

LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON

COUNCIL MEETING 27TH JANUARY 2004

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At an **ORDINARY MEETING** of the Council held at the Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD on Tuesday, 27 JANUARY 2004, at 7.30pm.

Present:

The Mayor (Councillor Doreen Scott) in the Chair

Councillors:

ALLAN George
BAKER Graham
BARNES Dave
BERENT Anna
BLANCHARD James
BOFFA Donna
BURGESS Wally
CAMERON Euan
COUPLAND Joan
CREAGH Mary
DUNLOP Fiona
DUNN Margot
ECE Meral

FOX Bridget
GOWERS Emma
GREENING Richard
HESELTINE Richard
HITCHINS Steve
KASPRZYK Stefan
KEMPTON James
NEAVE Bruce
O'SULLIVAN Michael
POWELL Carol

PULHAM Adrian
SAWYER Derek
SHARMA Jay
SIDNELL Barbara
SMITH Barbara
SPALL Lisa
STACY Terry
TROTTER Joe
VAJA Jyoti
VALERY Dorrie
WEST Catherine
WILLOUGHBY Laura
WRIGHT Sylvia

1. MINUTES (Item 1)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the meeting held on 28 October 2003 be confirmed as a correct record and the Mayor be authorised to sign them.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 2)

None.

3. MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS (Item 3)**(a) Apologies for Absence**

Received from Councillors Bonner, Brook, Featherstone, Gibbons, Johnson, Mary Powell, Ray, Sharp and Watt.

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillors Barnes and Trotter.

(b) Order of Business

The Mayor agreed to a request from Councillor Sawyer that Items 10(i) – Question relating to the future of Arthur Simpson Library – and 11(4) – Motion relating to Play Centre Charges – be identified as urgent matters to be considered before 9.30 p.m.

In addition, the Mayor agreed to an item of urgent business from the Majority Party regarding University Top-up Fees. This would be considered under Item 12.

(c) The Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment Result

The Mayor stated that she was very pleased to announce that the results of the December Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) had moved the Council up one level, from poor to weak.

Councillor Stacy thanked all staff involved in the CPA process on this achievement, Members of the Council who had played a role, in particular, the members of Performance Review Committee and also the Members of the Improvement Board.

(d) Councillor Jay Sharma

The Mayor reported the election of and welcomed Councillor Sharma to the Council.

(e) Councillors Marisha Ray and Graham Hay Smith.

The Mayor congratulated both councillors on recent births and undertook to write to them extending the Council's congratulations.

(f) Holocaust Memorial Day

The Mayor reminded the Council that today was Holocaust Memorial Day and announced that the occasion had been marked by the mounting of an exhibition in the Islington Museum.

Councillor Dunn described an event organised by CEA @ Islington and the Young People's Services called 'From the Holocaust to Rwanda – lessons learned, lessons still to learn'.

(g) Death of former Councillors

The Mayor announced, with regret, the deaths of three former Councillors: Skip Gordon (Mayor for 1976/77), Doris Rogers (Mayor for 1978/79) and Helen Metcalfe.

Councillor Greening paid tribute to Helen Metcalfe, who had served as an Islington Councillor from 1971 to 1978.

The Council observed a period of silence as a mark of respect for the former Councillors and also for victims of the Holocaust.

4. PETITIONS (Item 4)

Petitions were received as follows:

- (a) From Councillor Stacy – from residents in Kelross Road, opposed to the proposed CPZ in the area.
- (b) From Councillor Allan – from persons opposed to the sale of Finsbury Town Hall to the Urdang Dance Company.
- (c) From Councillor Willoughby
 - (i) from persons opposed to the possible prosecution of someone who sold Christmas trees on Blackstock Road
 - (ii) from the Somali community, requesting a temporary place of worship.
- (d) From Councillor Sidnell - from residents of Millfield on Six Acres Estate, protesting about poor maintenance of stairwells.

5. CHIEF WHIP'S REPORT (Item 5)

The report of the Chief Whip was laid round.

Councillor Kasprzyk, seconded by Councillor Stacy, moved approval of the recommendation.

RESOLVED:

That the following appointments be made, for the periods shown, or until such time as successors are appointed:

Performance Review Committee	: Councillor Jay Sharma (until May 2004)
Overview Committee	: Councillor Jay Sharma as a substitute (until May 2004)
ALG Economic Development Committee	: Councillor Laura Willoughby to replace Councillor Kempton (until May 2004)
School Organisation Committee	: Councillor Wally Burgess to fill the Labour vacancy

Julie Horten) to fill secondary
Narayana Jayaram) governor vacancies
Phil Kelly) (until January 2007)

St. Sepulchre Charity : Councillor George Allan (until May 2006)

Richard Cloudesley Charity : David Stephens (Jan 2007) and
David Peel (Sept. 2005)

6. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC (Item 6)

(a) Jonathan Rutherford to the Executive Member for Regeneration and Education, Councillor James Kempton.

What alternative provision has the Council made to alleviate the loss of the Arthur Simpson Library, in particular for the large numbers of older and younger users of the ASL who will not be able to travel down to the new library in Blackstock Road?

Reply:

I hope that you and other members in the room have had the opportunity over the last couple of days to visit the new library in Blackstock Road and I hope, like me, you are incredibly impressed by what you have seen there. You know also that the new library will be open from tomorrow morning at 10 a.m., six days a week with extended hours into the evening on several of those days. We hope of course that many of the current users of Arthur Simpson Library will want to use the new N4 library.

