

LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON

COUNCIL MEETING – 22 November 2005

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the **ORDINARY MEETING** of the Council held at the Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD on Tuesday, 22 November 2005, at 7.30pm.

Present:

The Mayor (Councillor Jonathan Dearth) in the Chair

Councillors:

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|------------------|
| ALLAN George | FOX Bridget | SAWYER Derek |
| BAKER Graham | GIBBONS Arnie | SCOTT Doreen |
| BARNES Dave | GOWERS Emma | SHARMA Jay |
| BLANCHARD James | GREENING Richard | SHARP Keith |
| BOFFA Donna | HITCHINS Steve | SIDNELL Barbara |
| BONNER Daniel | JOHNSON Heather | SMITH Barbara |
| BURGESS Wally | KASPRZYK Stefan | SPALL Lisa |
| COUPLAND Joan | KEMPTON James | STACY Terry |
| DEBONO Theresa | NEAVE Bruce | TROTTER Joe |
| DUNLOP Fiona | O'SULLIVAN Michael | VAJA Jyoti |
| DUNN Margot | POWELL Carol | WATT Lucy |
| ECE Meral | PULHAM Adrian | WEST Catherine |
| FEATHERSTONE Ed | RAY Marisha | WILLOUGHBY Laura |
| | | WRIGHT Sylvia |

1. MINUTES (Item 1)

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the Council held on 13 September 2005 be confirmed as a correct record and that the Mayor be authorised to sign them.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 2)

Councillor Hitchins declared a personal interest in Item 11.4 (motion re: World Aids Day) and Councillor Kempton declared a prejudicial interest in Item 11.6 (motion re: playcentres).

3. MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS (Item 3)

(i) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were reported from Councillors Berent, Brook, Cameron, Heseltine, Mary Powell and Valery.

(ii) Order of Business

No change.

(iii) Opposition discussion items

The Mayor agreed that items 11.3 (motion re: local authority business growth incentives schemes) and 11.6 (motion re: playcentres) should be considered before 9.30pm.

(iv) Death of former Councillor Archie Hull

The Mayor reported with sadness the death of former Councillor Archie Hull. Councillor Hull had been Chief Whip of the Conservative administration during 1968-71.

(v) Agnes Seeley

The Mayor was pleased to report that on 21 October he had attended the 100th birthday of Agnes Seeley. Agnes was the Mayor of the Metropolitan Borough of Islington in 1960/61.

(vi) International in Islington

The Mayor detailed events in connection with his theme for the year.

4. PETITIONS (Item 4)

Petitions were received as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Councillor Stacy | Repair of front door of Grove House, Aberdeen Park |
| Councillor West | Funding of police officers in Finsbury Park |
| Councillor Willoughby | Security of Fieldview Court, Highbury Grove |
| Councillor Spall | Development adjoining 1 Pilgrims Way/junction of Hazellville Road |
| Councillor Spall | Kinloch Park Open Space |
| Councillor Dunlop | Incorporation of Gresley Road into Hillrise CPZ |
| Councillor Burgess | Policing around Chambers Road Park |
| Councillor Coupland | Mary Magdalene Academy |
| Councillor Sidnell | Road closure at Moray Road/Durham Road |

The petitions were referred to the appropriate director for action.

5. REPORT OF CHIEF WHIP (Item 5)

The report of the Chief Whip was laid round.

In moving adoption of the report, Councillor Kasprzyk proposed amendments to the Council's representation on the Islington Strategic Partnership Board.

1. School Organisation Committee

RESOLVED:

That the following persons be appointed to serve on the primary schools section of the School Organisation Committee:

Church of England Diocese

Penny Harvey

Phillippa Stobbs

Roman Catholic Diocese

Ann Waldron

Daniel Kamara

Maureen Roe

Schools Group

Michael Simmonds (Primary)

Philip Stevens (Primary)

Ursula Wooley (Primary)

2. Appeal Panels For Admission And Exclusion Appeals

RESOLVED:

That the persons set out in the Appendix to the circulated report be appointed to serve on the panels for admission and exclusion appeals.

3. St. Lukes Parochial Trust

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Keith Sharp be re-appointed as nominative trustee on St. Luke's Parochial Trust for a period of four years expiring 30 December 2009.

4. Islington Strategic Partnership

RESOLVED:

That Councillor Kempton be appointed to the Islington Strategic Partnership Board, with Councillors Fox and Willoughby as subs.

5. Licensing Committee

RESOLVED:

(a) That the resignation of Councillors Brook and Trotter from the Licensing Committee be noted.

(b) That Councillors Euan Cameron and Barbara Smith be appointed to the Licensing Committee until the end of the municipal year or until successors are appointed.

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

(a) Dominic Curran to Councillor Arnie Gibbons, Executive Member for Resources

Islington Council has a long history of financial incompetence. What is the current situation?

Reply:

Let's remind ourselves where the Council was 6/7 years ago. Larger debt than some third world countries; no reserves; the HRA in deficit; budget savings proposed for £2m 'to be identified'; all budgetary control leading to panic-led in-year savings; not the faintest idea of who owed the Council money; appalling debt collection performance; routinely qualified Audit reports; late grant claims costing the Council millions; a history of poor financial decision-making and management - that's a quote from Modernising Islington - the Council's own document in 1998; and of course the highest Council Tax in London.

Now I fully acknowledge that the present position is far from perfect, but it represents a dramatic improvement on the shambles Labour presided over. I am also confident that we've built a robust Finance Department that is capable of providing firm financial foundations for the authority and for delivering further significant improvements to the Council's finances.

Let me outline some of the progress we have already made. Islington's accounts have been unqualified now since 2001/02 - four consecutive years, and the tone of the District Auditor's Management Letter which follows has been increasingly positive year after year. This is further validated by the dismissal of objectors - a decision covered later on tonight's agenda.

This year the accounts were closed a month earlier with positive comments from the District Auditor on the improvement in the quality of the information provided. The Council has achieved its target under the new harder CPA test - we have scored a '2' and are well placed to move up to a '3' next year. The 2004 Annual Audit Inspection Letter commented on the significant improvement in the timing of grant claims - 30% on time in 2002/03, now by value 96%. The recent Audit Commission report into our medium-term financial and service planning is very positive. Improved financial management of our budget has seen us come in under budget in each of the last three years. The Council has now built up reserves to a healthy level. As at 31st March 2005, the General Fund Reserve was £11.9m, the HRA balance was £8.1m and

earmarked reserves and provision, for example the Insurance Fund, adequate to cover known liabilities. Further contributions in 2005/06 should bring the General Reserves Balance up to the District Auditor's target of 5% of net revenue balances.

Efficiency savings. The Council is well placed to meet the challenge of the Government's Gershon savings targets, with £8m in efficiency savings either achieved in 2004/05 or planned for the current year. This puts us in the top quartile of London boroughs. Examples include the web-based HR system, PRO; the Commensura agency staff contract; savings on the telephony contract; savings arising from choice-based lettings.

On debt, the long term debt on the balance sheet has reduced from £889m in 1999 to £644m in 2004/05.

Islington's Pension Fund. In 2001 in a league table of London Boroughs by order of how well-funded they were, Islington was a lowly 23rd out of 33 - seven percentage points below the London average. Now, we are ninth - six percentage points above the London average. That's a change largely resulting from the bold decisions to sell substantial amounts of property and invest that in the Pension Fund which will reduce future revenue costs by £2.5m.

