

Empty Town Hall's high upkeep costs

Overall bill since the big move out in 2003 reaches £565,000

Rhiannon Evans

NEARLY half a million pounds has been spent maintaining Hornsey Town Hall since Haringey Council began vacating it five years ago, a Broadway investigation can reveal.

Despite no council departments remaining in the Crouch End white elephant and the Citizen's Advice Bureau occupying just one small area of the building, in 2009/10 Haringey Council spent £74,300 providing electricity, heating, security and caretaking at the site.

More than £25,000 of that went on heating and gas for the huge building – dramatically more than the £7,600 spent in 2003/04 when the site was actually fully occupied.

More was also spent lighting it in 2009/10 than in 2003 to 2005, before departments began vacating the site.

The largest bill – an astonishing £92,400 – came in 2008/09 when just one department remained in the building.

These amazing figures can be revealed as residents are being consulted on plans to redevelop the empty Grade II-listed building into a cultural and community hub, including performance venues, bars, offices and community spaces.

A development of 123 residential properties will also be built to bankroll the project.

Haringey Council, which owns the building, announced it was surplus to requirements in 2003. Following an outcry from the community a number of consultations took place to try and ensure it was redeveloped for the community's benefit.

Since then a number of the rooms, such as the huge auditorium and council chamber have remained closed off from the public and began to deteriorate.



SPRING VIEW: Hornsey Town Hall.

Picture by Nigel Sutton

Haringey Council is understood to have contributed a £7.1million advance towards the project, on the condition this will be paid back by the Hornsey Town Hall Creative Trust, which is due to take over the running of the site once renovation is complete.

Chairwoman of the trust Ann Wilks said the figures showed the pressing nature of getting

the empty building back into use.

She said: "We are keen to see the Town Hall brought back to use as quickly as possible to benefit of the community and the building."

The Broadway asked the council how much was spent on electricity, gas, security and caretaking since plans to vacate the building were mooted in 2003 – this bill is £565,900.

In 2003/04 and 2004/05 before staff began to leave, the council spent more than £69,000 and £76,000 on the upkeep of the building.

In 2005/06 Streetscene and Haringey Homes and Building Services left – and yet in 2006/07 the bill for maintaining the building rose to £88,900.

During 2007/08, three more departments left the building, leaving only the facilities management team at the site.

But in 2008/09, despite only the facilities management department also moving out during that year, a staggering £92,400 was spent on the building's upkeep – the largest figure in seven-year span we uncovered.

This year also included the largest payout on heating and gas, with the bill coming in at £34,000.

Crouch End councillor Dave Winskill said: "These are extraordinary figures.

"Although it's wise to 'keep the building warm' to stop any risk of deterioration through bad weather, it really seems that they have simply left the boiler going without any real regard for the small number of officers occupying the space."

A council spokeswoman said: "While the building is in the council's ownership, it is sensible to keep a limited staff presence at Hornsey Town Hall.

"This presence has an important role in preserving and securing the building until its long term future is secured."



Picture by Nigel Sutton

Soaring rents force a pharmacy to move out

A FAMILY-RUN pharmacy, which has served the Crouch End community for more than two decades was forced off the Broadway by soaring rents.

Reena's Pharmacy was forced to leave the Broadway and move to Crouch End Hill after their landlords demanded a 50 per cent increase – and later a 21 per cent increase – in rent.

Reena's Pharmacy, was set up by Jay Sanghvi in 1988, is now run by his son Neil, 29, pictured above.

But six months ago a rent review pushed the rent up on the Broadway to the level the independent shop could simply no longer afford. Mr Sanghvi is unable to reveal the exact figures involved following a legal agreement.

Mr Sanghvi said that at their new premises in Crouch End Hill, they are paying 55 to 60 per cent of what they would have had to pay at the old shop had they accepted the rent increase.

He said: "The main issue here

is not just our shop has had to move, but that Crouch End Broadway is in danger of losing all of its character.

"I can imagine a high street there in 20 years without a single independent shop in it and it's all the independent shops that make this area unique."

A spokeswoman for the pharmacy's old landlords Setanta said: "The new lease and associated rent has been determined in accordance with statute and the rent is at a market level.

"There is back dated rent due, which accrued between the date of the interim rent agreed in 2003 and the start of their new lease.

"The tenants have been aware of this and have been given fair warning of the impending payments due."

Mr Sanghvi said the pharmacy were paying the notice period on their break clause from the property, as well as any outstanding rent payments.



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