

LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON
COUNCIL MEETING - 15 SEPTEMBER 2016

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the meeting of the Council held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 15 September 2016 at 7.30 pm.

Present:

Andrews	Hamitouche	Picknell
Burgess	Heather	Poole
Champion	Hull	Poyser
Chowdhury	Ismail	Russell
Comer-Schwartz	Jeapes	Shaikh
Convery	Kay	Smith
Debono	Kaseki	Spall
Diner	Klute	Turan
Erdogan	Ngongo	Ward
Fletcher	Nicholls	Ward
Gallagher	O'Halloran	Watts
Gantly	O'Sullivan	Webbe
Gill	A Perry	Williamson
Greening	R Perry	

The Mayor (Councillor Kat Fletcher) in the Chair

106 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the Minutes of the meeting on 30 June 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and the Mayor be authorised to sign them.

107 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

108 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

(i) Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillors Court, Doolan, Khan, Parker and Wayne. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Erdogan, and Poyser.

(ii) Order of business

No changes were proposed to the order of business.

(iii) Declaration of discussion items

No items were declared.

(iv) Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor paid tribute to former Labour Councillor John Worker who passed away in July. The Mayor spoke about John's passion for the borough and its people. The Mayor is enjoying attending many community events including performances by Step Live Dance Celebrations, a dance showcase by Artistry for Youth Dance, the Imagine Islington Family Exhibition, school sports awards, street festivals, fun days, fetes and graduation ceremonies. The Mayor has also attended recent charitable events, such as the Summer Charity Party which provided funds for the Prisoners' Advice BADGE Service and the Islington Law Centre. The events celebrate the cultural life and diversity of the borough, as well as individual achievements.

The Mayor pledged her support to the Mayor of London's #LondonIsOpen campaign.

Finally, the Mayor advised of her visit to the Ben Kinsella Exhibition at Finsbury Town Hall. All of those present were encouraged to attend the exhibit, which is a powerful legacy to Ben's life.

(v) Length of speeches

The Mayor asked colleagues to do their utmost to keep speeches within the permitted length.

109 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Councillor Watts thanked the Mayor and welcomed back Councillor Rupert Perry, who had recently been absent from council business due to ill health. Councillor Watts also passed on his best wishes to Councillor Doolan, who was absent due to ill health, on behalf of the council.

Councillor Watts congratulated local young people, their families and teachers on their recent GCSE results. Councillor Watts said that he was extremely proud of the quality of education in the borough. Councillor Watts also said that London schools were among the best in the developed world and it was no coincidence that London had few selective schools, as selective schooling fails pupils of all abilities, as the eleven-plus exam was only a test of if parents could afford private tutoring. Councillor Watts advised that the Council was opposed to the government's proposals to re-introduce grammar schools, would exercise a veto for the borough if possible and would support a national campaign against grammar schools.

Councillor Watts was very pleased to attend the opening of new homes with Councillor Diarmaid Ward and was very proud of the council's fantastic contribution to combating the housing crisis.

Councillor Watts advised that Arsene Wenger and other representatives of the Premier League attended a recent event in the borough and the Arsenal Ladies team also attended an event in the Town Hall. The Premier League's contribution to local sports facilities was very welcome. Councillor Watts wishes both teams success in their football seasons.

Councillor Watts expressed his disappointment at the announcement of the Boundary Commission proposal to abolish the Islington North parliamentary constituency. Islington was currently served by two hardworking MPs and Councillor Watts said he will work with colleagues across parties to ensure that Islington keeps two MPs.

110 PETITIONS

Ms Barbara Sheridan presented a petition regarding funding for the dementia daycare service at St Luke's.

111 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question a) from Michael Ryan, Chief Executive of the St Luke's Community Centre, to Councillor Burgess, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

Why has the Council decided to cut funding of £26,000 pa for the unique dementia daycare service for such vulnerable members of our community when concern about dementia and isolation of older people is so high?

Reply:

Thank you for your question. Following savage cuts to our budget by the government, which has cut our core budget by 50% since 2010, we have to examine every grant we give and ensure that public money is spent in the most effective way. 11 people are registered to attend the St Luke's sessions and according to St Luke's own recent figures an average of only 5 people attend daily. The service costs £2,363 per service user per year and no assessment is made or referral required, so it's possible that some of the service users don't meet the thresholds. We delayed making this cut until we could ensure that users can access other services and they can now do so by using the council's Accessible Community Transport.