However, during the course of the consultation we did listen to what people had to say and in particular the concerns that for certain groups in the community the journey down Stroud Green Road would be a more difficult one than it would be for others and as a result of that we've put in place some alternative library services, as we said that we would to try and minimise the difficulties that people will have in accessing local library services. I was going to refer to these but I know that you probably have already seen the leaflet which has been handed out to users of Arthur Simpson Library which sets these things out in some detail and does give the contact information.

I've made my own enquiries and as far as I can ascertain not a single book has been thrown away, indeed I have seen books that have been moved from Arthur Simpson Library to the new library. The only thing which is happening to the books is that the labels with Arthur Simpson contact information on are being removed and they are being replaced with stamp labels for the new library. That is the only thing which is happening. If you've got evidence that anything else is happening give it to me and I will make sure that it is stopped.

Can I finish answering the question, if I may, about the measures that have been put in place for those people who would find it more difficult than others to access the new library in Blackstock Road. First of all the home library service. People with limited mobility or those who are housebound can use a free service which is brought to them in their own homes by the Home Library Service. It includes large print and talking books, music and videos. The Home Library Service also provides collections of books for residential homes and day centres for older people. People who would like

to use this service can do so by telephoning 7527 7980. We also receive referrals from Social Services. The Home Library Service will then be in touch with the person who would like to use it and arrange an initial visit to discuss the number of visits, whether that's fortnightly or monthly, the interests of the people concerned and the types of books or videos that they would like to borrow.

I was particularly pleased to see in this month's edition of the Islington Pensioner News publicity for Home Library Service. This is an excellent service. It's one which could be more widely used by people in Islington and I think the sort of publicity that we have here is very well made.

Secondly, I want to talk about the new community libraries that have been established in the area. We have had for some time the community library established in the Andover and Six Acres Estates and another community library will open shortly at The Laundry at the Hanley Crouch Community Centre. These community libraries provide books and magazines for all ages and are open one morning a week.

Finally, for younger children we are working in partnership with Sure Start. An under fives library provision with Sure Start provides collections of books and story tapes for under fives and that's being set up at local community centres. An early literacy co-ordinator has been appointed. They've been in post for about a year funded by Sure Start, partly to achieve Sure Start's own objectives but also in anticipation of the closure of the Arthur Simpson Library and the things that we are now talking about. The early literacy co-ordinator is working on things like under fours story and rhymes sessions which we've got at Caxton House, at Whittington Park and sessions are also due to start at the Crouch Hill Community Centre in February. I hope that has covered the points you wanted to raise.

Supplementary Question

Council officers are currently drawing up the disposal strategy for the library building and the land. What measures is Councillor Kempton taking to ensure that this disposal strategy guarantees that the future use of the building and land will be for the benefit of local people in line with the aims and objectives of the Finsbury Park Regeneration Scheme and not used for commercial gain?

Reply:

I am not sure that I will be able to satisfy you with my answer and I am not entirely sure what you mean by about use for commercial gain. When the Executive took the decision to proceed with the new library which was in November 2002, some time ago now, we agreed that the capital receipts from the sale of the site would be used to help fund the new library. Since then we have maintained our pledge to keep the library open until the new N4 library opens and you will know from both the Arthur Simpson Library itself and also from contact with officers the arrangements that have been put in place to wind down the Arthur Simpson Library and to end book lending. I have already identified the other opportunities there will be to use library services in the locality but clearly I want to encourage people to go the N4 library.

Officers will subsequently dispose of that building. A planning advice note has been drawn up and the advice from planners is that the most suitable use of the

site is residential use or a mixed use scheme which may consist of residential with B1 use which could be offices, research and development or light industry or community use.

(b) Leo Chapman to the Executive Member for Sustainability, Councillor Bridget Fox

Why is the Council not proposing a park from City Road to the existing Graham Street Park in its proposals for the City Road Basin Masterplan instead of including just a 'stub park' in proposals seen so far?

Reply:

One of the benefits of having a Masterplan for the City Road Basin is that it enables us to get the different landowners to work together so that we can achieve our aspiration of opening up public access around the whole of the Basin for the first time. The existing planning permission for the Fidelity site at the head of the Basin includes a building near to, although not fully up to the Basin edge, which effectively blocks extending the park for the full length of the Basin. However the proposal as it currently stands will result in an increase in the green space available and more than double the publicly accessible open space.

I should add that the proposed park is not as described a 'stub park'. It's a linear park that will run most of the western side of the Basin providing additional green space and leisure facilities and in addition to this park there will be public access all around the Basin including new open space at the City Road end. There will also be access direct to public bus stops from the City Road Bridge. This means there will be a lot of pedestrian movement at the City Road end so having green space there as opposed to paved space may not be appropriate. That said, I am personally very keen on maximising green space and this has also been a theme of the consultation responses and the planners are already working to see if we can increase the amount of green available on site and improve its visibility from Graham Street. A revised Masterplan will come back to the South Area Committee on the 9th February and if agreed will then go to the Executive on the 18th March to be adopted as supplementary planning guidance.

Supplementary Question

Would you agree that with a 35 storey building proposed by the developers there the Master planners themselves have got a bit too close to the big developers involved in this, that's the trillion dollar Fidelity Investments and Groveworld which is owned from the tax haven of Gibraltar?

Reply:

Well, I don't think you are entirely well informed Mr. Chapman because my understanding is that the site on which Fidelity Investments have the leasehold is owned by British Waterways themselves who clearly have a benign interest in improving the Basin. But I think, as I have said, the benefit of Masterplanning is that it enables the very legitimate interests of the Council and the community to be taken to the developers and have a plan which brings them in rather than just letting them have

a free range to do what they want with their sites subject to planning permission. A Masterplanning approach is a much better way of getting a constructive outcome.

