council Tax. House of Commons visit. Review of “End” at the National Theatre. Book review

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VOLUME 2 EDITION 63 January 2026

Introduction

Welcome to the new edition of the Havering Fabian Newsletter.

The difficult domestic agenda continues, and locally, Havering Council struggles to achieve a balanced budget.

We now have 1,335 followers on X (previously twitter). This number is slowly going down as people leave the site. Keep up to date at our X site **@haveringfabians** for the latest news.

Some of our followers have left or moved to Bluesky. **So, we have a new Bluesky account @haveringfabians.bsky.social** We have 145 followers already, including some who were not following us before. We have 306 followers on LinkedIn and 714 friends on Facebook.

We have a blog now as well as our website <https://haveringfabians.org/posts/> You will need to follow us to get updates. **We have recently added an Instagram account so follow us on there as well!** We have 124 followers.

We are affiliated to the four local Labour Parties and will do all we can to support their campaigns. As opinions are the lifeblood of politics, we welcome a reply to any of the articles. The Fabian Society exists to promote political debate, both within and outside the Labour Party. Progressive politics extends beyond the Labour Party and contributions

from the Labour Movement are welcome. Our website address is <http://haveringfabians.org>

As you are no doubt aware, GDPR means we need to keep our mailing list up to date. If you are not on our mailing list (we use Mailchimp – **please check your spam folders!**) contact us via the website or email and we will add you in.

Mike Davis Obituary

Written by Rosina and Chris Purnell.

Former Havering Labour councillor Mike Davis passed away on 2nd October.

Mike was a true working-class hero. He was a plumber by trade, a forward-thinking local politician and also a poet.

He served on Havering council from 1986 till 1998. Representing the Harold Hill area, he was an outstanding Chair of the Housing Committee. He put the tenants' needs first in decision making, which meant the Housing Department became proactive instead of reactive when dealing with repairs and maintenance. For example, he approached the perennial problem of damp in council flats caused by poor construction by visiting a scheme in Manchester and instructing the Housing Department to implement their solution immediately on his return.

Mike and three other councillors left the Labour administration in 1996 to set up a Socialist group on the council. They did not think that Labour principles were being carried out. He went with others from Havering on the 2003 march against the Iraq war.

After leaving the council, he set up a Tenants' Management Organisation called PETRA at Parkview Flats in Hornchurch, together with his wife, Jan. The TMO won national awards for its phenomenal reach into the needs of its community. He inspired Professor Anne Power of the

London School of Economics to involve herself and her staff with the TMO to improve energy efficiency over several years.

Mike was a keen environmentalist who magically obtained funding for replacements for rotting metal windows and had the then newly established LED lighting installed in all three PETRA tower blocks.

An effective trade union officer, Mike could, and did, prevent a strike with a well targeted phone call. His quiet but firm manner achieved results.

While in retirement, Mike established himself as a much-loved writer on the Odeboyz blog. His hair-raising tales of plumbing escapades in east London during the 1960s and 70s delighted his faithful following of readers. Mike also wrote poetry and produced an anthology of his own best work.

As a committed Socialist, he tore into injustice, especially for those he considered to be unfairly treated. He and Jan made themselves available to tenants in need of help in the flats both day and night.

Mike was a champion for ordinary working people and was liked and respected by tenants, council officers, and his political colleagues.

He kept to his principles and was a genuine ‘man of the people.’

Councillor Pat Brown made a speech at Full Council, as well as covering the above she read one of Mike’s poems, see below.

THE TOWN HALL MOUSE

‘Well, I declare,’ said the mayor with a stare.
‘There’s a mouse just sitting right there, on my chair.’
The Deputy Mayor looked over and said,
‘My goodness you’re right and it’s made it his bed.’

The Mace Bearer boomed, ‘What devilish cheek,
Does the rodent not know it’s the Mayor’s chair, that seat?’
The Chief Whip was summoned and shown the small mouse
Who sat up and squeaked, ‘I do like this house.’

But the Mayor and the officers, the councillors too
All demanded the Chief Whip should know what to do.
The Mayor and the Chief Whip who were ‘left’ so to speak
Would not see the squatter put out on the street.

With corridor whispers and a nudge here and there
The Council would show this mouse how they care.

