

Olive branch offered in battle for town hall

Caroline McClatchey

But panel chief sticks to her guns on numbers

A LABOUR councillor has called a ceasefire in the war raging over Hornsey Town Hall.

Cllr Judy Bax is chair of the under-fire town hall advisory panel. Set up by the council to find out what everyone wants for the Grade II*-listed landmark, the team of 20 includes councillors and local organisations, such as campaign group Crouch End for People.

Describing the situation as a tortoise and hare race, with herself as the tortoise, she wants to stress the importance of everyone working together at a slow and steady pace.

She told Broadway: "What worries me is that Crouch End for People seem to be determined to work against the council. They have some very good ideas but the council is not in a position to give them everything. We have to look after the financial interests of the whole of Haringey."

"There has been so much criticism and crossfire, and I think council officers have been very helpful to Crouch End for People. I know people are angry that the town hall was neglected, as have many throughout the country, but they have to acknowledge the squeeze on local government finances."

She said the restoration of the old theatre and council chamber for the community was a shared goal, and the only argument was about funding.



Councillor Judy Bax.

Crouch End for People want to set up a trust but Cllr Bax said a grant-dependent body was unreliable and in the case of Hampstead Town Hall, it took five years to raise the money.

"An alternative might be to work with a developer," she said. "We could always put a trust together to take over the running of the enterprise."

The scale of the residential development, needed to fund the repairs, and the car park are also contentious issues.

Cllr Bax said: "A balance must be struck. The council has

4,000 families on its housing waiting list."

As chairwoman of the advisory panel, Cllr Bax has resisted calls for her resignation. Campaign group Crouch End for People believes the chair should be independent and it wants more than one representative on the panel.

Cllr Bax said: "The panel has one representative from each of the organisations and I'm sticking to that. Crouch End for People says it represents 3,000 people who signed a petition but that's not the same as being a

member of an organisation.

"The final decision will lie with the council executive. It is council property after all but we are committed to letting people have their say. I hope we can work together to get a good solution."

□ Hornsey Town Hall is to be opened again to the public.

Following the runaway success of the first open day in May, the doors will be flung open again on Saturday July 10.

broadway@hamhigh.co.uk