7. QUESTION FROM MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL (Item 10(i))

(i) Councillor Derek Sawyer to Councillor James Kempton, Executive Member for Regeneration and Education

It is well-known that the Arthur Simpson Library building is to be sold off. Can you give me an assurance that the community, to whom it currently belongs, will have continued access to it as a local resource, or is its fate to be that of Finsbury Town Hall: to be mothballed for years whilst the Lib Dems look for luxury developers to buy it?

Reply:

The cost of the new N4 library is somewhere in the region of £1.3million. We have anticipated that some of that cost would be met from the sale of the Arthur Simpson Library and that clearly is the case. None of us at the moment know how much Arthur Simpson Library will raise and therefore this has been funded in advance from the capital corporate pot and the Arthur Simpson money will go in to reimburse it. But I think it is a very wise decision made by my colleagues to ensure that we didn't close one library and sell it off in order to get the money in advance of building the new library but we have been able to reach an arrangement where we effectively borrowed from other corporate receipts.

Clearly there is very likely to be a gap between the value of the Arthur Simpson site which is relatively small compared to the vastly superior site in Blackstock Road which, as you know, is bigger and better and therefore there is the substantial contribution from the Council's other corporate receipts. I think if there is a community use for that building and people want to buy it for the community then clearly they will do so but we have certainly found that it's not an ideal location. It's a great location for the people in and around Hanley Road as a local community resource but there are other community buildings in the area not least the Hanley Crouch Community Centre.

Supplementary:

The fact is you don't need the money as you've said because you've already built the new library. Why can't you recognise the concerns of the people in the area who have already seen a whole range of their community buildings closed by you at a time when it's supposed to be a part of the Finsbury Park SRB area? On the one hand the Finsbury Park SRB is trying to encourage more community resources in that area, trying to build up the capacity of the community and you are closing down and selling off buildings. You have closed down the Ormond Road Workshop, you have closed down the Charteris Community Centre, now you are closing down another community facility. Why can't you recognise that the Council has a responsibility other than just earning money, that it actually has a responsibility to keep community facilities that were built by the public with public money and keep them used by the local community.

Reply:

Obviously that's true and I could list a large number of community facilities that are even within my portfolio area within the Tollington Ward. To name a nursery, a primary school and a secondary school but clearly there are a lot of community facilities still in that Ward and what we have set out to do is to ensure that we use those facilities more intensively and I am hoping that the report which is being considered by the Scrutiny Committee on extended schools will do just that. The fact is that we have schools that are open only 39 weeks of the year, that aren't open at weekends very much, that are closed at 3.30 in the afternoon. They are underused community facilities as well and I think that what we need to focus on is how we make the best of the money that we've got. I think that we've got a good deal here, a brand new library, the first new library since the 1980's, funded by closing down a community facility yes, but there are many other community facilities in that Ward and throughout the Borough. We are talking about hundreds of them. You certainly didn't follow a similar pattern when you decided to close the community facility of St. Luke's Library. I think what we are doing is far superior to that decision.

So I think that what we've got here is a valuable local resource, a high quality local resource and I don't think anyone in the room would deny that. Really the question I want to ask you is which of you sitting over there prefers Arthur Simpson to the new library, because in truth there's a choice between the two. You can't just magic money from nowhere, the two are linked. Which of you would like to go back in time and keep Arthur Simpson that the Mayor, for example, couldn't get into. Which of you would like to do that compared to the new library?

8. COUNCIL TAX BASE CALCULATIONS 2004/05 (Item 7)

Councillor Allan, seconded by Councillor Stacy, moved approval of the recommendations in the report.

Councillors Greening, Heseltine, Creagh and Hitchins contributed to a debate on the matter and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED:

- (a) That the calculation of the Council's Tax Base for the year 2004/05 be approved.
- (b) That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended), the amount calculated by the Council as its Tax Base for the whole area for the year 2004/05 be 76,979.45 Band D equivalent properties, adjusted for non-collection.
- (c) That, for the purposes of Section 35(1) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the expenses of meeting the special levy to be issued by the Lloyd Square Garden Management Committee on the Council are to be special expenses.
- (d) That, in accordance with the Local Authorities (Calculation of Council Tax Base) Regulations 1992 (as amended), the Tax Base applying for the special levy for the Lloyd Square Garden area for the year 2004/05 be 51.49 Band D equivalent properties, adjusted for non-collection.

(e) That resolutions (c) and (d) above remain in force for the current financial year or until rescinded.

(f) That, pursuant to Section 11A(3) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, the discount under section 11(2)(a) of the Local Government Finance Act 1992 for the year 2004/05 shall be 10% in respect of all dwellings in its area within Class B (as defined by Regulation 5 of the Council Tax (Prescribed Classes of Dwellings)(England) Regulations 2003)('Second Homes').

(g) That the projected position on the Collection Fund at 31st March 2004, detailed in paragraphs 4.2 and 4.4 of the report by the Executive Member for Resources, be noted.

9. PROCUREMENT CODE (Item 8)

Councillor Stacy, seconded by Councillor Cameron, moved approval of the recommendations in the report.

Councillors Creagh and Sawyer contributed to a debate on the matter.

Following a vote, it was

RESOLVED:

(a) That the revised Procurement Code, attached to the report by the Director of Law and Public Services, be approved.

(b) That the definition of 'key decision' contained within the Constitution be amended to increase the financial limits to £500,000 for revenue expenditure and £1 million for capital expenditure where the decision concerned is the acceptance of a tender for goods, works or services.

(c) That the Director of Law and Public Services be authorised to make any consequential amendments to the Constitution, including to the Financial Regulations.