Supplementary question:

That's the first explanation we have received from anyone, but we can't understand how the £26,000 is going to save money if it is withdrawn.

Reply:

I wish that treating dementia was as simple as continuing the funding, but dementia carries on regardless. Islington Council supports the users of the daycare service and will continue to support people to access services here at St Luke's – there are a lot of excellent services there and we will be providing transport to enable them to access them. The St Luke's Community Centre has its own funding reserves, whilst we are struggling badly. We want to help people with dementia; we spend £12million a year on services for people with dementia, but we have to send it where it has most impact.

The meeting was opened to questions from the floor.

Question from James Thurlow regarding the Council's approach to the Tenant Tax. I am 34 years old and single and have stage 4 bowel cancer. I am on the housing waiting list and earn around £20,000 a year, however I am still nowhere near having enough points for my own home. Why is the Council challenging 'pay to stay' when it will support people who earn double my salary to stay in council homes?

Reply from Councillor Diarmaid Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development:

Thank you for your question. The Tenant Tax punishes hardworking residents and families when both parents are working. The Tenant Tax takes no account of residents' outgoings; many families have children and it will be very difficult for them to find money for the resulting rent increases. The Tenant Tax is unfair, it taxes people just because they are council tenants.

Question from Margaret Rudge regarding cuts to services for vulnerable people. You talk about cuts, but you are hitting what I call "below the belt" people. Why don't you tax big firms instead? The Council needs to go back to "real delivery" and your Finance Committee should look into everything you do.

Reply from Councillor Andy Hull, Executive Member for Finance, Performance and Community Safety:

Thank you for your question. I would love nothing more than to tax all of the big firms with international headquarters in the borough. Sadly we can't, so I urge you to take up this question with the Prime Minister and the Government to allow us to set higher taxes; it is an insult that we are forced to make cuts that affect vulnerable people. The government has cut 50% of our budget over the last five years, and we expect another quarter to be cut in the next five years. There are things we can do, we try to make sure that businesses pay their rates and have introduced Council Tax support schemes to defend residents most affected by government cuts. It is unacceptable that this government is balancing its books on the back of the poor, but we can't do everything.

Question from Gill Weston. As several members already know, Housing and Adult Social Services is planning to build a large three storey block on Windsor Street to house 12-14 adults with specific disabilities. The council is failing to follow relevant building standards for this client group and will be putting these vulnerable people at risk of harm. The council will not respond to expert's reports which warn that the building will not be fit for purpose. When will the council seriously consider redesigning this building to guarantee the safety and wellbeing of the intended residents?

Reply from Councillor Diarmaid Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development:

I have visited and am in close contact with the Windsor Street residents by email and phone. The process is continuing and residents will continue to be kept informed of developments.

Question from Benali Hamdache. What can residents do to challenge the boundary review of parliamentary constituencies?

Reply from Councillor Richard Watts, Leader of the Council:

I think it is a disgraceful disenfranchisement of local people and we will be starting a petition. The Council may also respond corporately. I urge you all to reply to the Boundary Commission consultation. If we can work across parties to end this travesty we will be pleased to do so.

Question from Tessa Courage. The Council is planning to build a large three storey block on Windsor Street to house 12-14 adults with specific learning disabilities and challenging behaviours. Can the lead councillors for housing and wellbeing explain what the capital cost for this is, whether this factors in legal costs arising from issues such as right to light, the cost of the tree that they have already removed from site, the cost of HTA consultants to get around the council's own planning rules, and the cost to the health and wellbeing of existing and intended residents?

Reply from Councillor Diarmaid Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development:

Councillor Diarmaid Ward advised that he did not have the information to hand and would provide a written response after the meeting. The following response was subsequently provided:

The capital cost for the scheme is £3.2m inclusive of fees for legal and expert input. It is normal for any organisation carrying out development, including the council's new homes development team, to engage a planning consultancy service as part of expert advice. The capital sum does not include a cost assessment around health and well-being. However, as has been shared with residents living locally, there has been an assessment of the need of residents with learning difficulties housed outside the borough currently to be closer to their families and support networks.

