

# NEWS

## 'Why did councillors dine with PR firm?'

**EXCLUSIVE** by Emma Youle  
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Senior Haringey councillors have come under fire over revelations that they have been winning and dining with a top property PR firm.

Labour cabinet members have enjoyed hospitality worth £770 at 13 lunches or dinners paid for by leading public affairs agency Terrapin Communications, it has emerged.

Terrapin has been linked to a property development firm awarded a controversial contract to turn Hornsey Town Hall into a boutique hotel.

Backbench and opposition councillors have demanded answers, with one senior Haringey Labour source saying: "If these meetings were not to do with Hornsey Town Hall then what were they about?"

Terrapin's website lists Coplan Estates Ltd, who were appointed town hall development joint partner on October 18, as a client.

But the PR agency said it never had any involvement with Coplan or any other company on the town hall bid.

Director Liz Williams said: "Terrapin Communications Ltd worked for Coplan Estates for about three months on a project in Barking and Dagenham, which ended in February 2016."

She added: "Terrapin Communications has never discussed Hornsey Town Hall with any member of the cabinet in Haringey."

She said the firm were "strong advocates of transparency" and declared all meetings with councillors and officers.

It has also emerged that Haringey Labour's chief whip Cllr Adam Jogee works as a consultant for the PR agency.

He faced a backlash this week after he sent a letter to Labour colleagues chastising them over "entirely unacceptable behaviour" for calling-in the cabinet's decision on Hornsey Town Hall



■ Cllr Claire Kober, top, and cllr Adam Jogee. Hornsey Town Hall, main.

last month.

The senior Labour source told the Ham&High: "I think it's completely inappropriate for Adam Jogee to be involved in any way in disciplining those who were involved in the call-in. It's a clear conflict of interest."

But Terrapin said Cllr Jogee's role as chief whip had "nothing to do with his work for the firm".

Ms Williams said: "In the interests of transparency both parties are happy to confirm that under his contract with Terrapin Communications while serving as a Haringey councillor, Adam Jogee may have no dealings with the London Borough of Haringey or its representatives on behalf of the company or its representatives."

Opposition councillors and campaigners trying to halt the sale of Hornsey Town Hall have called for more transparency over the Terrapin meetings.

Liberal Democrat Cllr Bob Hare said: "Why would Haringey bother to have dinner so many times? I think you can



ask the legitimate question what were these meetings about?"

David Winskill, of the Hornsey Town Hall Appreciation Society, said the 13 Terrapin meetings "outstripped those with other PR and lobbying firms" and called for "clarity on the nature of the relationship".

A Haringey Council spokesman said: "The process to appoint a developer to transform Hornsey Town Hall has followed strict public procurement rules.

"Terrapin have not worked on Hornsey Town Hall, and they have had no influence on the public procurement process or decision to appoint Coplan and Far East Consortium International Ltd as a development partner."

Cllr Jogee did not respond to the Ham&High's request for comment.

### WHO WINED AND DINED WITH TERRAPIN?

- Council records show Haringey cabinet members had lunches or dinners with Terrapin Communications on 13 occasions between July 2, 2014 and October 25, 2016
- Council leader Cllr Claire Kober met with the firm six times
- Planning boss Cllr Alan

- Strickland met them five times
- Finance boss Cllr Jason Arthur had lunch twice.
- One of the Terrapin dinners was at a prestigious international real estate conference in Cannes in the South of France.
- The total bill to Terrapin

- for all 13 meals was £770 and they were all properly declared as "hospitality or gifts" in the council's Register of Members' Interests.
- Cllrs Kober, Strickland and Arthur did not respond to the Ham&High's request for comment.

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