10. NOTICE OF MOTION (Item 11(4))

PLAYCENTRE CHARGES

Councillor Pulham, seconded by Councillor West, moved the motion printed in his name.

Councillors Kempton, Ece, Barnes, Creagh and Pulham contributed to a debate on the matter.

Following a vote, the motion was declared LOST.

11. BUSINESS FOR THE INFORMATION OF THE COUNCIL (Item 9)

Noted the report by the Director of Law and Public Services relating to Moorfields Primary School and primary organization issues in the south of the Borough.

12. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Item 10)**(a) Councillor Catherine West to Councillor Meral Ece, Executive Member for Health and Social Care**

Could the Executive Member for Health and Social Care please describe the Council's vision of corporate parenting for the borough's children?

Reply:

When we were elected as Councillors we took on an important responsibility for the health and well being of all children in our care. We have particular responsibility for securing the care and protection of children. Corporate parenting is the term used to describe the Council's responsibility for the children who are looked after, that's children in its care and those who have left care. At any one time Islington has 460 children, looked after children, and is working through Shaftesbury with 200 plus young people who have left care with whom we still have responsibility for.

There is a report coming to the Executive on the 12th February which outlines the Council's vision. It is a very comprehensive report which sets out where we want to be in terms of raising educational achievements and the health of looked after children. The essential point here is the notion of parenting. Islington Council wants to model how it cares for its looked after children on how a good parent would care for their own children. This means a number of things. It means having high hopes and expectations for the children and doing everything possible to ensure they achieve good outcomes in their lives. That they have a stable family base and they have the chance and support to do well at school. That they are healthy and have healthy lifestyles, that they can form good relationships and enter adulthood confident and ambitious.

We know the children in care of Islington have not done well in the past. The SSI inspection report in January 2003 pointed out the poor outcomes Islington's children achieved in areas such as health and education. Compared with other boroughs a smaller proportion of Islington children are in foster care and many are placed out of the borough. Therefore we know that if we are going to be good parents for those children there's a great deal more to be done and it's for this reason that strategies have been developed to promote good educational and health outcomes and that we have improved the allowances for Islington's foster carers. We have also established the new Corporate Parenting Group comprising Councillors and senior officers which will work proactively to ensure all the different parts of the Council harness their resources and work together to provide collective parenting and Councillor West will know the first of these meetings is scheduled for this coming Friday, 30th.

However our vision is broader than those children who are looked after. Any care system has inherent weaknesses and therefore it is imperative for us to prevent as many children as possible from actually coming into care in the first place and to help them and their parents to thrive in the community. This is why we are developing a coherent family support strategy with partner agencies and the voluntary sector to focus and harness help for the children in need.

So in summary, to answer the question, our vision is this. Help as many children in need to stay with their families and help their parents to provide good parenting. For those children who do have to come into this Council's care, ensure that the care provided is excellent. We know that it will be excellent when we would be happy as parents for one of our children to be in the Council's care.

Supplementary:

Would the Executive Member for Social Services and Health agree with the Labour Councillors that this took rather a long time to get round to develop? We had our first meeting last July and the report on your vision isn't coming forward until the 12th February. That's rather a long time. Furthermore would she also agree that the Council is presently lacking in ambition for young people in care and that in particular young people presently assisted by the Council are not being encouraged to reach their full potential educationally with only 31% of children leaving care at age 16 with a GCSE or GNVQ and would she not agree with me that it is scandalous that only 39% of looked after children in Islington receive the necessary health checks which they are entitled to?

Reply:

I agree it did take some time to get this off the ground and running. The reason for that is the reorganisation and new recruitment that we've been actively involved with in the past year and this has hindered some of the progress that we would have liked to have made. It simply wasn't feasible to get all the different areas of corporate parenting up and running without the relevant team leaders and the managers for those relevant departments in place. We couldn't do it with agency staff and that's one of the reasons it's taken some time. But that doesn't mean that we are not going to push ahead and try to do as much as we can in the time that we have.

I agree with you educationally it's not good. The report that I mentioned to you that would be going to the Executive on the 12th, you will see in there a very comprehensive outline of where we are in terms of education of looked after children and very challenging targets as to where we want to be and we are doing this with the assistance of CEA and our other partners in trying to achieve that. I believe that we are going to make some real progress because we have got the commitment now, people are coming together to really get behind this and make it happen.

Equally with the health of looked after children, in the past, you are right, the targets in terms of health checks, dental checks, all the sorts of things that any parent would make sure that their children had, have not been fully met but now there are more resources that have been put in place. But more money has been put into the Children and Families Service to make sure that we can reach these targets now and one of the reasons that we are having to look at savings in other areas is because we have had to re-prioritise children and families in this way. Precisely for the reasons why you have asked me this evening what our vision is. Our vision is to have an excellent Children and Families Service and we can't do that without the resources in place and we've made sure we've got them there.

(b) Councillor Catherine West to Councillor Laura Willoughby, Executive Member for Communities

What role do community services play in creating a good borough to live in where quality of life and people's welfare are paramount?

Reply:

We are very proud to have a very strong and developing relationship with the voluntary sector and community groups and there are many principles with which Liberal Democrats have chosen to move this relationship forward.

First, that involving the community is an essential building block in improving services, building civic pride and creating sustainable communities. We believe strongly that where possible we will devolve as many decisions to local communities and allow people to participate in the democratic process. Area Committees are just one example of this. We will work with the constraints now upon us from Central Government in terms of finance and new partnerships arrangement and make them work for Islington. We also recognise that the community and voluntary sector is a very varied group of organisations right from paid for voluntary sector to voluntary community groups.

