

COUNCIL MEETING – 14 DECEMBER 2023

NOTICES OF MOTION

Motion 1: A call for peace

Proposed by: Cllr Caroline Russell

Seconded by: Cllr Benali Hamdache

This council notes:

- Across Islington, residents are horrified by the violent conflict in Israel and Palestine and are grief stricken at the loss of lives. Many, especially in Jewish, Muslim and Arab communities, are concerned for the safety of friends, family and work colleagues in the region.
- The loss of civilian life is heart-breaking and is in contravention of international law affecting all.
- The continued imprisonment of Israeli hostages and the collective punishment against Gazans civilians, with the withholding of water, food and power.
- There has been a worrying rise in antisemitic and islamophobic hate crime in Islington since the attacks on 7th October and the siege of Gaza.
- The brilliant work by faith and community leaders across the borough to hold our community together, provide solace for today and hope for the future.
- The Labour's King's Speech amendment calling for longer "humanitarian pauses" in Gaza fell after MPs voted against it 290 to 183.
- The SNP's King's Speech amendment calling for "all parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire" fell after MPs voted against it 294 to 125.
- A range of international humanitarian organisations have been calling for a ceasefire, including Oxfam, Save the Children, Medecins Sans Frontières, Muslim Aid, War on Want, War Child and Amnesty International.

This council further notes:

- There must be an immediate ceasefire to end the violence. Humanitarian aid and basic services must be immediately restored. Hostages must be immediately released.
- For too long the peace process has been abandoned. Instead, violence, injustice and unfairness have become normalised. A lasting peace can only be achieved with dialogue and negotiations, and every government should be using every avenue to encourage this to happen.
- The UK government has a unique role to play in reaching peace. We have a historical debt to the region through colonisation. We are a UN Security Council member with the platform and power to influence the situation.
- There can be no place for hate in our borough. Islington must be a safe place for people of all faiths and nationalities. We must support people whose families and loved ones are caught up in this conflict and extend a special welcome to anyone fleeing war and persecution.

This council resolves to:

- Write to the UK Prime Minister to:
 - i. Call for an immediate ceasefire and an embargo on the sale of offensive weapons for this conflict.
 - ii. Call for a renewed peace process to establish a political settlement that guarantees freedom, justice and safety for both Israelis and Palestinians.
 - iii. Request central government funding to support community cohesion and peace-making at a local level.
 - Write to our local MPs and ask they use every avenue to pursue peace and to call for ceasefire now.
 - Work with partners to ensure safety for Islington's Muslim, Jewish, Arabic and all communities and to be ready to welcome refugees from Palestine.
 - Encourage interfaith and community groups to bid for funding, like Local Initiative Funding, to support community cohesion and peace-making.
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Motion 2 – Standing in solidarity with Islington’s diverse community in times of conflict by supporting the cessation of hostilities on all sides

Proposed by: Cllr Roulin Khondoker

Seconded by: Cllr Ilkay Cinko-Oner

Also supported by: Cllr John Woolf

This Council notes:

- The pain and trauma caused by the conflict in Israel and Palestine, and expresses solidarity with local people who have loved ones in the affected region, in particular concerned with the rising number of civilian deaths and unacceptable number of children who have been killed.
- Many local people have been deeply affected by the conflict, which is why our focus continues to be on ensuring our borough remains the cohesive, welcoming place we all know and love, and that our diverse communities are safe, reassured and know that we are on their side.
- Islington is a diverse place, with different communities from all around the world that have made this borough their home. Nearly 40% of people who live in Islington were born outside the UK and even more have parents and grandparents who came to this country and made Islington their home.
- Our continued celebration of Islington’s diverse faiths and community groups.
- Prominent faith leaders from across Islington, as well as both of our local MPs and Islington councillors from all parties came together in November to remember those who lost their lives in conflict and recommit to aim for peace across the world.

This Council further notes:

- There has been a vast increase in the number of hate crime incidents in Islington since the start of the conflict primarily incidents of antisemitism and Islamophobia.
- The support of Islington Faiths Forum with the organisation of a Peace Vigil in Islington Green in October, which was a chance for local faith leaders and representatives to come together, say prayers and mourn the loss of life we have seen during this conflict.
- The Council statement in November to mark Islamophobia Awareness Month, including the event held on Wednesday 29th November, reaffirmed our commitment to stand united in the face of Islamophobia and antisemitism, and all forms of hate in our communities.
- The Council’s previous adoption of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on British Muslims’ definition of Islamophobia in 2019 and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition of antisemitism in 2017.

- Over 300 organisations have signed the Islington Hate Crime Pledge, which is to allow individuals and organisations in the borough to support and participate in ongoing efforts to reduce hate crime in the area.