Question from Ernestas Jegorovas. Why is the Council failing to meet the government's public sector apprenticeship targets?

Reply from Councillor Asima Shaikh, Executive Member for Economic Development:

Great efforts are being made to provide apprenticeships, to increase the number of people in apprenticeships through the iWork service, but there are challenges. London Councils have been lobbying against the unrealistic public sector apprenticeship target set by the government. We see great value in apprenticeships, and our youth employment support services are raising awareness of apprenticeships to teachers and students, and we work with schools to increase the take up.

We are working to make apprenticeships as attractive as other career paths. We are pushing for parity of esteem to other pathways as it is important that apprenticeships are considered as valid and valuable as other forms of education.

112 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Question a) Councillor Poyser to Councillor Hull, Executive Member for Finance, Performance and Community Safety

The recent murder in Hillrise Ward came as a huge shock to the community and the local councillors. The thoughts and feelings of all councillors go out to the family of the victim. It is now naturally a matter for the police to investigate swiftly and fairly, and speculation as to the perpetrator or perpetrators of the crime are a matter for the courts and not a public discussion which could prejudice the legal process. In the light of his previous answer at a council meeting earlier this year on the victim of a shotgun, also in Hillrise Ward, could Councillor Hull give us reassurance that the Council is taking appropriate steps to work with the police to reassure local people that we will do our utmost to try to ensure this does not happen again?

Reply:

Thank you for your question, David. For now, the murderer of David Robinson remains uncaught. The Murder Investigation Team within Islington Police are actively pursuing various lines of enquiry. Three arrests have been made to date, but these people have been bailed and no charges related to the murder have yet been brought. There have been no subsequent criminal incidents connected to the murder since. Further public appeals for information are going to be made shortly.

Every murder is one too many and our sincere condolences go to the families and friends affected by this tragic shooting and the loss of another young man from our borough. While we await, as we must, the due process of the law to run its course, the Council and the police continue to work together to tackle crime in every ward across the borough, including in Hillrise.

The Integrated Gangs Team co-located at Toldpuddle Police Station is an excellent example of the police and Council working together and with partners in Probation, Victim Support, St Giles Trust and others. The team is now settled and intervening in the lives of young men and women involved in serious youth violence and gangs. While they are not able to prevent every tragic incident, the team is providing a rapid response to identified young people, from custody through to the community, supporting them to escape the clutches of gangs.

In terms of community reassurance, the Council discuss with the police a plan of action after each incident of death or serious violence. Such plans can include jointly agreed public statements, community engagement and increased patrolling, including involving Council staff who go into affected areas to engage and reassure residents, especially young people who are often most affected by this type of violence. The Council's Targeted Youth Support team work with St Giles Trust workers – some themselves former gang members – and the Neighbourhood Policing Teams to engage residents as well as gather information to improve overall safety.

Finally, developments continue apace across the Council to streamline our engagement with the police, both operationally, such as within the Youth Offending Service and the Integrated Gangs Team and strategically, within the Safer Islington Partnership and through scrutiny arrangements. This partnership is vital to ensure such incidents are, thankfully, not commonplace here in Islington.

Supplementary question:

Thank you for a full answer. How big a problem is gun crime in the borough?

Reply:

On gun-crime specifically, there have been 30 reported firearms incidents in Islington this year, compared to 9 the previous year (including where firearms were shown or intimidated), although this year's figure does include 18 incidents recorded as a result of a single drive-by paintballing spree. The rise is in keeping with a London-wide rise in gun-crime of 45% compared to last year.

Any intelligence regarding anyone in possession of firearms is acted upon straightaway by dedicated police investigators. This is normally done under the guise of a drugs warrant so that the person passing the information cannot be identified. So far, the police have actioned in excess of 20 warrants in the last 12 months along these lines. Some firearms have been recovered. The Integrated Gangs Team targets offenders who may have access to firearms. Parkguard and the police conduct regular weapons sweeps. Islington Police also collaborate closely with police in neighbouring boroughs to address gun-crime. Finally, all recovered firearms are forensicated to see any links to previous offences.

