

Private policing is understandably not very acceptable. After all, we pay through our business and private rates and taxes, and that should be sufficient. But when a grave shortage of Police makes it a good area for all conceivable unlicensed trading, as in James Street, something has to be done. You'll read more about this in Insp Wright's Police Report. Although the decrease in crime was not enormous, it most certainly disrupted the very lucrative unlicensed street traders, and that is to be welcomed. That it was out of control in the first place was due to two factors, namely the cleaning up of Leicester Square (and therefore the displacement to James Street) and the reduction in the number of local Police officers. The sponsored policing trial was impressive.

We are delighted that Holborn Police Station has finally re-opened. As always,, we need to appreciate our Police service and recognise that they

are doing an increasingly dangerous job against increasingly bad odds. We just wish there were more of them!

Jo Weir

Dragon Hall: An Example of our Times?

We have come to expect most, if not all, new public buildings and facilities to come into being by way of public/private arrangements. London Underground is to be improved by a PPP (Public Private Partnership), the new University College Hospital by way of a PFI (Public Finance Initiative) and future doctor's surgeries by LIFTs (sic) (a type of public private financial arrangement), whilst new School buildings like Haverstock Secondary School are to follow procedures derived from M41 (Movement for Innovation!).



The one thing all these deals have in common is the obsession of the public sector to transfer all public responsibility to the private sector, and correspondingly for all public financial risk to be eliminated. In practice this never occurs as when a private developer fails to deliver a hospital (as has happened in Cheshire) the public sector is left to bail it out. A more prominent example of the tenuous foundations of this obsession is the Government's recent bail out of Rail Track .

What, you may ask, has this to do with Dragon Hall, Covent Garden's new community facility in Stukeley Street?

This time last year I reported that our ten year struggle was close to being realised and indeed this year CGCA's Annual General Meeting was to take place in Dragon Hall. However I failed to take into account the inadequacies of the public/private procurement process by which Dragon Hall has been constructed.

Other than the Dragon Hall Trust, set up by the CGCA to run the new facility, every party which has been directly involved in Dragon Hall has



Dragon Hall: new 4400 sq ft community facility in Stukeley Street – the photo shows the entrance and the opaque glazing to the multi-purpose hall, with offices and meeting rooms above