The Mayor stood beside where he once would have chaired
And banged down his gavel, ‘This motion declares
From now on a rodent with no assets or home
Can come to this Council for a starter home loan.’

So, a shoe box was found, with some string and some wax
But the mouse was then charged the full Council Tax.

Secretary and Press Officers both standing down at the Annual General Meeting – retirements!

The Society's AGM in February will see two long standing officers stand down.

David Marshall

Secretary David Marshall announced he would not stay in post in October, giving the Society time to seek a replacement. David has held the post for over 20 years, taking over from Graham Carr.

David has been superb at arranging meetings and speakers. We have never been to a double-booked venue, speakers have always arrived at the right place, and almost always at the right time. The A13 has a lot to answer for, but David is not in control of that.

David also gave an excellent talk on his visit to the Falklands, a meeting which Andrew Rosindell offered to attend. His offer was politely declined. David will, subject to the AGM, remain on the Executive Committee.

David Ainsworth

David Ainsworth has been the Society's Press Officer for as long as anyone can remember, which probably means since the Society was formed. He has announced his intention to stand down ahead of the AGM.

He has a phenomenal memory of previous events and speakers. We drew heavily on this during the run up to the 50th anniversary, as he was able to recall speakers going back to the 1970s. He has contributed and written some of the obituaries for our newsletter. He was one of the pro Brexit speakers at one of our debates during the Referendum campaign and has suggested several excellent speakers.

As press officer, he has outlasted almost all the local papers, with the Romford Recorder the last one remaining. The growth of social media has not been good for the local press. David is also Press Officer for Havering Sports Council.

We thank both Davids for their work over many years on the Society's behalf and hope to see them at future meetings.

Their replacements will take over from the AGM, and anyone wishing to stand please get in touch.

Why do we pay Council Tax – Councillor Julia Williams writes.



Figure 1 Julia Williams

One of the most common things said to councillors is “Why are we paying Council Tax and getting nothing for it?”

It’s a fair question, and most people will naturally assume that their council tax is mostly spent on bins and road sweeping, which are the most visible services the council offers.

But actually, most of the council’s money, including a large part of your council tax, goes on something called Adult Social Care. This is a statutory duty, which means councils are legally required to fund and provide it.

So, what does that mean?

Adult social care is not NHS care. It is care run and funded by local councils. It includes:

- Care homes and nursing homes
- Home carers visiting people 2-4 times a day
- Support for adults with learning disabilities
- Support for adults with physical disabilities
- Support for people with dementia and Alzheimer's Disease
- Day centres, supported living and respite care
- Safeguarding vulnerable adults

Let's give you an example of what I mean. My friend Jean had to admit her mother Kathy into a nursing home 4 years ago. Kathy is only 72 but has suffered several strokes and is showing signs of dementia. She couldn't look after herself at home any more. Jean sold Kathy's house and is spending the money it raised on the nursing home fees. This particular nursing home is lovely, but not luxurious. The staff are brilliant and Kathy is perfectly happy there. It costs just under £6,000 a month.

Obviously, if Kathy had been a council tenant, the council would have been responsible to pay these fees from the outset, because there would have been no house to sell.

Jean tells me that the money from the house will run out in the middle of 2026. At that point, Jean will have to ask the council to fund the nursing home. In practice, the council cannot simply refuse. They could ask Kathy to move to a cheaper home, but to be honest she's happy, and the costs are very similar everywhere.

So, what does that mean for your Council Tax? Who pays for care homes like the one Kathy lives in?

- Jean will pay for it from the money raised by the sale of Kathy's house. While someone has assets (like a house or flat), they usually have to pay for themselves, until the money runs out.
- Care homes commonly cost £4,000 to £7,000 a month and rising every year.
- When Kathy's money runs out, the council will step in.
- Kathy will still contribute:
 - Her state pension
 - a small personal allowance if she can, or any relevant benefits she can get.
- The rest of the fees are paid by the council

That council funding comes primarily from your Council Tax and some government grants, with council tax being a major part of the local contribution.

But I thought the NHS paid for this sort of thing?

- Usually no, that's not what happens. The NHS only pays in very specific cases under a scheme called 'NHS Continuing Healthcare.'
- Dementia alone often does not qualify for NHS funding.
- This is why families are often shocked when they discover the NHS isn't paying.