Income collection. We not only know who owes us money, we also collect it. Rent collection has improved substantially. At 31st March 2001 arrears were £410 per tenant. Now they're down to £230. Council Tax collection has improved substantially year on year. In 2003/04 we had the fourth largest collection rate across the whole of England and that enabled us to make a large reduction in our bad debt provision which allows us to release resources to invest in front line services - over £5m last year.

Our budget consultation has evolved into one which can be held out to be an example of good practice. I suggest you try 'Googling' London Boroughs Budget Consultation and see what the first hit you get is.

And finally, Islington's Council Tax has been below the London average for four years and we fully intend to keep it below the London average for another four years.

Supplementary Question:

What would happen to Council Tax under Labour?

Supplementary Reply:

That is probably a question for Councillor West, but we can make some intelligent guesses. First let me remind you that when Councillor Sawyer led this Council, it had the highest Council Tax in London. Is there any evidence that their propensity to spend and spend without regard to the Council Tax payer has diminished?

Over recent months Labour have proposed free swimming, reductions in income from parking, free school meals, CCTV schemes across the borough, subsidising Town Hall weddings. They have opposed sales of property which finance many of the things they want. They have even opposed efficiency savings such as their cultural reluctance to reduce expenditure. Whatever they may say, it will be a simple choice next year - between the Liberal Democrats who have proven that they can keep their Council Tax pledge, keep the Council Tax below the London average, and Labour whose impulse is to spend and spend with no regard for financial sustainability or the cost to the taxpayer.

(b) Phil Groves to Councillor George Allan, Executive Member for Customer Focus

I've read that lots of councils are having trouble with the new licensing regime. Licensed premises are surely a vital part of Islington's local economy. Can you tell me about the situation in Islington?

Reply:

Here in Islington I am pleased to say we have managed to process all the applications to vary or convert licences within the statutory 21 days prescribed by the Licensing Act 2003. We have dealt with 875 applications to convert old-style licences into new ones, 263 applications to vary and 105 new licence applications.

Like all Councils across the country, Islington received the bulk of its applications in the last weeks of the transfer period before 5th August. I am particularly proud that the Liberal Democrat administration took the decision to notify all members of variation applications within 50 metres of their premises, which was far beyond the publicity requirements which the Government thought were adequate. Almost all the applications for extended hours were opposed by local residents, and therefore resulted in hearings of the Licensing Committees. As a result, we have held more than 56 licensing hearings, with more to come, sometimes four times a week during September and October and some of these lasting literally all day.

Most premises have not varied their operating hours. Where they have, they have tended to ask for 1 or 2 additional hours, primarily at the weekend. Our Licensing Committees have attached conditions to almost all of these variations, although certain applications have been refused.

There are some licensable premises that have not yet applied, and we have in place a series of actions planned with colleagues at the Police service starting on 24th November where we will be undertaking inspections and taking enforcement action where necessary. For the month of December we will be participating in the Home Office national initiative to drive down alcohol related nuisance crime, and we're happy to achieve further reductions in the level of these crimes as we experienced over the summer. In fact, in September, alcohol-related crime in Upper Street fell by 57%.

We will have extra staff working over this period as will the Police to monitor the effects of the new legislation.

I would like to pay tribute to the work of Members and officers who have worked extremely hard to achieve this. I would, of course, like to have extended my thanks to members on the Labour party for their part in the process. The Labour Group duly nominated one member towards the 15 required to serve on the Licensing Committee - that was Councillor Spall - but sadly she was unable to attend a single meeting. Later, the Labour Group nominated Councillor Coupland to serve on the Committee, but sadly she was unable to attend a single meeting.

The conclusions one can draw from this are that either the Labour Group is trying to distance itself from the deeply flawed process its own Government has decreed for licence approvals or simply that it is too lazy to meet its responsibilities to the people of Islington.

Supplementary Question: (not audible)

Supplementary Reply:

We have received 20 appeals. This is out of something of the order of 200 applications and therefore represents how well accepted the decisions of the very hard working committees have in fact proved to be. The appeals will still be heard in December and I have every confidence that with our hard working chairs and legal representatives, results will be satisfactory and the best can be expected for the borough and its residents.

(c) Eleanor Young to Councillor Jyoti Vaja, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

When is the Council going to make leaseholder charges for major works on ex-Council properties under Homes for Islington, some of which have been quoted at over £39,000 for individual properties, more reasonable?

The Mayor stated that, as there were a number of questions relating to leaseholder charges, he had asked Councillor Vaja to give a composite reply as provided for in the Constitution. The questions concerned were (c), (h), (j), (k), (n) and (o).

Reply:

Thank you Mr Mayor for allowing me to answer all the leaseholder questions at this point.

This issue is a cause of concern for all of us in local government.

As you know, recovering leaseholder charges is regulated not only by the leases but also by Government legislation. In this respect the Leader of the Council has made representations to the Government about the impact of charges on leaseholders, but at present the Council has no choice but to collect leaseholders' contributions.

Under the terms of their lease, leaseholders have to contribute towards the costs that the council incurs as the landlord, in carrying out works and improvements to the building and/or the estate where they live.

To offer a universal cap for all leaseholders, when the homes they own get new windows, roofs and repairs to external walls, would involve the council taking money out of the rent account. This would mean us taking tenants' rent and using it to cut costs to homeowners.

This is the only option the government has offered us to cap charges, and it is a poor option. It would mean taking the rent money of our poorest residents, cutting planned improvements to their homes and making them foot the bill for every resident on an estate – even if those residents owned their own property.

It is not fair or reasonable for tenants to pay for works on other people's houses when doing so would disadvantage the most disadvantaged group in the borough. In doing this, tenants would be paying for improvements to private property.

And even if we wanted to we would be unable to increase the rents set by government. To enable us to do this would leave a funding gap and we would not be able to afford new bathrooms, kitchens and windows for tenants properties.

We know leaseholders' charges are high and this is a problem that councils and leaseholders across the UK are faced with.

The council goes through a stringent process for selecting contracts for works on our properties to ensure that costs are fair. Seventeen "framework" contracts were procured following strict European-wide guidelines to ensure value for money and high quality and residents were involved in their selection. We go through this process to ensure that the works represent not only value for money but also the correct balance between quality and cost of work.

Part of the controversy and confusion surrounding leaseholders service charges stems from the fact that some leasehold properties are undergoing works under Private Finance Initiative (for street properties) or EC1 New Deal (the regeneration scheme in the south of the borough) and both have caps on their charges to leaseholders. The PFI has its cap of £10,000 and at present EC1 New Deal have applied to the Secretary of State for a cap of £15,000 and we are still waiting for a response. These caps are in place because the funding for the extra costs is available from the government. As I have said, under Government legislation the only way the Council could cap is by taking money from Council tenants.

I am now going to move on to the question for Alan Curran with reference to the installation of UPVC windows, and he also asks questions regarding the major works to leasehold property on the Highbury Quadrant estate.

The government has introduced a requirement that all local authorities bring their housing stocks up to the Decent Homes Standard by 2010. As a council we are under pressure to meet that standard and the standard includes double glazed windows.

Meeting this standard will cost the Council around £500 million. We have undertaken a number of initiatives to raise the revenue required including stock transfers, Private Finance Initiatives, and the establishment of an ALMO (Homes for Islington).

In relation to UPVC windows, a recent scrutiny revealed that there are advantages and disadvantages to UVPC, and certainly double glazing is preferable for tenants as it offers noise reduction, more insulation and greater security.

