

Artists back centre appeal

A church will be transformed into a gallery to raise money for a community centre.

Artists including Royal Academy sculptor Michael Sandle, whose Iraq Triptych showed Tony and Cherie Blair expelled from the Eden-like Downing Street, will be selling work to boost the fund.

Other exhibitors include Sophie Dickens, Kate Malone and Adam Gray.

Pews are being pushed back at St Peter's Church, in De Beauvoir Road, from 10am to 4pm on Saturday and from noon to 5pm on Sunday.

The artists are donating a percentage of their takings to the £20,000 still needed to transform the crypt into a community centre.

Admission is free and all the artists live or work in the De Beauvoir area.

Libraries job cuts would mean slow death of services - union

Council chief denies claim and blames government savings

By **Jasmine Coleman**
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Proposed job cuts could spell a "slow death" for Hackney's libraries despite the council's promises to protect them, trade unionists have warned.

Members of Hackney Union, the public services union, voted unanimously to back a vote of no confidence in the council's head of libraries Ted Rogers this week over their concerns about cutbacks to frontline staff.

They fear that plans to re-

duce the number of library posts by a quarter - from 104 to 76 - will see the decline of the service, increasing theft while reducing the number of events and facilities on offer to the public.

This comes despite the council's pledge earlier this year to keep all of its eight libraries open in the face of government cutbacks.

Committed

Hackney Union Branch Secretary, Matthew Waterfall said: "There will be hardly enough staff to keep

the doors open. This is a slow death sentence for the library service."

Cllr Jonathan McShane, cabinet member for health, social care and culture said: "Hackney Council is committed to keeping all eight libraries open and maintaining some of the longest opening hours in the coun-

ty." However, cuts imposed by central government mean we need to find savings to ensure the long term sustainability of our library service.

"As part of this, the unions and libraries staff have been asked for their views. "As with any process like this, we will take these on board while ensuring that we create a service that continues to deliver the high standards that residents in Hackney want and deserve."

■ The council's consultation with staff ends on 17 June.

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Generations come together to discuss children's books

Children's writer Ann Jungman captured the imagination of Stoke Newington primary school children at the culmination of a two-month project aimed at sharing books across the generations.

The writer, who is well-known for her book *Vlad the Drac*, spoke in an assembly to celebrate the Grandpar-

School in Cazenove Road last Wednesday.

Imagination

Some grandparents came

like Heidi, Little Lord Fauntleroy and Pippa Long - together with more modern books like *Going On A Bear Hunt*.

Around 60 grandparents turned up for the special event, where Jungman read her book *The Most Magnificent Mosque* - the tale of Jews, Christians and Muslims trying to overcome their

came up with the idea for the project, said: "She captured the kids' imagination and she managed to bridge the generation gap - so the children got something out of it, but also the grandparents too."

"I came up with the idea because I thought that grandparents see their grandchildren through most phases of



Arsonist who torched own flat is handed prison term

A convicted arsonist who set fire to his own basement flat while his neighbours were sleeping has been jailed indefinitely.

Vincent Sills, 25, torched a pile of his own clothes and left them to burn inside a wardrobe at his home in Hackney.

He then attempted to flee the scene but was caught by police officers as he climbed out of his window.

Fortunately everyone escaped uninjured from the incident, on September 7 last year.

Snaresbrook Crown Court heard Sills, of Shore Road, South Hackney, had previously served a 10-week prison sentence for setting fire to his bed while in hospital in 2008.

He pleaded guilty to arson being reckless as to whether life is endangered and was sentenced to indefinite imprisonment for 'public protection'.

Judge Tudor Owen said he agreed with the probation report that Sills posed a "high risk of harm to the public"