We also believe in helping individuals achieve their full potential and take their equal role in society and part of that is about empowering community groups and not creating a dependency culture and that all organisations in this borough have a role in creating a better Islington and definitely helping us achieve our vision for an A1 borough.

I think that, in terms of what the voluntary sector offer us, is actually very important. Community organisations have strong links with local people, often built up over many years and the best community organisations are trusted and valued by local people that can help involve them in a range of activities, both by the Council and also our statutory sector partners. They have connections with communities that can often be hard to reach by all agencies as well as the Council such as black and ethnic minority communities, young lesbian and gay men, carers and those communities which serve as mediators between the statutory agencies and our hard to reach communities. They are also very important in achieving our community cohesion goals and we have identified quite heavily that there are three particular areas of community cohesion where community groups need to help us. That's an inter-generational divide about cultural difference and the big fiscal divide in this borough, the big gap between the rich and the poor.

Voluntary and community organisations work flexibly with people finding ways to deliver services which match the reality of people's circumstances and lifestyles and through that we are hoping they'll help us create an A1 borough. They also can provide a base for people to use their skills and contribute to their communities both as volunteers and in housing other services such as on-line centres and can help us and communities respond quickly to change in circumstances and new needs. A good example of that is some of the issues around the top of Blackstock Road and of course most of all that they can help feed in to policy-makers, all of us, as well as national policy-makers and give us the evidence that we need to make sure we make the right decisions. User groups and others have been essential in our consultations over recent weeks.

So for this reason and many more we are trying to develop stronger and more vital links with the voluntary and community sector. Firstly we have got the new compact which is an agreement that was agreed in September and launched jointly by IVAC and ourselves in December which actually sets out very closely the working relationship between the voluntary sector and the Council and this isn't a document that's going to sit on the shelf. It has an action plan with it on ways that we are going to change our behaviour and approach and the way the voluntary sector will begin to learn to understand some of the constraints on us and it's definitely looking at how we commission service, promote equal opportunities and encourage volunteering.

Just before Christmas, on the 9th December, we also held a voluntary sector networking event. This wasn't a conference; it was very much about bringing together officers from across the Council and people in the voluntary and community sector to start talking to each other. Often the voluntary sector moan that they are not on certain people's radar, that they don't often get the networking opportunities and it was a very successful day. There were 450-500 individuals from both the Council and the voluntary and community sector and we have had very warm feedback, but it really is only the start and we need to build on this, take some of that feedback away and look at how we develop that relationship in the future.

Every department in this Council has a link with voluntary and community groups, from Social Services through to Greenspace who contract some Greenspace maintenance to voluntary and community groups and it's important that we as a Council take that corporate responsibility. The Council is also involved in many partnerships in the voluntary community sector through the Islington Strategic Partnership and other partnerships such as the health partnership, business, jobs and training partnership and Sure Start.

I am pleased that, through the active citizenship group that I chair, we are doing some particular work or working on looking at the needs of community organisations that don't get a lot of funding and don't have staff. We also are working with community based organisations such as the Faith Network, the LGB Network, the BME Network and these will be very important organisations in terms of delivering our equality standard across the Council, both in terms of service delivery and our duty to promote race equality and other equalities challenges and we are also working through partnerships in terms of developing funding.

We have £1million funding that secures Healthy Living in Islington where the Octopus Network which is the linking of a number of community groups that come together to look at how they access funding. We also have European funding for projects like the Reflex Project and we also spend around £4million of the Council's budget through regeneration education on a wide range of services for local people from childcare to youth work to mother tongue classes to community arts and services for newly arrived communities.

Supplementary:

Would you not agree with me and Labour colleagues that the vicious nature of the present cuts package in the 2004/2005 budget affecting older people, people with a mental illness and those with a disability, completely and utterly contradicts your vision for a cohesive community within Islington? And wouldn't you agree with me that it's somewhat at odds for the Executive Member for Communities to support such brutal

targeting of the cuts on the voluntary sector which surely is integral to the concept of achieving a better community for all and may I just quote one example – the appalling manner in which older people are treated by this Council, where on the 100th anniversary of the Claremont Day Centre in White Lion Street, the cutting of Whittington Day Centre for Older People, the above inflation 10p increase on Meals on Wheels for which older people in the community regardless of their circumstances will have to pay and are not these measures somewhat at odds with the Liberal Democrat's national policy, their wish list, of providing free long term care for the elderly? We can't even get free meals for our people locally but nationally they want everybody to have long term care. Please explain?

Reply:

No I don't agree with you and the consultation on these matters is still ongoing.

(CE's note: The time allowed for Members' questions having expired, written answers were sent in respect of questions (c)-(h) and (j) as set out below).

(c) Councillor Joan Coupland to Councillor Bridget Fox, Executive Member for Sustainability

I know a lot of pensioners who use the pedestrian crossing at the Angel and think it is a nightmare. Can you please give me an update on the campaign to make this crossing safer?

Note by Chief Executive: At Councillor Coupland's request, this question is to be resubmitted for reply at the next Council meeting.

(d) Councillor Margot Dunn to Councillor James Kempton, Executive Member for Regeneration and Education

How many members of the Liberal Democrat group are governors of schools in Islington? How many members of the Labour group are school governors?

Reply:

22 of the 38 Liberal Democrat councillors are governors of Islington schools, while 3 of the 10 Labour councillors are Islington governors.

(e) Councillor Keith Sharp to Councillor Arnie Gibbons, Executive Member for Resources

Could you please give me an update of the progress being made on the balance of funding review?

