

Sinn Fein decision was 'not political'

IRISH leaders in Camden fired off an angry letter to council leader Richard Arthur this week urging him to reconsider the decision not to allow Sinn Fein to rent office space in Camden.

And Councillor Dave Horan, who was at the meeting which made the decision last week, denied it was a political matter.

The decision was made last week by the Labour leadership after council officers offered to rent offices in Holborn to the Irish party which campaigns for a united Ireland.

Normally decisions to rent accommodation owned by Camden is made by officers and, the New Journal understands, it is very unusual for councillors to become involved.

Cllr Horan said the decision was made on purely commercial grounds because of the possibility of high insurance premiums.

"It wasn't taken to the vote," he said. "There

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Council's Sinn Fein decision 'not political'

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was a meeting of group officers and senior councillors. If it was a political rather than a commercial decision then it should have gone to the whole Labour group. But it was an officer led decision, although far from unanimous."

But Pegeen O'Sullivan, secretary of the Camden Irish Forum, told the New Journal that the decision set a "dangerous precedent".

She said that Camden

hadn't even checked whether insurance premiums would go up or not.

"This is a perfectly terrible precedent," she said. "If they are going to victimise groups because they are Irish that is shameful and not at all in the traditions of Camden. We feel that it is very arbitrary of them to decide they are not going to allow Sinn Fein, which is a political party, access to Camden. I expect people to stand by

their principles and not to be blown off course."

In her letter to Mr Arthur she asks whether the council would refuse accommodation to Jewish or anti-racist organisations because they "could be" victims of extremist attacks.

"Is it one law for the Irish and another for everyone else?" she asks. "Do you allow the insurance companies to make your moral and political decisions for you? In case you have forgotten,

Gerry Adams was one of the three initiators of the peace process and arguably the most courageous. Does Camden not want a peaceful solution?"

Ms O'Sullivan also wrote to Camden's two MPs, Frank Dobson and Glenda Jackson, calling for them to clarify their position on the matter.

Council leader Richard Arthur said: "I hope we're not setting a precedent that would be wide ranging."