But what about carers visiting people at home? Isn't that NHS?

- It's true that people often pay a contribution to their carers, but the true cost of those visits is much higher.
- The council pays the difference.
- That funding again comes from council tax and central government support

This is why around £7 out of every £10 the council spends every year goes on Adult Social Care and children's services. It's about looking after our parents, grandparents, neighbours and let's be honest, maybe us too one day.

Of course, bins, litter collection and street cleaning matter, and councils respond to those issues. But most council tax is quietly spent on care you may never see, until one day you or someone you love needs it. So, when we ask, "Why am I paying Council Tax and seeing nothing for it?" hopefully it's comforting to know that we are in actual fact contributing our bit to the safety net that holds our community together 'from the cradle to the grave'.

(It's also worth mentioning that Barking & Dagenham's adult social care is independently recognised as being Outstanding by the Care Quality Commission. That's a huge credit to the dedication and professionalism of our adult social care officers, and to the leadership of Cllr Maureen Worby in this area.)

Councillor Julia Williams is Labour Councillor for Village Ward of Barking and Dagenham Council

House of Commons visit.

We were pleased to accept the invitation from Margaret Mullane to visit the House of Commons in October,

Margaret arranged for a discussion on Housing. Ken Jones, who works in Margaret's office and was Director of Housing for Barking and Dagenham, led the discussion.

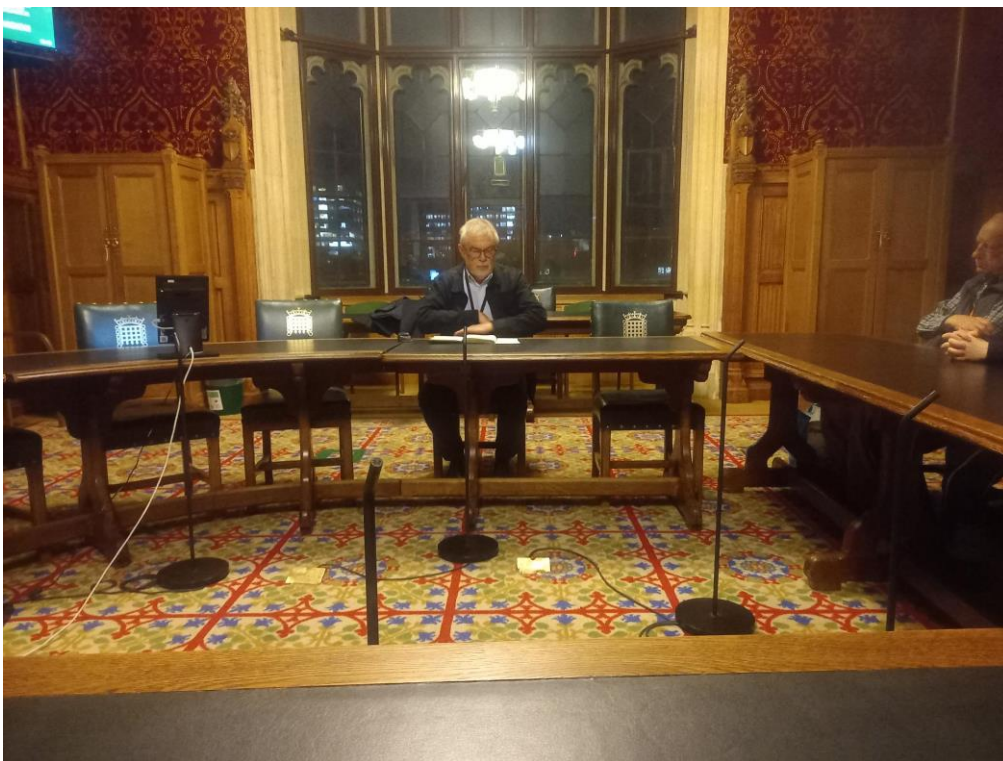


Figure 2 Ken Jones at the House of Commons

Margaret had to leave occasionally to vote, and we were also joined by former Hornchurch and Leyton MP John Cryer (now a Lord), who also had to vote, so it was a fast-moving evening with a range of different issues discussed.

Ken and Margaret had been working on three strands of Housing policy.