We are not using UVPC windows everywhere due to environmental and conservation concerns with some buildings. Because of this, HFI will be installing new double glazed windows with a variety of frames including UVPC, metal, and wood right across Islington.

Under the terms of the Council's contract with our leaseholders, we are obliged to maintain the exterior of the leasehold buildings and part of this includes replacing windows. It is only sensible as the freeholders of the property that we take all the steps we can to maintain that property in proper order.

However we all know that this is something that our Labour predecessors never managed to achieve.

I am now moving on to the question from Alison Craighead and Barry Kelly.

I want to state categorically now and on the record that the Council did not accept the 56% management fee as part of the contract with Partners for Improvement and that it was an error that the 56% figure was ever included in the estimates.

We have advised all leaseholders who have received this estimate that it was a mistake and that no leaseholder will be charged 56%.

Homes For Islington is paid a management fee of 11% to deliver its Capital Programme Works.

I would like to take this opportunity to apologise on the record to all leaseholders who received the estimates which included this figure.

Finally the question from Shosh Morris who asked a range of questions. Firstly regarding the amount leaseholders are charged under the PFI. Leaseholders under the PFI schemes have their major works bills capped at £10,000 as a result of the Government's rules on PFI. As you can see from earlier questions, this is a much better situation than many other council leaseholders are facing. The average bill for PFI leasehold tenants is around £8,000.

Secondly over the length of time given to tenants to pay charges. PFI leaseholders are offered the same length of payment as any other leaseholder. They have a two year interest free period to pay the charges. After two years if a leaseholder hasn't finished paying, they can continue paying the charge in the same way but will be charged interest on the outstanding balance. There is no cut off point to this. There is no need for any leaseholder to extend their mortgage and no pressure to do so.

We are always looking at new ways to ease the burden on all our leaseholders and are currently looking at different methods of payment, and have a variety of strategies in place to help leaseholders and improve communications.

If any of the leaseholders have remaining concerns I would be happy to respond to written questions at any time.

Supplementary (from Alan Curran):

You say that you're required to do this and the Council has to do the major works to comply with the Decent Homes Standard. The Decent Homes Standard explicitly states that it does not apply to leasehold properties and I've had that in writing from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. More than one quarter of your properties - I believe about 28% - are leasehold, and you do not have an obligation to meet the Decent Homes Standard in respect of those properties. How would you answer that?

Supplementary Reply:

Unfortunately, as you can see if you have a property on a Council estate, if we are required to meet the Decent Homes Standard we certainly won't be doing the bathrooms, kitchens and the rewiring. The Decent Homes Standard also covers such things like roofs and windows which remain the responsibility of the Council.

Suspension of Council Procedure Rules

After questions on leasehold tenancies had been dealt with the Mayor ruled that the 20 minute period allowed for public questions had expired and that all other questions would receive written replies. Councillor Sawyer, duly seconded, moved that Part 4, para 12(c) of the Constitution be suspended to enable the remainder of the public questions to be moved.

On a show of hands this was rejected.

A division was demanded which showed

For the suspension: Councillor Barnes, Bonner, Burgess, Coupland, Debono, Greening, O'Sullivan, Pulham, Sawyer, Sidnell, Spall and West (12)

Against the suspension: Councillors Allan, Baker, Blanchard, Boffa, Dearth, Dunlop, Dunn, Ece, Featherstone, Fox, Gibbons, Gowers, Hitchins, Johnson, Kasprzyk, Kempton, Neave, Carol Powell, Ray, Scott, Sharma, Sharp, Smith, Stacy, Trotter, Vaja, Watt, Willoughby and Wright (29).

CE : The following questions all received written replies as printed below.

- (d) Claudia Webbe to Councillor Jyoti Vaja, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

There have been a number of high profile shootings in Islington in recent weeks and the numbers and level of gun related violence has shot up -130% increase as compared to a 35% drop during the same period the previous year. Walk around any estate in Islington and you will find a growing number of young people with access and/or in possession of firearms or imitation and replica weapons, which can be easily converted into a real deadly illegal firearm. No one agency can tackle this problem alone. In response to this sharp increase in serious crime and recent shootings on the Elthorne Estate, over 100 residents of the estate and neighbouring area held a meeting with the local police. What specific action and resources will Islington Council direct towards tackling violent crime and gun crime in particular?

Reply:

What Claudia Webbe should be aware of is that nothing raises gun crime and gun ownership as much as fear of crime. With your role with Operation Trident you should be aware that scare mongering will only make any problem worse.

To make that worse your figures are incorrect. According to the information I obtained from the police, your figure has been over stated by 50%. One has to wonder whether that was deliberate and what your objective is in asking this question. Raising fear of crime is normally done for personal and political reasons.

As a member of the independent monitoring group for Operation Trident and an independent board member of Homes for Islington, I would have expected more responsible and less political behaviour from you.

What I can assure you is that the partnership between this council and the local police is one of the strongest in London and no rise in any sort of crime is acceptable for Islington council or Islington Police force.

Tackling gun crime has always been, and remains, a priority for us. Even with our recent rise, Islington remains 18th out of 32 boroughs for incidences of gun crime. Given our proximity to some of the most challenging boroughs for gun enabled crime, this reflects the success of the police and council in curbing the behaviour and our unceasing vigilance in working together to combat it. Last year an incredible reduction was achieved in gun enabled crime across Islington, this followed Operation Guinevere and the tragedy the year before at Turnmills nightclub.

I want to be clear - gun crime covers a wide range of offences and includes both discharges from ball bearing guns or air rifles as well as firearms and shotguns. It also includes sighting a weapon, whether real or fake.

The police, with whom we work closely in partnership on this issue, have asked me to stress that the number of offences that involve section 1 firearms, shotguns, or converted weapons remains low in Islington. So far this year there have been 87 offences, of these 19 involved someone being hit, but at least 7 of these were from ball bearing guns.

Police intelligence does not suggest that there are a lot of guns out there. Islington is not at all complacent about gun crime. The only 'acceptable' level for gun crime across the borough or anywhere is ZERO – on which I am sure you will agree with me.

We have various activities targeting gun crime taking place across the borough and planned for the future, for example:

- schools continue to run the Dorothy.com campaign, a personal safety learning programme being used in schools.
- recently 200 young people in the borough attended an anti-gun crime seminar, where keynote speakers included internationally famous record producers/DJs/MC and Chief Supt Barry Norman.
- operation Guinevere 2 is planned for early next year.

In addition Islington Police still have a dedicated team of officers who research intelligence on gun crime and take proactive measures to tackle it.

The deployment of our two new mobile CCTV vehicles and the roll out of safer neighbourhood teams will enhance their intelligence gathering capabilities. The council and its partners recognise that the effect of firearm offences is disproportionate to the small numbers and we are not being complacent.

(e) Paul Greaney to Councillor James Kempton, Executive Member for Children

In light of the statutory planning consultation process in September of this year, eliciting 650+ signatures on a petition against the establishment of an all-through academy on the St Mary Magdalene primary school site, compared with 360 returned responses in November 2004 supporting it (as part of a non-statutory consultation process), is this not time for a re-think of the apparent mandate the Council feels it has in going ahead with the project?

In the interests of true democracy, isn't there now an obligation to conduct another non-statutory consultation process to establish if there is genuine support from the local community as a whole, not just a few addresses locally plus only the CofE primary schools in the Borough?

As a recently appointed Governor on the Board of the St Mary Magdalene primary school, surely your conflict of interests here warrants such a review and re-survey?