Gun-crime is incredibly serious and I can assure you that the Safer Islington Partnership takes it incredibly seriously.

Question b) Councillor Russell to Councillor Comer-Schwartz, Executive Member for Community Development

Will Islington Council be following Sadiq Khan's recommendation and take action to save Fabric Nightclub?

Reply:

Although I cannot speak for the decision of the Licensing Sub Committee A following the Metropolitan Police's request to review Fabric's licence, I have overarching responsibility for the Council's licensing policy. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my condolences to the friends and families of those who died.

The Sub-Committee heard that 18 year old boys were able to buy MDMA in Fabric and were also able to conceal drugs on their person which were not detected by a search on entry to the club. The Sub-Committee considered evidence from the Police and concluded that the problems seen during the 2014 review of Fabric's licence had not been adequately addressed. In light of all the circumstances, the Sub-Committee decided that revocation was both appropriate and proportionate.

The borough's cultural scene is important and is part of what makes London a great city, but venues need to act in accordance with their licence. The Sub-Committee cannot consider other matters and is only able to decide on matters within its remit.

Supplementary question:

I also extend my condolences to the families and friends of those who died. Would you like the Police to work more collaboratively with licenced premises and take a more balanced approach, taking into account public health factors and the needs of the night time economy?

Reply:

The Council does not have a say on national drugs policy, nor on local policing policy. I suggest you direct your questions to our local MPs, the Mayor of London, or GLA members such as yourself.

Question c) Councillor Russell to Councillor Burgess, Executive Member for Health and Social Care

Do you agree with the words of a petition supporter of the Early Dementia Service at St Luke's Community Centre, that "this is a vital service which helps provide continued self-respect and independence to members and is ultimately cost effective as well"?

Reply:

Respect for those with dementia is a cause that is very dear to my heart. The Council and CCG are spending £12.5 million per annum on people with dementia, £11.4 million is spent on residential and nursing support, and the Dementia Strategy is currently being refreshed to make sure that we offer support to dementia sufferers at different stages of their illness. Officers are ensuring that dementia sufferers can continue to access the lunch club using the Community Transport Service.

Supplementary question:

Many of us were surprised to hear that this is the first time that St Luke's have received a full explanation of why their funding is being cut. Will you meet with service users and the Chief Executive at St Luke's and promise to include them in future decision making?

Reply:

I was also surprised to hear that this is the first explanation they had received. The contract was due to end in February 2016 and this was extended to September 2016 to allow service users to find alternative support. Officers wrote to St Luke's in May and a meeting was held on 22 June to agree how support service users. I will be meeting with St Luke's about this shortly.

d) Councillor Ismail to Councillor Caluori, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families

In light of recent A level achievements - does the Council keep a track record of young people who live in Islington and those who went to Islington Schools and achieved University degrees, after the Council has invested so much?

Councillor Richard Watts, Leader of the Council, replied in Councillor Caluori's absence:

It is inspiring that we have so many high achievers in Islington; our own youth councillors are a great example. Members may remember Benjamin Harrison, who has gone on to work full time for a solicitors' after completing an apprenticeship there.

However, although we have a lot of talented young people in Islington, I am concerned that some young people are not fulfilling their potential. I am concerned about those who drop out of school for one reason or another and become NEET. The council carries out a lot of work with young people to ensure that they remain on track, and those who do drop out are offered one-to-one support to help them to re-engage. This can even involve calling at young people's homes if they are unwilling to engage through more usual channels. I'm pleased that the number of NEETs has dropped significantly over the last few years.

Islington rates highly on the government social mobility league table and this proves that we are one of the best places in the country for working class pupils. It is important that we offer young people in Islington the best start in life. London Councils publishes data on the Islington residents who start higher education programmes each year. We know that in 2014/15 1,227 young Islington residents started a higher education programme, which is very impressive. We are also collating the destinations of leavers from Islington schools, which will get sent to Central London Connexions.

We also check the destinations of our care leavers carefully; there are currently 48 young people studying at university and an average of 20% of Islington care leavers each year have progressed to university in recent years.