1. A step change in Council Housing
2. Leaseholder issues
3. Place making as well as new homes.



Figure 3 Lord John Cryer, Ian Rusha, Margaret Mullane MP, and Councillor Keith Darvill

Council Housing.

There is a crisis in Britain with 135 thousand families in temporary accommodation, which includes 172 thousand children. Families are often housed in poor quality private sector homes.

This also is also driving a budgetary crisis across London and is one of the main factors in Havering Council's financial crisis. The Local Housing Allowance¹ has been frozen since 2011 which has added to the issue.

Private rents have increased and continue to do so, giving Councils an ever-increasing financial problem.

The Comprehensive Spending Review had allocated £39 billion for new housing, doubling the subsidy to Councils and Housing associations for

¹ Local Housing Allowance (LHA) – Government based estimate of housing cost used to allocate subsidy

affordable housing (see Newsletter 53 for Margaret's analysis of unaffordable affordable housing).

Housing Associations are not as accountable as Councils; none the less local Councillors are dealing with substantial case work. The sector is struggling to cope with limited resources.

Leasehold issues

There are five million leaseholders in England. Their rights are limited, but locally, the casework generated is staggering. There is a lack of transparency around service charges and in particular, capital work.

The Conservatives were going to legislate but failed to do so until near the end of their term and botched the legislation. Labour has unpicked this and will legislate further on Freehold and Commonhold issues, with all new developments being on a commonhold basis.

New legislation will aim to make lease extensions cheaper and enhance the right to manage.

The recent fire at Spectrum House in Chadwell Heath has shown how the interest of leaseholders is often disregarded. The owners will not release building details, and this highlights the need to put disclosure requirements into legislation. Lawyers are involved, which increases costs and in the short term does not benefit the residents.

Place Making

Place making is essential to build a sense of community. Homes alone are not enough to achieve this, so schools, medical facilities and community centres are needed as an integral part of new developments.

The new Beam Park development has plenty of housing but a lack of infrastructure. People need health facilities, schools etc. if they are going to remain in an area. The proposed Beam Park station was a major attraction to both the developer and potential residents. The GLA have put up funds and Havering Council are committed to this but in 2021 the Government blocked the station with 1,500 homes built and occupied.

Government Ministers Matthew Pennycook and Lord Hendy have been involved, and we hope for good news in 2026.

Question and Answer

The question-and-answer session threw up interesting points.

The fires in Wennington and Dagenham had seen a loss of homes and a campaign ensured additional S106 contributions² would not be required as part of the rebuild. With climate change such events may become more frequent.

In the mid 1970's 94 per cent of government spending on housing was on bricks and mortar, 6 per cent on Housing benefit. By 2023 this had reversed. That is an awful lot of money going to landlords that could be used for new homes. Labour's challenge is to reverse this.

Labour have announced at conference three new town developments with more to follow.

Employment is also important. While the decision to relocate City of London markets outside Barking and Dagenham was disappointing, there are other options to be explored.

The political situation was changing rapidly. In 1956, 80% of the electorate did not change the Party they voted for, this is now 40%. All political parties need to work hard to attract voters.

John Cryer

John Cryer spoke briefly about his new role in the House of Lords. He was appointed as a Whip and was working on the Reform of the Lords. Labour has concentrated on the removal of hereditary Peers to avoid amendments that sink the proposals. More legislation will follow.

One of the Lords he deals with as a whip is a 100-year-old former World War Two Lancaster pilot, who has been away looking after his wife, and will return shortly to increase the Labour Lords' numbers.

John found the Starmer government different to the early Blair government, where contacts were more stable, which helped continuity.

An interesting and informative evening, with both Commons and Lords votes while the meeting progressed.

² Section 106 Agreements sets out the contributions to infrastructure required from developers as part of the Planning Process.

End – the third part of the David Eldridge trilogy.

The third part of the David Eldridge trilogy has just ended at the National Theatre. The three parts, Beginning, Middle and. End , all feature just two actors, and focus on their relationship.

David spoke to us in 2024, and hinted End was likely to be performed in 2025. His adaptation of “The spy who came in from the cold” has just ended in the West End and is now touring.