Reply:

The petition to which you referred was presented at the Planning Committee. As the Executive Member for Children I have absented myself from consideration of the planning application. In view of the outstanding planning decision it would not be appropriate for me to comment further on this issue.

However, as I explained when you asked a very similar question at the last Council meeting, the commitment to establish a brand new secondary school was included as one of six specific commitments in the Liberal Democrats' manifesto, and the people of Islington voted for the Lib Dems on the strength of this manifesto. The fact of my becoming a governor of St Mary Magdalene primary school makes no difference to the Council's existing commitment to establish a new secondary school, and does not warrant a review. I believe that by continuing to support the plans for a new secondary school I am acting in the interests of all those who wish to see standards of education continue to rise in the Borough.

(f) Paul Smith to Councillor Arnie Gibbons, Executive Member for Resources

How much Council money has been spent as a result of the Standards Board Inquiry into the Chief Executive's appointment?'

Reply:

Legal fees incurred on this case are £15,874, and the time spent by legal officers is costed at £15,750. These relate solely to consideration of the council's duties and responsibilities in relation to the conduct of the case by the Standards Board. No costs have been incurred with respect to any of the individuals involved in the case.

(g) Gary O'Shea to Councillor Jyoti Vaja, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

I was evicted from my home on July 14 2005 on the instructions of Islington Council. I would like to know what Council sub-committee made the decision to hire a private firm, Devonshires, to help secure the eviction; who sat on the sub-committee in question; and finally on what date the decision to hire outside solicitors was made?

Reply:

No sub-committee or members were involved in this decision. Council members and sub-committees do not usually become involved in appointments of solicitors, certainly not in this level of work.

(h) Alan Curran to Councillor Jyoti Vaja, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

With particular reference to the installation of UPVC windows, but not confined to that issue, could the Council please confirm why it considers that the major works to leasehold property on the Highbury Quadrant estate, and across other estates in the borough, are necessary?

(See reply to question (c) above)

(i) Richard Watts to Councillor Catherine West, Leader of the Opposition

How many citizenship ceremonies have you officiated at as the 'recognised local dignitary' in the last six months?

Reply:

Only once, but I understand that, in other local authorities, members of opposition parties often share this duty with members of the Administration.

(j) Jon Thomson to Councillor Jyoti Vaja, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

I am a leaseholder on Spa Green Estate where costs are as high as a staggering £42,000 for some properties. When will the Council make leaseholder charges for major works for ex-Council properties managed by Homes for Islington more reasonable and fair?

(See reply to question (c) above)

(k) Alison Craighead to Councillor Jyoti Vaja, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

When works were carried out a while ago on Milner Square under PFI, Management, charges were an enormous 56% meaning that for every £100 pounds charged to leaseholders, only £44 went on the major works themselves. What percentage of costs are taken as a management fee on major works just starting at Spa Green Estate under Homes for Islington?

(See reply to question (c) above)

(l) Amy Silverston to Councillor Bridget Fox, Executive Member for Sustainability

When considering what it will accept in a proposed Master Plan, will the councillors of the North Area Committee have as their priority the wishes of local residents and businesses or the already clearly stated preferences of the Council Leader?

Reply:

Like the Leader, yourself and anyone else, members of North Area Committee are entitled to form and express their own views and no doubt will do just that.

But I believe what we all have in common is a belief that Archway could be a lot better, a belief that residents around the Archway deserve a better neighbourhood, and a belief that the Council has a positive role to play to stimulate that change.

94% of respondents to the Council consultation think that Archway should be redeveloped. What's more, people are already expressing support for ending the gyratory; having more and better public spaces; more trees; attractive modern buildings; thriving local shops; safe access to public transport; mixed use developments and a good mix of housing. None of that will happen unless the Council takes a lead.

If the Council does not take a lead, Archway faces an uncertain future. Other centres are changing and improving. Without major investment, Archway will slowly decline. None of us wants to see that. And without a clear vision from the Council, we could all be at the mercy of a developer who comes in, buys up the site, and develops it their way, complying with the letter of the planning law, but ignoring the many public benefits we all want to see for the Archway community. None of us wants to see that either.

The Council cannot regenerate Archway unaided. Archway is not rich enough for regeneration via individual small businesses alone, nor poor enough to attract government regeneration funding or to entitle the Council to subsidise business.

So any framework has to be deliverable commercially by one or more private sector partners or it won't happen at all.

By scoping a planning framework, we have the opportunity to set out what we will expect of any developer so we get the best we can for Archway.

Councillors will need to listen to the views of local residents and businesses, work within local, regional and national planning policy, and deliver proposals which are commercially viable. That's a big challenge - perhaps that explains why previous administrations failed to do anything for Archway - but I believe it is worth the effort, not only for the present community around Archway but for the whole of Islington and for the future.

- (m) Tim Gordon to Councillor Jyoti Vaja, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

I'm very worried about crime in the area. What is the Council doing about it?

Reply:

The council works very closely with its partners, particularly the police, to agree priorities and develop responses to crime. Most notably, the close partnership working with the police has resulted in multi-agency responses to crack house closures, licensing visits, truancy patrols and neighbourhood policing, to list a few. The council is a lead authority in Islington's crime and disorder partnership, through which resources such as the two mobile CCTV units have been purchased and now deployed daily in the borough.

The council has its own enforcement responsibility, particularly around managing public spaces, such as the parks and other open spaces and a great deal of resources are put into keeping such spaces safe and accessible to all members of the public. Where the most appropriate response to a problem may be delivered by another agency, such as the police, the council works well in co-ordinating such responses, helping to ensure they are appropriate and, where necessary, they are supported.

The council provides co-ordination around issues such as domestic violence and other hate crimes, ensuring services are geared up to support victims as well as helping to get offenders into the criminal justice system. Other key roles include designing out crime, through the management of the built and natural environment, adequate street lighting and the provision and monitoring of static CCTV. The council works to communicate the responses to the community in a bid to inform more accurately and to help reassure the public.

In supporting the police with engaging the community and also to provide some immediate support to communities, the council has funded the early roll out of safer neighbourhood police teams to existing wards without teams.

- (n) Shosh Morris to Councillor Jyoti Vaja, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

In regard to the PFI-1 contract, why did councillors fail to deal with the amount and timescale of recharges to leaseholders, and how do they propose to alleviate the resulting problems leaseholders are now facing, and which substantially include the £10,000 estimated recharge to each leasehold, the 2-year maximum period for payment (which Chris Smith MP advised us was not Council policy), Partners' threat to demand their payment is added to our mortgages or they will take equity in the property, and the 56% management fee the Council accepted as part of the contract with Partners – costs and problems which are particularly threatening to leaseholders living on pensions, unemployment and disability benefit, or just low income, or who are unable to further extend their mortgages for various reasons?

(See reply to question (c) above)

- (o) Barry Kelly to Councillor Jyoti Vaja, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

When works were carried out recently at Milner Square under PFI, management charges were 56% meaning that for every £100 pounds charged to leaseholders, only £44 went on the major works themselves. On average, what percentage of costs are taken as a management fee on major works carried out under Homes for Islington?

(See reply to question (c) above)

7. CORPORATE PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT 2005 - DIRECTOR OF TRAVEL (Item 7)

Councillor Stacy moved, seconded by Councillor Hitchins, the recommendation in the report.

Councillors Barnes, Ray, Pulham, Gibbons, Greening, Gowers, Dunn, Burgess, Blanchard, Sidnell and Kasprzyk contributed to the debate.