Reply:

I thank Cllr Sharp for his continued interest in the subject. It has become one of increasing interest throughout the country. The shortcomings of council tax were not given adequate consideration at the time of its introduction – and these are now becoming manifestly apparent.

In particular council tax is not linked to ability to pay and this has created considerable difficulties, particularly for people on low income, in an environment where only a small proportion of local government expenditure is raised locally.

The effect of “gearing” – whereby a 1% increase in council expenditure gives rise to a 4 1/2% increase in council tax – creates tremendous upward pressure on council tax bills in an environment where there are ever increasing demands on council budgets. Notwithstanding this Islington has done its utmost to keep council tax bills at a manageable level. That part of the council tax that is the direct responsibility of Islington (ie excluding the GLA precept and levies from bodies such as the North London Waste Authority) has increased by less than half a percent over the last five years.

The Audit Commission report “Council Tax increases 2003/2004 - Why were they so high?” concludes:

“There are underlying problems that cannot easily be addressed by making changes to the existing system. The system is far too complex for citizens – and many involved in the decision-making processes – to understand, and there is no direct relationship between decisions to spend and increases in local taxation. The consequences are lack of accountability.”

The Balance of Funding Review was set up by the ODPM in April 2003. There was a background of concern over the effects of the impending revaluation (expected in 07/08) and this was compounded by the large increases in council tax nationally last year which lead to the Audit Commission report I have just quoted from. It is clear from the original brief that the intention was to consider alternative sources of funding as “optional sources of additional revenue at the margins”. That is a direct quote from the papers presented to its first meeting.

It is now clear that, as the pressure for wholesale reform grows, the Balance of Funding Review has now expanded its role to consider wholesale reform of the present system. I welcome the recognition by central Government that tinkering with council tax is not a realistic option – wholesale reform is needed to solve the problems inherent in the present system. This council has passed a motion calling for local income tax to be the principle form of funding for local Government, and this was reflected in the council’s submission to the balance of funding review.

In its submission the Local Government Association, which represents councils of all political persuasions, includes a local income tax within the range of options that it would like the Balance of Funding Review to consider.

The Government cannot keep levels of council tax down simply by making menacing noises and sending out threatening letters. Only a root and branch reform will deliver a system that is fair and transparent, one that does not place too onerous a burden on pensioners and others with fixed incomes. It is encouraging that the Balance of Funding Review is now moving towards acceptance of this message, and I hope that this council will continue to press that message for the sake of our citizens.

(f) Councillor James Blanchard to Councillor Wally Burgess, Chair of Sustainability Review Committee

In the light of your comments condemning Councillors who try to become MPs elsewhere, do you regard it as sustainable for a member of this Council to seek to become the Member of Parliament for Blaenau Gwent?

Reply:

Sustainability may be defined as “meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”.

As we know, Cyngor Bwrdeisdref Sirol Blaenau Gwent - known in English as *Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council* - has a fully-functioning sustainability agenda. For example, they have a Trade Eco Centre which welcomes recycling from trade and commercial sources, at the Waun-y-pound Industrial Estate, Ebbw Vale.

They recycle the usual range of materials but also items such as: scrap metal, fluorescent tubes, car batteries, wood and most importantly, domestic electrical appliances (i.e. toasters, kettles, TVs, computers).

The new service is part of Blaenau Gwent’s drive to dramatically increase recycling as a means of dealing with waste, without sending it to landfill sites. Therefore, it is safe to say that Blaenau Gwent is itself sustainable.

The next aspect of your question concerns the sustainability of representing a constituency in Wales, living in Islington and working in Westminster. (Of course, this question is a little academic since Councillor Mary Creagh isn’t Blaenau Gwent’s chosen prospective candidate.)

We need to examine the comparative sustainability of that scenario with one involving living in Islington, working in Westminster as a peer and also in Brussels as an MEP. Is it less sustainable for a Councillor to travel from Islington to Blaenau Gwent or for a Baroness to travel to Brussels – and Strasbourg? That is the question.

In terms of sustainability in general and Councillor Mary Creagh in particular, it is she who cycles around the borough. And so she did even when heavily pregnant. You can’t be much more dedicated to sustainability than riding a bike and having children. After all, our children are the future generations who will continue our species and who in their turn will care for the world and its ecology.

So – is it less sustainable being an MP in Westminster and living in Islington compared with being a peer in Westminster and being an MEP in Brussels? I would think it’s a fine judgement.

Of course, while one is travelling from London to Brussels, it’s not too much of a diversion occasionally to call in at Soissons.

Soissons is a cathedral city to the North East of Paris. Its ancient cathedral is well known and was built up over the centuries. “La cathédrale Saint Gervais et Saint Protais de Soissons n'est pas un édifice homogène.” One might be forgiven for believing that this description was originally penned to describe the current

Administration.

The first cathedral was built in the 6th century as a shrine to Saint Crispin, who, in the 3rd century, with his fellow Christians, preached in the streets by day and made shoes by night.

He was martyred by torture and beheading.

Saint Crispin's day was made famous by Henry V's speech before the Battle of Agincourt – *as reported by William Shakespeare*.

He inspires his army thus:

“We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
This day shall gentle his condition:
And gentlemen in England now a-bed
Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.”

Saint Crispin – preaching by day and making shoes by night.
Is it surprising, therefore, that he has been given the patronage of shoemakers?
He is the patron saint of cobblers.
Which brings me back to Councillor Blanchard and his question.
May Saint Crispin bless you. Keep up the good work. When we listen carefully
can we just hear your whispered prayer to your patron? :

“*S'il vous plaît – plus de cordonniers. Je suis un membre de l'administration!*”
“More cobblers, please – I'm a member of the Administration!”