Starring Clive Owen (Alfie) and Saskia Reeves (Julie), End deals with the final stages of their relationship. Alfie has terminal cancer and has around three months left, so the relationship has a looming if unplanned ending.

The play dwells on various loose ends, including lingering resentment about a previous affair, concern for their daughter, and how Julie will cope.

The play is set between two major events of 2016, West Ham leaving Upton Park (Alfie attended with his daughter) and the EU referendum. A device that enables a dig at David Cameron, and the author to mention West Ham, a theme throughout the trilogy.

There are several Havering references. Collier Row, Boxall Road, and a long-forgotten night club opposite Hornchurch bus garage receive a name-check.

The couple argue and have sex for what is they assume for the final time. It is not an erotic scene, more an expression of time running out.

Some issues are resolved, and not in a sad way. Others cannot be, as life goes on.

A fitting end to the trilogy. While not an autobiographical work there is a lot of David Eldridge in the play. Referencing West Ham³ and Havering

³ At our meeting he addressed in 2024, David mentioned the football references were altered when the previous plays were performed in Manchester

venues reflect his upbringing. This is a device to link the play to a working-class background rather than the middle class setting of many modern plays.

A very enjoyable evening even allowing for the subject matter. The play is not currently due for a West End transfer, but if this happens, it is well worth seeing,

DB

Same Storm Different Boats – Covid, Community and how we come together - Jason Strelitz

This is our first book review, and if you want to write another, please do.

Jason Strelitz was the Director of Public Health in Newham during Covid. His book provides a history of the pandemic as it evolves. Jason was new in post and suddenly confronted with the biggest Public Health crisis in a century. The potential to be overwhelmed was substantial and Jason details of how the government approached the pandemic was not always consistent.

Central government engagement was initially patchy, then thinking on its feet to deal with the emerging crisis. The book sets these in sequence, and the issues that faced Newham, which had a mix of concentrated housing (flats, tower blocks and Houses of multiple occupation) and multi-generational families, where a mix of children and grandparents, (the group most likely to have spreaders and the most vulnerable age group) meant unique issues to deal with. Government responses often failed to recognize that millions live like this across the country. For example, not everyone had access to a garden or green space.

Jason sets out Newham's response. He was the Officer leading on Public Health locally and coordinating the Council and local volunteers and set out the issues at each stage.

Jason provides a unique insight into what will hopefully be an experience we collectively will not have to face again. The lessons learned are for generations yet to be born, so it is important to embed in future planning.

The book is a reminder of a difficult period and provides a reminder of what happened when and the consequences. He does not touch on the politics, which will fall to the Public Inquiries currently underway.

DB

WhatsApp group

We are setting up a WhatsApp group as another form of communication, if you are viewing this on your phone, the link below should work.

<https://chat.whatsapp.com/I5TfwGaK1KuEcQnwluX1pN>

Otherwise, to be included, send an email with your phone number to haveringfabians@outlook.com

We will use this for reminders of meetings, links to national Fabian Society events etc and not (yet) for discussion purposes. So, you will receive one or two notifications a week at most.

If you think we should have a discussion group, let me know and we will create one - so far, a limited response on this !

Future Meetings

AGM 6th February 2026

Our AGM will be held at Fairkytes at 7.30pm, followed by a guest speaker.

Basildon Council Leader Gavin Callaghan. Essex is an area where Local Government Reform is being introduced which will create 4 or 5 Councils to replace the existing District and unitary Councils. Gavin will be able to

update us on the latest position.

If you want to stand for the Executive Committee, let David Marshall know national Fabian rules require that you be a national member to be eligible. Further details in our next mail out.

Dawn Butler MP Thursday 12th February 7.30pm
Roope Hall Upminster 29 Station Road
Upminster RM14 2SJ

Dawn Butler MP will be our speaker on 12th February, Dawn was re-elected in 2024 as MP for Brent East. She has had two terms in Parliament and has expressed an interest in standing for Mayor of London should Sadiq Khan stand down.



Wikipedia gives the following biographical details.

First term (2005–2010)

Following the retirement of Paul Boateng to become British High Commissioner to South Africa, she was selected as the Labour candidate

in Brent South and retained the seat for her party at the 2005 general election with a majority of 11,326. She was the third black woman to become a British MP after Diane Abbott and Oona King.