RESOLVED:

That the contents of Islington's Direction of Travel self-assessment and the significant achievements in the following areas be noted:

- Resident satisfaction has increased by 11 percentage points compared with 2003/04.

- 83% of services are available electronically – an increase of 16 percentage points since last year.
- 78% of Islington's national key performance indicators improved over the year.
- Islington is the only designated "opportunity borough" in Inner London.
- Islington has been named sustainable transport borough of the year by Transport for London (TfL).
- The Housing Benefits service has been transformed from a one star service to a three star service.
- Street cleanliness and standard searches are in the best quartiles nationally and continuing to improve.
- Islington is on track to be removed from Government intervention on services to schools.
- Partnership working has led to improvements on all the national indicators relating to young people and crime.
- Rapid progress is being made on waste recycling with an increase from 10.39% in March 2005 to 14.75% less than 6 months later.
- The Royal Institute of British Architects awarded its first ever prize for a public space scheme for Islington's development of Newington Green.

8. STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS (Item 8)

Councillor Gibbons, seconded by Councillor Stacy, moved the adoption of the recommendation.

Councillors Sawyer, Greening and Hitchins contributed to a debate.

RESOLVED:

That the positive conclusion to the objections in the 2001/02 and 2002/03 accounts, the unqualified opinion on the 2004/05 accounts, and the current position on the objection of the 2003/04 accounts, be noted.

9. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STANDARDS COMMITTEE (Item 9)

The Mayor, duly seconded, formally moved adoption of the report.

Father Jim Kennedy, Chair of the Standards Committee, attended the meeting and responded to questions from members.

Councillors Stacy, Sawyer and Barnes contributed to a debate.

RESOLVED:

(a) That the report of the Standards Committee be received.

(b) That Father Jim Kennedy, and other independent members of the Standards Committee, be thanked for their work.

10. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL (Item 10)

- (a) Councillor Donna Boffa to Councillor Bridget Fox, Executive Member for Sustainability

The Council has put in lots of traffic calming methods over the last few years. Are they actually working?

Reply:

Yes, traffic calming is working. The use of traffic calming is to reduce the volume and speed of vehicles through primarily residential areas where the streets are for access and not designed as through routes. Many neighbourhoods within Islington have campaigned for traffic calming and with financial support from the Council, Transport for London and latterly the Islington Strategic Partnership we have been able to introduce a whole series of 20mph zones, safer routes to schools and local safety schemes and we've had great success. Both the speed and the volume of traffic through calmed areas is reduced and the number of people killed and seriously injured in road accidents has fallen dramatically and this has been independently confirmed as part of the measurements of the BPI and the Council's PSA.

We are proud that Islington's traffic planning measures have been so successful. Road deaths and serious injuries have more than halved since the year 2000 and the number of children killed or seriously injured have seen a 78% reduction. Overall our programme in 2003/04 alone has delivered a 47% reduction, nearly halving casualties to date. We can see the fall in accidents particularly clearly where specific schemes have come in. Accidents are down by over 60% in Dartmouth Park Hill since the traffic calming came in and down by over 70% on Mackenzie Road and Roman Road in Holloway and Caledonian Wards.

Targeted school schemes have been particularly successful for example around Duncombe School. Members of the Council may remember the Head of Duncombe School petitioning the Council for measures near his school. Around Duncombe School accidents fell from an average of 10 a year before the scheme went in to 1 a year since, something I would like the whole of the Council to welcome were it not for the Council casting aspersions on that very traffic scheme just a little while ago. Accidents involving kids by Duncombe School have gone from 10 a year to one a year and that's something we should all welcome. I know not everyone likes traffic calming, but there is no doubt it is saving very many lives, particularly young lives in Islington.

No supplementary question

- (b) Councillor Anna Berent to Councillor Bridget Fox, Executive Member for Sustainability

The kitchen waste recycling pilot is a very innovative scheme, and I love the way that, combined with all the other recycling methods, only a tiny amount of rubbish goes into my bin now. However, I wonder how popular recycling this kind of 'gunky' waste will be - what kind of feedback have you had so far?

Written reply:

The kitchen waste collection service has recently been extended to all street facing properties. The initial pilot area, servicing about 14,000 households was collecting around 36 tonnes per month. The highest collection rate was in July, so the warmer weather appears not have put people off the scheme. There have been numerous requests from residents not in the pilot area asking to join the scheme.

The council's doorknockers report predominantly good feedback from residents. This establishes that residents are prepared to participate and that the scheme is successful in diverting the material from landfill. This is of great importance due to the impact of LATS and increasing costs to dispose of degradable waste, not to mention the negative environmental impact of degradable waste in landfill.

The Council is currently having an independent study undertaken to establish ways of improving the service and making it more user friendly.

(c) Councillor Marisha Ray to Councillor Terry Stacy, Executive Member for Performance

You recently launched a 'wireless hotzone' on Upper Street so that people can access the internet for free on their laptops. How many people have logged on to the internet through this so far?

Reply:

I am delighted to report that the utilisation of the upper street wireless hot zone (product name - streetnet) has exceeded all expectations to date. It is an ideal example of the Council putting the "One Islington" vision into practice by providing free internet access to the many residents, businesses and visitors to the Borough's A1.

On average since going live we have had 850 users a week using the service, steadily increasing week on week. It is now, not only the largest continuous free wireless internet access zone in London, but one of the most widely used in the UK, if not the EU. And it is being used by a number of public sector organisation as a good practice example, amongst these are the IDEA and the ODPM.

The most frequently asked question on the Council's web site last month was "How do I log onto streetnet?".

We now have five local businesses on the A1 using the service - one has set up free internet access for his patients waiting in his waiting room, the other is using the free bandwidth to run security CCTV to reduce crime within his shop.

The service has been expanded into the crypt at St Mary's church, which is used by numerous charitable and voluntary sector organisations, and the scheme has also been submitted for a Local Government award under the category of innovation.

Plans are well on the way to extend the service down the Holloway Road and to provide the service within the Arsenal stadium and surrounding piazza area. With other key areas like the Cally Road and Kings Cross, which my colleagues Councillors Powell, Gibbons and Valery have been championing for several months, also lining up to be included in scheme.

And, after lobbying by Councillor Kempton, we are also evaluating a request to provide coverage to a local housing estate in the St Mary's ward area.

This project is an excellent example of both the public and private sectors working together. The cost to the council has been minimal, with the private sector picking up most of it.

It is also an excellent example of how a Liberal Democrat administration is delivering an inclusive agenda and addressing community cohesion. Here is a real example of beating the digital divide and enabling all members of our community through the One Islington vision to play a full role and fulfil their potential.

It is an ambition of mine that we can roll out this kind of activity and become the first local authority to provide free internet access for all its residents.

It is an example of why this administration is improving Islington through a dramatic and ambitious programme of change and innovation, which is bringing huge benefits to our partners in business, in the voluntary sector and all our residents. Contrast it with the backward looking, anti-change, conservative proposals that are all we get from the party opposite. That's why the Liberal Democrats are running the fastest improving council in the country.

Supplementary question

Is there any truth behind Labour's claims that the money used to install wifi down Upper Street could have been used to install CCTV and would that be true elsewhere?

Reply

I am delighted that Councillor Ray has asked me this question, because no, there is no truth. It is a blatant, blatant lie and I can assure Councillor Ray that all the costs associated with this, other than staff time, have been met by the private sector partner. This is us working with the private sector at no cost to our residents. It just goes to show that what comes out of Labour's mouth is a bunch of lies.

