

Panel should be allowed to choose own chairman

A Hornsey Town Hall Advisory Panel has been established to advise on the future of a building with truly breathtaking Art Deco interiors and detailing and whose public spaces the council has deliberately allowed to fall into disrepair.

We have been asked to nominate a representative. We are more than willing to put our historical expertise at the disposal of the committee, but our 500 members will require that the latter be regarded by the local community as both credible and independent.

We do not regard our role as simply rubber-stamping and lending legitimacy to a pre-ordained council policy to sell the leasehold of the site to the control of a commercial developer, rather than the option – which English Heritage prefers but which the council has in the past preferred to ignore, notably in the case of the Alexandra Palace – of transferring custody of an historic building to a genuinely independent, sustainable, self-financing charitable trust whose sole objects are to let the building serve the local community.

Several speakers at the meeting chaired by Barbara Roche MP, expressed dissatisfaction and anger when the composition of



Cllr Judy Bax

the panel was displayed. The chair was to be a majority group councillor. Many of the councillors on the committee just happened to be associates from "Friends of the Town Hall" (we were never invited to any meetings, if there were any) who have publicly and privately attacked Crouch End for People.

CEfP, in contrast, has massive local support, efficiently organised informative meetings that were advertised and open to the public, and has a formally constituted charitable structure, yet is allocated just one representative. Just one local resident representative was appointed, Charles Sharp, who by a remarkable coin-

cidence happens to be a defeated former Labour councillor.

Haringey must learn that their gambit of agreeing to set up advisory bodies and then proceeding to pack them with their own politicians and allies is no longer acceptable to the community.

We therefore call upon some councillor members to be asked to step down so the panel will not have a built-in council controlling majority.

We call upon Cllr Bax to be asked to retire as chair in favour of one democratically elected by the committee and who is not a councillor or politician, present or aspirant.

More representatives from CEfP should be there as well as representatives from expert bodies such as the Twentieth-Century Society and English Heritage.

This is what we shall propose at the next meeting of the panel. We call on fair-minded councillors who have the interests of the community at heart to support us.

PETER BARBER

Vice-President, Hornsey
Historical Society

KEITH FAWKES-UNDERWOOD

Chairman

JACOB O'CALLAGHAN

Conservation Officer