Interest in youth services continued as one of her main interests in parliament. On 24 October 2006, she was appointed chair of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Youth Affairs, and she is an honorary vice president of the British Youth Council. After Gordon Brown became prime minister in June 2007, Butler was made one of the Labour Party's six vice chairs, with particular responsibility for youth issues.

Second term (2015–present)

In 2013, Dawn Butler was selected as the Labour candidate for Brent Central at the general election in 2015. Prior to the election, Sarah Teather had announced she would stand down from parliament, so she did not contest the seat. Dawn was returned to parliament with a majority of more than 19,000 votes.

In the 2024 United Kingdom general election she contested the newly formed constituency of Brent East. In the election she was re-elected with a reduced majority. Following the election Dawn was a candidate to be chair of the Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee.

Dawn was guest speaker at a recent Dagenham and Rainham fundraiser and author of a book "A Purposeful Life: What I've Learned About Breaking Barriers and Inspiring Change".

The Committee are working on the programme for the rest of the year. We hope to have a panel with local Labour candidates ahead of the Council Elections. With elections in May, there will be no April meeting. So, our next edition will include the programme for the rest of 2026. Our regular emails will keep you informed as details are finalised.

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Links

Blog	http://haveringfabians.wordpress.com/
Website	https://haveringfabians.org/
X	https://twitter.com/HaveringFabians
Facebook	https://www.facebook.com/havering.fabians
LinkedIn	https://uk.linkedin.com/in/havering-fabians
Bluesky	@haveringfabians.bsky.social
Instagram	haveringfabians

Online payment

Details are included in the regular Havering Fabians email. Contact us for further details if you are not on the current mailing list. Membership is £6 waged, £12 unwaged.

National membership is also available via the link below.

[Join | Fabian Society](#)

National membership includes a regular quarterly magazine; regular email updates and invites to conferences. There are theme-based groups that develop policy in areas such as housing, the economy and environmental issues.

Politics in Havering

You may already be aware of the excellent Politics in Havering Blog, which we repost via our twitter feed. This gives a regular update on politics within the borough – a link is below, please follow them (and our blog!) for regular updates!

<https://havering.blog/>

We value your input!

The Society invites speakers on a range of subjects; if you would like us to invite speakers on a particular subject let us know and we will try to oblige. The Society has a policy of rotating meetings around the borough; **if you need or can offer a lift or if you know of any suitable venues** we could use, contact David Baldock.

Local Fabian Society Contacts

Chair Councillor Keith Darvill	Secretary David Marshall	Contact David Marshall
Membership Secretary Councillor Harriet Spoor		31 Vicarage Road Hornchurch RM12 4AS 01708 441189 david.c.marshall@talk21.com
Vice Chair Sanchia Alasia		
Treasurer Dave Baldock		
Committee Members Councillor Jane Keane Councillor Andrew Achilleos Cecile Duerinckx Keith Taffs		

Future Editions

The Fabian Society exists to promote progressive ideas from within and outside of the Labour movement. As such we are happy to publish articles in keeping with this broad ethos but reserve the right not to include all or part of any material which falls outside of this parameter. Our next edition will be in **April 2026**. – contributions welcome. This will include a preview of the Council elections.

Hasving Fabian Society is affiliated to.

- National Fabian Society
- Dagenham and Rainham Labour Party
- Romford Labour Party
- Upminster and Hornchurch Labour Party
- Barking Labour Party

Havering Fabian Membership

To join Havering Fabian Society, please complete the following and send to David Marshall before he retires. You can also join the Society nationally; David has more details. You do not have to be a member of the Labour Party to join Havering Fabians, but you will need to be a Labour Party member to take part in Labour Party selections and elections.



Havering Fabian Society

Founded in 1974, the Society promotes progressive political thought in Havering and beyond. Membership of the Society is not necessary to attend meetings, and neither is membership of the Labour Party.

However, to participate in nominations to the Local Labour Parties or in selection conferences, membership of both is required. The Society meets regularly throughout the year, apart from the summer and during election campaigns. Local Membership is currently £12 waged, £6 unwaged.

If we wish to join Havering Fabians

Name

Address

.....

.....

postcode.....

E-mail.....

Phone number

Waged (£12) unwaged £6.....