(d) Councillor Joe Trotter to Councillor Bridget Fox, Executive Member for Sustainability

Could you provide details of the pilot of doorstep recycling on estates and how well it is working?

Reply:

The pilot recycling scheme started in mid-July serving 4,500 households in the Upper Street Housing Office area apart from the Central Street Housing Office Area outside

the EC1 New Deal area starting at Bevin Court. The scheme has since been extended to the Isledon Road area with more areas to follow in December and the New Year.

Schemes are a weekly collection covering cardboard, paper, glass bottles and jars, plastic bottles, food and drink cans - the same as the street properties and the aim is to bring easy to use recycling service to all residents on estates. Residents are given either a green box or a collapsible blue bag depending on the location and accessibility to their homes and these are collected from the doorstep by dedicated crews. EC1 New Deal are also investigating recycling on estates in their area and will be working with us to prepare results and see what works best.

Residents are recycling an average of 1.25 tonnes a day on the scheme, not each but the total, which compares favourably with some of the schemes in Camden. We don't have a full evaluation yet but there has been a residents survey with very positive feedback.

We have also started some pilot incentive schemes covering nine estates. Each of the estates in the scheme has its recycling measured each week and the estate which increases most each month relative to the number of households wins one person £500 to be spent on environmental improvements on the estate and we should congratulate Kerridge Court in Mildmay who have just won the first month's prize of £1,500.

Supplementary question

Could you tell me when you are likely to start the recycling on the Council estates?

Reply:

Yes. We are extending to the Isledon Road Housing Area by the end of this month and in December the LBI estates in Lion Street, Holland Walk and Boleyn Road Housing Offices will get this service and then the remainder in Upper Street and Central Street will get them in February.

In addition we have also.....so that the Circle 33 Housing Trust, Islington & Shoreditch and other housing associations are also, where possible, included in the scheme.

(e) Councillor Fiona Dunlop to Councillor Jyoti Vaja, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

What progress has been made to improve benefits services for local people since you got rid of ITNet?

Reply:

I have great pleasure in answering this question, as the benefits service has improved significantly as a result of the Council taking the service back from ITNet in May 2003.

In 2002/03 under ITNet, the Benefit Fraud Inspectorate, working on behalf of the Government to establish the standard of the benefits service, considered that the service was poor and failing to meet the needs of local people. In 2004 with the

service now back under Council administration the Inspectorate's judgement changed to fair in recognition of the number of initiatives underway to bring about improvements. This year with those initiatives having been translated into good levels of performance, the BFI has declared that the service is now good overall with elements of good service such as Customer Focus. How resources are used and the security of processes are considered as being excellent.

So let's just compare the service of the ITNet era to what is achieved now. It highlights the improvements that have been made to the local people. Under ITNet due to the large backlogs of work, we paid benefit to only 24,500 people. Nowadays 32,500 receive benefit and that is an increase of 33%. With ITNet there was a backlog of over 9,000 items waiting to be processed - now the average outstanding is less than 1,000 items which is below the amount of work received in a week. Back then it took over 100 days to process a new benefit claim - now it is just averaging 37 days in line with Government targets. In 2002/03, 3090 complaints were made to the service - in the first six months of this year we only received 159. The ITNet call centre took an average of 22 minutes to answer a call. Nowadays over 90% of calls are taken with 20 seconds. Then customers had nowhere to go to make an immediate face to face enquiry with a member of the benefits staff - now we have benefit officers providing effective advice at each of our Area Housing Offices.

This service impacts on some of the most vulnerable people in our borough, therefore we are pleased at the significant progress that has been made. We are not complacent and will continue to work hard to bring about further improvements to ensure that our residents receive the level of service that they deserve.

No supplementary

- (f) Councillor Wally Burgess to Councillor Bridget Fox, Executive Member for Sustainability

Given that the number of residents who cycle in Islington has increased in recent years, why has the Lib Dem Administration failed to apply for the full grant to pay for children's cycle training from the Mayor of London?

Reply:

I am afraid that Councillor Burgess' question rests on a fallacy that the assumption there is somehow a set grant for cycle training from Transport for London and this is available on request to boroughs, neither of which is the case. It is simply untrue. There is no set amount of funding from TfL for cycle training. You have to bid like everyone else and the level of bids is developed in consultation with advice from the Borough Liaison Officer at TfL. However, Islington does have a very successful track record of bidding from TfL for a wide range of sustainable transport initiatives and we have above average success rate on the return of our bids. Indeed we've been named as TfL's sustainable transport borough of the year and we've been shortlisted for a record five categories in London Transport awards for this year including borough of the year which will be decided next month.

In terms of cycle training we currently have a bid in for £60,000 for TfL for cycle training in 2006/07 and that will be our minimum bid for each future year until 2010, although we hope to expand that where it will strengthen our annual bid.

What is important is that Islington has the necessary funding to offer cycle training whether that comes from TfL, the Council's own resources or other partners. Islington has been extremely successful in obtaining funds for cycle training from a range of sources and as a result have a new dedicated cycle training officer in post who is running a wide range of courses for children and adults alike in line with national standards. For example, basic courses are offered and being successfully delivered to schools in a package which suits them - perhaps as a before school activity combined with a breakfast club. Eight such courses have been run during holidays and weekends in partnership with Pooles Park Primary School and Islington Green Secondary School and we plan another four such courses in the forthcoming months.

Also, an added innovation is running cycle training for adults. In the past three months we've done three advanced courses for adults and these are available to Islington residents and people who work in Islington alike. In addition to formal training courses, the Islington cycle training officer attends two assemblies a week in schools across the borough to raise awareness of safe cycling courses, cycle safety and to explain the benefits of cycling to health and the environment. This reaches far more people than the formal cycle training courses alone.

It is important to understand that TfL funding is not the only funding for cycle training in Islington. For example Islington Council's own officers who wish to use the bike pool receive mandatory training which is separately funded.

The cycle training officer has developed, and is currently delivering, a bike maintenance course and cycle training course in partnership with the Clerkenwell Youth Development Project. To enable all the young people involved in this project to have a bike to work on, the Metropolitan Police are providing stolen and recovered bicycles to be repaired and each week a different element of bike maintenance and safety is carried out. This successful business now attracts its funding from the South Area Magpi and is being extended to Canonbury and this again is additional to any TfL funded cycle training. Overall cycle training in Islington is very well funded and set to continue that way.

Supplementary question:

The real problem is, if things are so good, how come they are so bad? Basically how many children currently cycle at the moment and is it enough? Do we want to encourage them, if so those that do cycle do they know what to do, do they know the rules of the road? In particular do they know about traffic signals and how they work and what you obey and what you don't? Do they know why riding on the pavement is dangerous? And do they actually learn how to show courtesy and priority to pedestrians? I'd like to think that this is going to happen but why does it always seem to be so awful out there and I'm a non-cyclist and I really do worry when I see the way young people particularly treat the road and treat other users and I really wonder if you could answer if it so good why is it so bad?

Reply:

I'm not sure.....it's the best incentive showing people to cycle for Councillor Burgess to criticise the behaviour of young people who do choose to cycle in the borough. The question was about the funding of the cycle training. We are putting a

lot of funding into cycle training and I have been very impressed by some of the young people I have met on those courses and I would encourage all Members to take up the opportunity which is offered by the Road Safety Team to go into schools with members of the Road Safety Team to see the excellent work that is being done.