This Council resolves to:

- Support those in Islington with loved ones in the affected region by writing to the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition to support calls - made by the Mayor of London, a number of trade unions including Unite and UNISON, the UN General Assembly, over 200 countries and many global humanitarian aid agencies - for an immediate cessation to hostilities in Israel and Palestine, including an immediate humanitarian ceasefire and the release of hostages on both sides. Also to support calls for an investigation by the International Criminal Court into alleged breaches of international law during this conflict and to begin a political process for permanent peace.
 - Continue to work with faith and community leaders from across Islington to preserve and celebrate our borough's diversity and cohesion, this will include working with the Islington Faiths Forum to organise an inter-faith event in early 2024, allowing people from all parts of Islington to come together and celebrate our community's shared values.
 - Further promote the work of the Council's Hate Crime Prevention Champions, encouraging more local people to take ownership and support our drive to tackle hate crime in Islington.
 - Continue to promote the work of Islington-based charities working to support those affected by the humanitarian crisis in Israel and Palestine.
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Motion 3 – Protecting Islington’s families through the Childcare Crisis

Proposed by: Cllr Michelline Ngongo
Seconded by: Cllr Toby North

This Council notes:

- Access to quality, affordable childcare is vital to support children’s early years development, as well as enabling parents to return to work or training.
- Since 2010, the cost of childcare has risen by over £2000 a year. This equates to a 44% increase, leaving parents in a catch 22 situation as childcare costs continue to rise, whilst statutory maternity pay is down by 3% in real terms and the TUC says the country is in the longest pay squeeze for 200 years.
- Rates of pay for childcare workers fail to recognise the vital work they do and the important contribution they make in children’s early years development and advancing their future life chances.
- There are now more than 2 children for every childcare place in England, with a 19% decline in the number of childcare providers since 2017.
- Recent data from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) shows that the UK has the second most expensive childcare system in the world.
- A Trade Union Congress (TUC) poll of working parents with pre-school children – published in March of this year – revealed that one in three (32%) spend more than a third of their wages on childcare.
- Coupled with the cost of living crisis, one in four working London parents struggles to feed their family.
- Although the Department for Education announced the national average hourly funding rates on 29th November 2023, local authorities still need time to calculate the outcome of this for local people, which means childcare providers won’t know their actual rates until January.
- Islington was one of the first councils in the country to provide free school meals to all maintained nursery and primary schools, supporting families in financial hardship and ensuring every child has a hot meal.

This Council further notes:

- In summer 2023 there were 239 early years settings providing childcare in Islington. This included 123 childminders on the Early Years Register and 116 group and school-based nurseries.
- Islington offers subsidised childcare at the cost of £5 million through 19 Children Centre nurseries across the borough and on a smaller scale to 11 community based voluntary sector nurseries, to allow them to offer affordable places to local parents.

- The subsidy applies to places for children living in Islington aged from 6 months where both parents are working or studying. 669 places are provided at subsidised rates for Islington-resident working families, who are charged on a sliding scale according to family income.
- The Council Budget for 2022/23 which quadrupled the size of the childcare bursary scheme to £160,000, enabling up to 300 more parents to afford to get back into work or training, and has been maintained since.
- Islington's Bright Start Strategy 2023-28 developed in partnership with maternity, early childhood services and parents and carers, sets out our ambitions, priorities and commitments around increasing accessibility, reach and inclusion and developing our workforce.
- Our Bright Start service supports families who need extra help through our Family Support Surgeries, food packages at community events and working with our partners to set up warm spaces.
- The roll out of Family Hubs, providing universal prevention and early intervention services for children, young people, and their families from conception to 19 (or 25 for those with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)).
- Despite the Conservative government's announcement to expand 30 hours of "free childcare" scheme to all eligible children of working parents aged between nine months and two years by September 2025, this will only benefit working families, denying access to early childcare for our children from the lowest-income families and exacerbating inequalities from the moment a child enters the classroom.

This Council resolves to:

- Write to the Secretary of State for Education to call on the Government to:
 - work with childcare providers to ensure funding rates are increased in real terms and childcare workers are paid a decent living wage.
 - Provide universal free childcare for children over nine months old and support the Labour Party's policy of free breakfast clubs for all primary school children.
 - Support the Labour Party's call to an immediate review into childcare if they are elected to government, including a review into SEND provisions.
 - Continue to support parents and families with our family hubs, children's centres and other early years settings.
 - Protect Islington Council's investment in the Childcare Bursary and continue to help Islington's disadvantaged families through our free school meals and school uniform grant.
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