The Council is keen to work with graduates, and provides a lot of graduate level jobs. We also working to improve the provision of high quality apprenticeships for local people too. We want to work further with JobCentre Plus to provide tailored support to young people, because our view is that the current package of employment support doesn't work for everyone. We are pushing hard for devolution of these services, to allow us to provide better services to help local people and fully implement the recommendations of the Employment Commission.

113 ISLINGTON ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT ANNUAL UPDATE

Councillor Poole moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Alice Perry seconded.

The recommendations were put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

- That the progress and events over the past year be noted.
- It be noted that frontline staff have been trained to recognise and refer residents with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and on the wider package of support for veterans.

114 RESOLUTION TO EXTEND 6 MONTH RULE – SECTION 85 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Councillor Alice Perry moved the recommendations in relation to Councillor Doolan. Councillor Gill seconded.

The recommendation was put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

- That in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, Council approves Councillor Gary Doolan's non-attendance at meetings until the end of the municipal year on the grounds of continued ill health and that the Council's best wishes be conveyed to him.

115 CONSTITUTION CHANGES AND MONITORING OFFICER POST

Councillor Alice Perry moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Gill seconded.

The recommendations were put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

- That the post of Director of Law and Governance be designated as the Council's Monitoring Officer post in accordance with section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 be agreed with effect from 1 October 2016.
- That the Pay Policy Statement be amended to remove reference to the Monitoring Officer Allowance be agreed with effect from 1 October 2016.
- That the changes to the Constitution described in paragraph 3.2 and contained in Appendix 1 be agreed with effect from 1 October 2016.
- That the changes to the Constitution described in paragraph 3.4 and contained in Appendix 1 be agreed with immediate effect.

116 CHIEF WHIP'S REPORT (APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS)

Councillor Alice Perry moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Gill seconded.

The recommendations were put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

1. APPOINTMENT TO LICENSING COMMITTEE

That Councillor Champion replaces Councillor Rupert Perry as a member of Licensing Committee for the remainder of the municipal year 2016/17 or until a successor is appointed be agreed.

2. APPOINTMENT TO POLICY AND PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

That membership of the Policy and Performance Scrutiny Committee be increased by one and that Councillor Champion be appointed with immediate effect for the remainder of the municipal year 2016/17 or until a successor is appointed be agreed.

3. APPOINTMENT TO ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

That Councillor Rupert Perry is standing down as a member of Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee with immediate effect and that Council will appoint a replacement.

4. APPOINTMENT TO HOUSING SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

That Jim Rooke and Rose-Marie McDonald be appointed as observers to the Housing Scrutiny Committee when their terms of office as resident representatives end on 30th September 2016 for the remainder of the municipal year 2016/17 or until a successor is appointed be agreed.

5. APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS TO AUDIT COMMITTEE (ADVISORY)

That Alan Begg and Nick Whitaker be appointed as Independent Members of the Audit Committee (Advisory) to take effect from 1 October 2016 for a period of four years until 1 October 2020 be agreed.

6. APPOINTMENT OF AN INDEPENDENT PERSON TO STANDARDS COMMITTEE

That Rosalind Stevens be appointed as Independent Person on the Standards Committee with immediate effect for a period of four years until 15 September 2020 be agreed.

117 NOTICES OF MOTION

MOTION 1: ANONYMOUS SHORTLISTING

Councillor Russell moved the motion.

Councillor Hull moved the amendment set out in the second despatch of papers. Councillor Russell seconded the amendment.

The amendment was put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

The motion as amended was put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

- That we will promote the use of anonymous shortlisting by Islington employers, sharing the knowledge and best practice of how such a system is run in our council.
- That we will encourage council contractors to adopt anonymous shortlisting.
- That we will monitor the success of this work and report back to Full Council in one year on its progress.

MOTION 2: ISLINGTON IS OPEN

Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Burgess, moved the motion. Councillors Heather and Webbe contributed to the debate.

Councillor Russell moved the amendment, as set out in the second despatch of papers.

The amendment was put to the vote and was **LOST**.

The motion as originally written was put to the vote and was **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

- To continue to make representations to the Government for the need to protect former EU funding to the Council.
- To work with the Mayor of London in support of his #LondonIsOpen campaign.
- To work closely with the police and others to tackle hate crime and to pursue perpetrators.

The meeting closed at 9.01 pm

MAYOR