I think it is great that more young people are switching to cycling and that the efforts the Council has made on traffic calming as I earlier said have led to the borough being a much safer environment for cycling. I know that cycling on the pavements is a vexed issue. The Islington Cyclists Action Group wouldn't agree with Councillor Burgess, they are less enthusiastic about cycling on the pavement. I think the jury's out on that one but I certainly agree that we should be making the borough.....shifting to cycling is good. We've seen a 25% fall in cycle accidents in the last year as a result of both cycle safety measures and wider traffic calming measures and I hope that will continue.

- (g) Councillor Lisa Spall to Councillor Jyoti Vaja, Executive Member for Housing and Community Safety

How many Safer Neighbourhood Teams were rolled out by the end of October using Council resources?

Reply:

The answer is none. Those that we do know about both Junction and Highbury West started in the first week of November and Highbury East, St. George's, St. Peter's, Canonbury and Barnsbury will go live during January.

No supplementary

- (h) Councillor Derek Sawyer to Councillor Gibbons, Executive Member for Resources

The Islington Irish Centre on St John's Way was once a thriving community centre in the north of the borough. After the Lib Dem Administration sold it to developers, can you explain how residents of our borough will benefit from current proposals for the site?

Reply:

Prospective residents of 131 St. John's Way will benefit from the new homes that will be created as a result of the planning application that has been approved by North Area Planning. And of course the prospective residents will also benefit from being represented by three excellent hard working councillors, Councillors Dunlop, Sharma and Johnson. Residents of Hillrise will also benefit from the community space which is part of the ground floor proposal for the development.

However that is only half the story. The Council's capital programme involves spending many millions of pounds. While some of this comes from borrowing and Government grants, such as the money from TfL which pays for traffic calming, a sizeable portion of the capital programme is funded by capital receipts from property sales. Without those receipts it would be impossible to deliver a long list of schemes which, between them, benefit huge numbers of Islington residents in a myriad of ways.

Children's home improvements, Archway Early Years Centre boilers, asbestos surveys in schools, Tufnell Park Primary School Nursery relocation, works at Kate Greenaway Nursery, highway improvements, A1 Borough projects such as improvements to Whittington and Davenant Parks, CCTV at the Nag's Head, Way Finder Boards, CPZ implementations, HERS grants to traders for shopfront improvements, DDA access to Council buildings, disabled facilities grant to improve DDA access to non Council buildings, adaptations for the disabled so they can live independently at home, upgrading old peoples homes, refurbishment of the Highbury Resource Centre, e-Government and IT upgrades which enable the Council to do its business more efficiently in a more customer friendly way, leisure centre improvements, decent homes work contribution to the ALMO which is £2.9 million a year, housing grants for private sector landlords, and health and safety work in the Council cemeteries.

It is the efficient use of Council resources to deliver these schemes which helps the Council meet its priorities and those of its residents. They give us far more benefit to citizens of Islington than keeping open an underused centre for the benefit of a small self - selecting fraction of the population.

The question to Councillor Sawyer is how many of these benefits would you have been prepared to sacrifice in order to preserve your foolish belief that the Council should not be selling property?

Supplementary question:

That's one for the Irish Times that – a small self - selecting fraction of the population is a nice way of describing the Irish population of Islington... (tape turnover).....14 flats and therefore no social housing. So this site, which as far as we can see has been used entirely for the community ever since it was built on as a field, is now being sold off for private development for private housing without any social housing. Do you see that as progress or not Councillor Gibbons?

Reply:

The answer is simply yes, because that enables us to – and let me repeat this – carry out children's home improvements, Archway Early Years Centre boilers, asbestos surveys in schools, Tufnell Park Primary School Nursery relocation, works at Kate Greenaway Nursery, highway improvements, A1 Borough projects such as improvements to Whittington and Davenant Parks, CCTV at the Nag's Head, Way Finder Boards, CPZ implementations, HERS grants to traders for shopfront improvements, DDA access to Council buildings, disabled facilities grant to improve DDA access to other buildings, adaptations for the disabled so they can live independently at home, upgrading old peoples homes, refurbishing the Highbury Resource Centre, e-Government and IT upgrades which enable the Council to do its business more efficiently in a more customer friendly way, leisure centre improvements, decent homes work contribution to the ALMO, housing grants for private sector landlords, and health and safety work in the Council cemeteries.

These are all things which we as a Council are proud of and we couldn't do them unless we had the foresight to ensure capital resources were available, and that means ensuring that our capital is not tied up in underutilised property.

1. NOTICES OF MOTION (Item 11)

Chief Executive's Note:

At 10.30pm and in accordance with the Constitution, the following business (with the exception of Items 11.3 and 11.6 which had been determined earlier in the meeting) was dealt with under the closure procedure. Motions were deemed to be formally moved.

1. Operation Scrap-It

The following amendment was moved by Councillor Burgess, seconded by Councillor Spall:

- Insert the following at paragraph 2) and re-number accordingly:
2) Also notes the Liberal Democrat Administration's decision to axe £150,000 from Islington's Abandoned Vehicles Service in 2005/06. The reason offered by officers for this cut was the rising cost of scrap metal which resulted in fewer vehicles being abandoned in London.
- At re-numbered paragraph 6, delete "Labour Government" and replace with "Liberal Democrat Administration". Insert "their abandoned vehicles budget by £150k this year" between "of" and "this". Delete "this vital scheme."
- At re-numbered paragraph 7), delete "Praises" and replace with "Regrets". Insert "s" after "Council, and delete "for its". Insert "cut funding for its own" between "to" and "continue". Delete "continue providing the". Further delete "despite the central funding being cut, but believes that a London wide service is far more effective,".
- Delete re-numbered paragraph 8).
- At re-numbered paragraph 9), insert "and the Liberal Democrat Administration" between "Government" and "to recognise". Delete "this" and replace with "abandoned vehicle". Insert "s" onto "scheme". Delete "this" and replace with "these". Insert "s" onto the final "service".

The amendment was put to the vote and declared LOST.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1) Notes with concern the problems that are caused by abandoned vehicles in London, including;
 - a) attracting crime and anti social behaviour such as joy riding and arson
 - b) costing the tax payer £6.6 million to remove each year
 - c) undermining the attractiveness of our streets
 - d) taking up valuable parking spaces
 - e) causing inconvenience to residents.

- 2) Praises Operation Scrap - It, which has been operating in London for the past two years and which has successfully tackled abandoned vehicles by providing a fast London-wide removal service for abandoned and end-of-life cars, removing around 75,000 vehicles a year from London's streets, stopping the problem at source by allowing owners to contact the council to take away the vehicle when it is no longer wanted and before it becomes a nuisance.
- 3) Notes that the scheme has been very successful right across London, with 98% of abandoned vehicles removed within 72 hours.
- 4) Notes that the scheme has saved the Government over £30 million a year in the decline of vehicle tax avoidance, and reduced costs for the fire brigade and other public services, which, compared to the £6.7 million to fund the scheme, means that Operation Scrap-It provides extremely good value for money.
- 5) Condemns the short-sightedness of the Labour Government in cutting the funding of this vital scheme.
- 6) Praises Islington Council for its decision to continue providing the service despite the central funding being cut, but believes that a London wide service is far more effective, as vehicles not collected in other boroughs may now be dumped on Islington streets.
- 7) Thanks Liberal Democrats on this Council and at the Greater London Assembly for their continued campaigning to have the scheme reinstated.
- 8) Calls on the Government to recognise the importance of this scheme and reinstate the funding for this vital, successful and economical service.

