

Councillor resigns after £200 fine



GUILTY: Beatrice Howard
ONE of Ealing's most distinguished Conservatives has resigned her council seat after receiving a suspended prison sentence and being fined £200 for book-keeping offences.

Cllr Beatrice Howard, OBE, 61, of Holyoake Walk, Ealing, pleaded guilty to two counts of concealing a Trustee Savings Bank cheque and failing to record receipt of it, at the Amateur Radio Exchange, Uxbridge Road, Acton.

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Elthorne governor may decide its fate

THE crucial vote to decide the future of Elthorne High School may be cast by one of its own governors.

The political parties seem set to line up 34-34 in the crunch council meeting that will either axe or save the school.

That means the mayor's casting vote will be the decider — and that vote will be cast by Bob Hetherington, an Elthorne governor.

He has not yet decided how he will vote. He said: "I will not make my mind up until the day of the council meeting. I would advise people to respect that I am mayor and not try to apply pressure."

There are 70 seats on Ealing Council, the Tories controlled 37 at the last local election, Liberals three, and Labour 30.

The Tories have lost former education chairman June Shipton, who now sits as an independent Tory, and Beatrice Howard, who resigned fol-

By Martin Brice

lowing a court case.

Tory councillor Ross Sault abstained on the Elthorne closure before, and now says he will only vote if he is forced to, and he wants to see the school stay open.

That means the Tories can rely on 34 votes with a full turn-out.

Labour, Liberals and Cllr Mrs Shipton also count 34 votes, with a full house.

Both Vladimir Kopecky, Tory chief whip and Robin Pathak, Labour chief whip, will be hoping to keep all their members at the meeting until the education committee agenda comes up for discussion, and that is usually in the early hours of the morning.

Elthorne High School, in Boston Road, Hanwell, was earmarked for closure when a drop in the number of pupils suggested children at the school would not get a sufficiently varied education. The Tory group passed the closure decision by one vote.

The education committee recently overturned the decision when the Conservative group found itself outnumbered in a motion put down by Labour's Hilary Benn.

Education Secretary Sir Keith Joseph will make the final decision on the school closure — but only if Ealing Council decides to press on with it. If the council votes to withdraw the closure notice before Sir Keith makes a decision, the school cannot be closed without going through a complicated procedure again.