(g) Councillor Richard Greening to Councillor George Allan, Executive Member for Customer Focus

How much does Islington Council spend on publicity expenditure per head of population?

Reply:

The amount the Council invests in publicising the Council's work and policies is the equivalent of £3.92 per resident per year.

(h) Councillor Graham Baker to Councillor James Kempton, Executive Member for Regeneration and Education

Can you tell me how Islington's schools compared to others in the country in the new league tables produced by the National Audit Office which take into account factors like deprivation levels?

Reply:

The Government's enthusiasm on the use of crude league tables, a Tory policy (yet another Tory policy!), takes no account of pupils' prior attainment or personal

circumstances to make judgements about the performance of schools and LEAs. Many people, myself included, have criticised this as unfair and unhelpful. Finally in response, the Department for Education and skills (DfES), the National Audit Office (NAO) and others, including Ofsted, have begun to make use of other measures to assess the value that schools are adding to children's educational attainment.

The most widely used of these is DfES's measure of "value added", which looks at the progress that pupils make from one key stage to the next. A value added score of 100 for a school indicates that the children in that particular school are making the average level of progression between the key stages. Scores of greater than 100 indicate that the school is achieving value added results that are above the national average, while scores that are lower than 100 indicate value added results below the national average. The overall value added results in Islington schools for 2003 were 100.2 for progression from Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 2 (ie the Key Stage 2 results), 98.7 for progression from KS2 to KS3 (the Key Stage 3 results) and 101.7 for progression from KS3 to KS4 (the GCSE results).

Whilst these value added results are more helpful than the traditional league tables, they do not take into account the fact that some groups of children, such as those with English as an additional language, may find it more difficult to progress from one Key Stage to the next. The National Audit Office therefore carried out a piece of work which was published in November which took into account a range of factors that have been shown to have a correlation with pupil attainment. These included the proportion of children in the school with special education needs, with English as an additional language, who are eligible for free school meals, and so on. The NAO report, which focused on Key Stage 3 results, concluded that when contextual factors were taken into account, Islington secondary school performance was the 9th best in the country. This contrasts sharply with the DfES Key Stage 3 value added results, which show Islington to be below national averages at this key stage.

So what does all this tell us about how Islington schools are really performing? At Key Stages 2 and 4, the value added results show that Islington schools are out-performing the national average in terms of the value they are adding, even before any additional contextual factors are taken into account. This was borne out by the six percentage point improvement in the number of pupils achieving 5 or more top GCSE passes. At Key Stage 3, the picture is more mixed, and while the NAO study provides a helpful acknowledgement of the barriers to learning faced by a proportion of pupils in Islington schools, it is essential that we continue to provide the highest standards of education to overcome these barriers. The Council will therefore continue to work with CEA@Islington and schools to ensure that improvements are sustained.

(j) Councillor Mary Creagh to Councillor Bridget Fox, Executive Member for Sustainability

Given that NCP wardens were issuing parking penalties between Christmas and New Year, why did you not ensure that the Municipal Offices would be open at this time to allow residents to purchase or renew parking permits?

Reply:

I am aware of this issue and have discussed it with the Director of Customer Focus. Contact Islington's opening hours are widely publicised. While the Council gave every notice possible that the Municipal Offices would be closed over the Christmas period,

unfortunately a small number of residents who wanted to renew permits during the holidays were put out. I agree that this is regrettable. It is a lesson learnt and one that we shall bear in mind for future years.

The good news is that we are opening new parking shops for easy access to parking services throughout the year. By April, we will have one at Clifton Terrace, and a second at Waterloo Gardens off Milner Square. A third parking shop is proposed for the southern end of the borough in Old Street later this year. While Contact Islington and the Municipal Offices will still be the main contact base for parking services, the parking shops will offer permit applications and voucher sales from 08.00 to 18.00 Monday to Friday and 09.00 to 17.00 on Saturday.

The Council has responsibility for enforcing decriminalised parking and traffic offences all day and all year round, many of which are unrelated to permits or vouchers. Many enforcement services, such as the noise patrol or licensing, operate outside office hours; it would therefore be a bad principle to limit enforcement to the times that Council offices are open.

If you would like to discuss this matter further, please do not hesitate to contact me, or the Director of Customer Focus.

13. NOTICES OF MOTION (Item 11)

10.1 EAST LONDON LINE EXTENSION

Councillor Fox, seconded by Councillor Valery, moved the motion printed in her name.

Councillors Burgess, Kasprzyk, Pulham and Fox contributed to a debate on the matter.

Following a vote, it was

RESOLVED: That

- (a) Council re-affirms its commitment to improving public transport in Islington.
- (b) Council believes that improved transport connections are important both for regenerating the borough and for delivering the borough's sustainable transport policy.
- (c) Council welcomes:
 - the news that the East London Line northern extension is now going ahead
 - the opportunity to improve links between the North London Line and the tube network
 - the inclusion of two East London Line stops in Islington, at Highbury and Islington Station and at Canonbury Station.
- (d) Council notes:
 - that the East London Line trains will have to pass through the station at Caledonian Road and Barnsbury to reach the turning point near Kings Cross.
 - that the community around Caledonian Road and Barnsbury has experienced

- severe disturbance and disruption from CTRL and other rail works without direct benefit
- that Liberal Democrat councillors have met with both the Mayor of London and Lynne Featherstone, Chair of the GLA's Transport Committee, to press for an East London Line stop at Caledonian Road and Barnsbury Station.
- (e) Council strongly believes that an East London Line stop at Caledonian Road and Barnsbury will bring many benefits to the surrounding area.
- (f) Council welcomes the recent announcement by the Mayor of London that he will look into the proposal.
- (g) Council therefore calls on the Executive Member for Sustainability and all members to continue to press the Mayor of London in support of this improvement.

