

Ham & High

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Gremlins foil debt collection

MORE than £4 million in council tax owed from last year has yet to be collected by Haringey Council because of computer gremlins.

Software used for sending out bills and keeping tabs on payment has been dogged by problems, and compensation is being sought from the manufacturers.

But Highgate councillor Peter Forrest, one of two Tories on Haringey, claimed the problem had been dragging on for too long and blamed "ineptitude".

"The council blames the new computer system but it has been in place for more than 18 months. Soon they will have to come up with a new explanation," he said.

Nearly £3 million has been recovered since the end of March.

Total income is budgeted at nearly £56 million and Toby Harris, leader of Haringey, said the £4.6 million still outstanding at the end of September was not a cause for concern.

"The latest figures show we are taking up the shortfall fairly rapidly," he told the Ham & High.

Fury at £2m price for Roundhouse

THE ROUNDHOUSE is up for sale for about £2 million — more than twice the price Camden Council sold it for 18 months ago.

The move has fuelled Tory claims that the council is letting the family jewels go on the cheap. Conservative group leader Judith Barnes said the asking price for the grade-II listed Victorian former railway shed, in Chalk Farm Road, proved that Camden's properties were "always knowingly undersold".

She told the Ham & High: "It confirms all the suspicions that one had at the time that they had sold off the family silver pretty cheap and that we have probably thrown away an awful lot of money."

Property company Palacegate bought the Roundhouse from Camden for £900,000 in April last year, hoping to attract a partner prepared to invest money in the building, possibly to turn it into a centre for the arts or a live music

'Camden sold it on cheap'

venue. But there has been no satisfactory offer, despite considerable interest.

The property market is "firmer" so it will be advertised from tomorrow in property trade and entertainment magazines.

A top rock venue in the 1960s and 1970s, when Jimi Hendrix and the Rolling Stones played there, the Roundhouse has stood empty for more than 10 years. Pop star Prince visited the Roundhouse last month for the launch of the new VH1 music television channel, but noise from other recent one-off music events has provoked complaints from residents.

Martin Walford, consultant

surveyor with Palacegate, says the company could only hope to make a small profit on the freehold sale because it has spent £500,000 on improvements.

"The company was seduced by the aura of the building, as many other people have been," he said. "It has an amazing feel to it. But, as a traditional investment company, we did not realise the problems involved in trying to get it up and running."

Labour councillor Ernest James said Camden had needed money and Government restrictions on borrowing left no alternative but to sell properties.

"Good estate management practice would dictate that when you need to raise money and you are at the bottom of a property market, you would borrow money rather than selling assets," he said. "But the Government refuses to allow us to do that. Therefore we sold off public properties at the price the market would bear."

Bid to stop eruv rising goes down to the wire

A LAST-DITCH High Court bid to stop the eruv was launched this week.

Permission was granted by Environment Secretary John Gummer last month, but on Tuesday, the last day an appeal could be lodged, resident Dr Jeffrey Segall initiated legal proceedings, challenging Mr Gummer's findings that the eruv would not seriously harm the appearance and character of the area it would enclose.

While Dr Segall, of Childs Hill, declined to speak to the Ham & High, it is understood the appeal has been lodged on the grounds that Mr Gummer did not take sufficient account of "social harmony" when making the decision.

Jill Foster, a legal adviser to the objectors, said: "This is extremely brave of Dr Segall. Perhaps the Government inspector's decision was not right given the evidence

presented, and there is a feeling that certain aspects have been overlooked.

"This is one of three routes objectors could have taken, and the one likely to create the most publicity. I would imagine it will be some time before it is settled."

Edward Black, spokesman for the United Synagogue's Eruv Committee, said: "We are confident that the carefully reasoned decision of the Secretary of State for the Environment will be upheld in the courts."

Police chief to attend group in BNP dispute

CHIEF Superintendent Linda Newham, of Kentish Town police, has warned British National Party official Michael Newland that racists have no place on a police panel.

And, despite previous reports from her colleagues that "if Newland is there we won't be", she has promised to attend the next meeting of the Kentish Town Central Sector Working Group, on November 17.

If he turns up, Mr Newland is expected to be drummed out of the

meeting when members vote in a new constitutional clause banning racism.

The Anti-Nazi League, which discovered that Mr Newland, who lives in Leighton Road, Kentish Town, had been attending the working group, is planning to picket the meeting.

In a terse letter to Mr Newland, Ms Newham said anyone who supported racism would hinder the group's progress. "This would not be acceptable to the Metropolitan Police."

LADIES - TRIM & TONE EFFORTLESSLY!

