

# Tea grower helps council's Fairtrade bid

TEA and coffee are two staples of everyday life that most of us take for granted but for the communities that produce them, they are a vital part of their economy.

Many of these communities in the developing world are vulnerable to exploitation, but with the advent of Fairtrade products, more and more are getting fair deals and revitalising their towns and villages.

Barking and Dagenham is bidding to become the sixth London borough to achieve Fairtrade status.

As part of that bid, and to launch Fairtrade fortnight, councillors and officials were visited by a Ugandan tea producer who has seen the real benefits of the scheme.

Silver Kasoso-Atwoki joined councillors and senior officers at a coffee morning to explain how the money generated by these products has paid for new roads, school buildings and health centres.

He said: "Thanks to Fairtrade we have changed our agricultural techniques and improved the quality and quantity of our teas.

"It is contributing towards the social improvement of our community and providing a better future for our youngsters."

The council's catering services, which provides foods to the borough's schools, is using Fairtrade tea, coffee and sugar.

But to secure the additional status the council must



● **FAIR DEAL:** Barking and Dagenham Council chief executive Rob Whiteman, Silver Kasoso-Atwoki of Mabale Growers Tea Factory Ltd, Uganda, Bernhard Krieger of the Fairtrade Foundation, the Mayor, Cllr Marie West and Cllr Milton McKenzie

serve Fairtrade products at all meetings, offices and in its canteens, ensure that Fairtrade products are used by at least 10 businesses and have a range of products on sale in the area's shops.

Fairtrade fortnight ends on Sunday but various groups across the borough are doing their bit.

Jo Richardson Community School students use food and drink produced by the initiative and have taken advantage of another unique product.

Geography teacher Kerrie Brinkley said: "We're about to have a football tournament using Fairtrade footballs. We've been incorporating it into our curriculum and it's an issue the students feel passionate about."