10.2 SAVE THE PENSION BOOK

Councillor Willoughby, seconded by Councillor Dunn, moved the motion printed in her name.

Councillor Greening stated that the amendments proposed by the Labour Group, which had been laid round, were withdrawn.

Councillor Burgess contributed to a debate on the matter.

Following a vote, it was

RESOLVED: That

- (a) Council notes that more than half of Islington pensioners collect their pension at a local post office using a pension book.
- (b) Council also notes the Labour Government's plans to scrap pension books and force pensioners to only receive pensions through their bank accounts or by automated payments.
- (c) This Council condemns the Labour Government's plans because:
- current pensioners should have the freedom to choose how they want to receive their pension – including with a pension book
 - the Government have already backed plans to close up to 3000 urban post offices and scrapping the pension book will threaten the future of post offices even more
 - the Government's plans to change the way benefits are paid are both unnecessary and needlessly complicated.
- (d) Council welcomes the launch of a borough-wide petition to save the pension book and the on-going campaign against post office closures in Islington by the Liberal Democrats.

(e) Council therefore calls on:

- the Government to stop their plans to take away pension books
- all Islington pensioners who want to keep their pension book to write to the Government expressing their opposition and asking them to reconsider.

10.3 and 10.5 GENETICALLY MODIFIED FOODS AND FAIRTRADE/CREATING A FAIR TRADE BOROUGH

The Mayor stated that, as motions 10.3 and 10.5 related to the same subject matter, she proposed that Council consider them together. An amendment was laid round to Motion 10.3 which effectively amalgamated the two motions.

Councillor Fox, seconded by Councillor Berent, moved the motion printed in her name, as amended.

Councillors Creagh and Burgess welcomed the merger of motions 10.3 and 10.5.

Following a vote on the amendment to motion 10.3, it was declared carried.

RESOLVED:

(a) This Council notes that sustainability is a key Council priority and is already being integrated into all Council services, promoted both within the Council and externally in the community.

(b) Council therefore believes it must also adopt a sustainable approach to food.

(c) Council notes that in relation to genetically modified (GM) foods:

- there is increasing concern from members of the public over GM food and the possible effects on the environment
- there is still scientific debate about the safety of GM crops and that the commercial growing of GM crops also presents legal and ethical problems
- more than half of Britons who took part in a nationwide debate on genetically modified crops said they should never be introduced under any circumstances and only 2% said they would be happy to eat GM foods
- the Economic Review, conducted by the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit, concluded that there is no commercial market for GM foods in the short term due to public suspicion and a lack of demand.

(d) Council also notes that Fairtrade is a growing, international movement which ensures that producers in poor countries get a fair deal and welcomes the growing support for fair trade products in the local community.

(e) This Council welcomes:

- that school meals are already GM free and that school tea and coffee is fair trade

- the work that local Liberal Democrat MEP Sarah Ludford has done in encouraging the EU's institutions to use fair trade tea and coffee in their cafes, bars and coffee rooms
- the support for healthy food and fair trade shown by the success of the farmers market in Islington and that another one in Chapel Market is being launched next year
- the work done to date on the new green procurement code which will form the basis of more detailed procurement guidance including green and ethical procurement.

(f) This Council undertakes:

- to write to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs urging her to continue the UK moratorium on the production of GM food to allow further research to take place
- to investigate the implications of making social services meals on wheels and other social services catering GM free
- to work towards achieving 'Fair Trade Borough' status and pledge its support to the Fairtrade Foundation.
- to promote the use of fair trade products wherever possible and to offer fair trade tea and coffee at council meetings
- to investigate the possibility of setting up an organic farmers' market in Islington
- to review the Council's own procurement policies such as those of its suppliers and contractors, and purchase fair trade wherever possible
- consider promoting awareness of fair trade issues through its 'Islington' magazine and make publicity and education material available to local people concerning the impact of unfair trade and the opportunities that fair trade provides to promote sustainable development
- promote fair trade issues and practices amongst local businesses, commercial and other organisations.

14. MATTERS OF URGENCY (Item 12)

UNIVERSITY TOP UP FEES

Councillor Willoughby, seconded by Councillor Fox, moved the motion printed in her name, which had been laid round.

Councillors Pulham, Blanchard, Creagh and Heseltine contributed to a debate on the matter.

Following a vote, it was

RESOLVED:

That Council notes:

- (a) that despite a Government majority of 180, this evening MPs have voted by just five votes to support the Government's proposals to increase the financial burdens on students through the introduction of top-up fees
- (b) that this will impose hardship on many of the more than 40,000 students living in Islington at any one time, and deter many potential future undergraduates from going to university
- (c) the different public positions taken by Islington's two Members of Parliament, to the problems being faced by our two local universities and students living in Islington and others intending to progress into higher education
- (d) that Council welcomes local Labour MP Jeremy Corbyn's brave decision to vote against his own Government's Higher Education Funding Bill, acknowledging that supporting variable top-up fees will break his Labour election manifesto pledges
- (e) with regret, that his colleague, Chris Smith MP, as reported in recent newspapers, has changed his mind on the issue of top-up fees since he originally signed the Early Day Motion opposing them
- (f) that key discussions and votes on the future of this Bill will be taking place during February, and resolves to urge both MPs to lobby their colleagues on the Bill's Standing Committee to bring forward amendments to prevent the introduction of variable top-up fees.

The meeting closed at 10.25 p.m.

MAYOR