

What are Friends really for?

SURELY I cannot be the only one to smell a rat? If Sally Billot, Richard Reidy, Chris Warburton and Kevin Pinnock are all claiming to be 'local residents' with one place each on the Hornsey Town Hall 'Advisory Panel' and are dissociating themselves from Friends of Hornsey Town Hall then – apart from Cllr Dave Winskill – who are the Friends of Hornsey Town Hall?

If I were cynical, I might start to ponder that Friends of Hornsey Town Hall are not friends at all. I might start to ponder that the whole group was set up by Haringey councillors to put about a rumour that there were two groups working on the town hall.

Crouch End for People has one place only out of 20 on this advisory panel. Yet they represent more than 3,000 Crouch Enders and have worked solidly since the summer.

They were mandated unanimously by the community during open packed public meetings in October and April, chaired by our local MP Barbara Roche. They have presented transparent documents, figures, vision statements, and leafleted all households. They operate from the heart of the community, running stalls on a Saturday, listening and talking with residents.

The contrast could never be greater, could it?

We do not know who Friends of Hornsey Town Hall are. They have never held a public meeting. They have never produced anything.

This handful of people have to my knowledge met only twice, on September 23 and April 15, when David Bond of Haringey Council gave a presentation.

And it increasingly looks like this advisory panel is just as great a sham. It's basically the same people, with a few invitations to innocent groups like the Crouch End Festival Chorus to add legitimacy to an organisation of councillors and their chosen friends that masquerades as a community representation.

MIRANDA WATSON