2. Failure of the Northern Line Service

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1) Notes that the Northern Line of the London Underground is a key transport line for people visiting, living and working in Islington, serving four key local stations: Archway, Kings Cross, Old Street and Angel.
- 2) Notes that users of the Northern Line have been facing a deteriorating service, with monthly train, track and signally faults rising by 31.7% in the first part of 2005 - 221 faults per month.
- 3) Notes with concern the recent extreme disruption to services on the Northern Line, leaving it out of action for the better part of a week and commuters facing days of travel misery.
- 4) Notes with further concern that no service replacement buses were provided in Islington, which already suffers from overcrowded buses, making travel even more difficult for local people.

- 5) Believes that this incident and the many other problems regularly emerging with tube services recently are indicative that the Government's PPP deal for the tube was ill-judged, ill-conceived and poorly implemented.
- 6) Calls on London Underground to ensure that if any similar incidents affect Islington's tube service in future, sufficient replacement services are provided.
- 7) Urges local people with weekly, monthly or yearly travelcards or oyster cards whose journeys were disrupted to take up their right to apply to Transport for London for a refund.
- 8) Calls on the Government and the Mayor of London to find a way of bringing the maintenance of London Underground back in house without costing taxpayers millions of pounds as a result of the shambolic PPP contracts.

3. Local Authority Business Growth Incentives Scheme

Councillor Willoughby moved, seconded by Councillor Ray, the motion.

Councillor West moved, seconded by Councillor Barnes, the following amendment:

- At paragraph 1) insert “, and that local authorities have a duty to ensure they do all they can to support the local economy” between “leisure” and “.”.
- Insert new paragraph 2) as below and re-number accordingly:
 - 2) Regrets the net loss of over 300 shops and businesses in Islington over the period 1999-2004, as reported on p.6 of the State of the Environment Report, and agreed by the Executive at its meeting of the 6th October.
- Insert new paragraph 3) as below and re-number accordingly:
 - 3) Recognises that many independent shops and businesses operate on the edge of profitability, being vulnerable to small increases in costs or drops in trade, and condemns the Liberal Democrat Administration for
 - a) presiding over this loss; and
 - b) being responsible for a parking regime which has made it harder for local businesses to rely on passing custom from residents and visitors to the borough; and
 - c) introducing a new tax on pavement tables and chairs; and
 - d) increasing charges for holiday and after-school playschemes, making it more costly for local parents to leave their children in care and work a full day.
- At re-numbered paragraph 7) delete “unfair” and replace with “disappointing”. Insert “given the loss of so many shops and businesses,” between “that” and “Islington”.
- At re-numbered paragraph 9) delete “Notes that that the scheme is to be reviewed after the first year and c” and replace with “C”. Insert the following between “to” and “campaign”
 - i) Work closely with the Islington Chamber of Commerce to identify areas where the Council could do more to encourage and support the local economy; and

- ii) Introduce free 20 minute parking bays in the borough's shopping areas wherever possible; and
- iii) Insert "during the scheme's review" between "change" and "so".

Councillors Barnes, Fox, Ray contributed to a debate.

The amendment was put to the vote and declared LOST.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1) Recognises that a thriving local business scene benefits all residents including through employment, entertainment and leisure.
- 2) Welcomes the Local Authority Business Growth Incentives (LABGI) scheme which will benefit local business by allowing local authorities to invest a portion of their business rates back into the area that they came from.
- 3) Notes that Islington has historically high local business growth rates, significantly more than Camden, twice as high as Hackney, and nearly 5 times that of Haringey, which has resulted in Islington being having the highest floor target for local growth.
- 4) Notes that under the scheme all London boroughs except Islington will receive money for simply maintaining their current performance.
- 5) Notes that it is unfair that Islington is the only borough that will not benefit by simply maintaining its historical growth especially as our businesses have the second highest level of growth in London, putting our local businesses at a disadvantage.
- 6) Calls for the Government to review Islington's businesses target growth of 4.9% so that it is not the only council not to benefit from LABGI.
- 7) Notes that that the scheme is to be reviewed after the first year and calls on the Executive to campaign vigorously for a change so that Islington's businesses do not lose out for a second year.

4. World Aids Day

Councillor Greening moved, seconded by Councillor Coupland, a number of amendments, all of which with one exception were accepted by Councillor Stacy.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1) Commemorates World AIDS Day 2005 on 1st December as an opportunity to remember those who continue to live with, or have died from HIV in this country and across the world, and urges councillors and the people of Islington to wear a Red Ribbon in support of the day.
- 2) Looks forward to this year's World AIDS Day events arranged by Islington Council's Equalities Unit.
- 3) Recognises that HIV is one of the biggest social, economic and health challenges in

the world. It is a global emergency claiming over 8,000 lives every day.

4) Notes that in Islington, there are more than 970 people being treated for HIV, one of the highest number per head of population in the country.

5) Notes:

- i) that the Mayor of Islington's charity for 2004/5 was the Foodchain, a locally based charity delivering meals to HIV/AIDS patients, which received £14,000 over the year, and continues to receive donations thanks to the Mayor's Appeal; and
- ii) that the Mayor's 2005 theme is 'International in Islington', reflecting the many diverse nationalities represented in Islington, many of which are connected to countries which have been deeply affected by the HIV epidemic.

6) Notes the need to combat HIV/AIDS-related stigma and discrimination, and welcomes Lord Smith of Finsbury earlier this year becoming the UK's first openly HIV positive MP, and believes that such role models are important in challenging stigma and discrimination about the condition.

7) Congratulates and applauds all the agencies that work with those living with HIV/AIDS in Islington, the UK and worldwide, including Foodchain, Positively Women, and the National AIDS Trust who are based in Islington.

8) That in the UK, there are now at least 53,000 people living with HIV/AIDS, and that 52% of people diagnosed with HIV live in London, and notes with concern that the number of new HIV diagnoses has doubled since 1998.

9) Notes with concern the growing crisis in sexually transmitted infections in the UK, with these almost trebling in the last decade, with only 45% of people attending NHS genito-urinary medicine clinics being seen within 48 hours, and 25% of people having to wait two weeks to be seen.

10) Notes with concern that changes to NHS regulations introduced in April 2004 mean that some people living with HIV in the UK cannot access the treatment they need, meaning that long stay visitors, anyone living in the UK without documentation, and anyone refused asylum or leave to remain, but not removed from the UK, is liable to be charged for their HIV treatment except in an emergency.

11) Notes that, worldwide, there are now over 40 million people living with HIV/AIDS, including 2.2 million children, and that there has been a total of 20 million AIDS related deaths.

12) That 90% of people living with HIV are in developing countries, but only 700,000 of these currently receive anti-HIV drugs, which is only 12% of the 6 million who need them.

13) Notes the importance of practical assistance for the poorer countries devastated by HIV/AIDS.

14) Believes that pharmaceutical companies and governments should take the steps necessary to allow access to appropriate antiviral treatments to all those who need them.

15) Calls on the Government to:

- a) exempt HIV treatments from NHS charges by for instance giving it the same status as TB and other sexually transmitted infections on the list of communicable diseases exempt from charges
- b) address stigma and discrimination through more education and strengthening protective laws.
- c) improve education on HIV by:
 - i) refocusing the spending and priorities of the health service on health education and screening; *and*
 - ii) making comprehensive sex and relationships education a compulsory part of the national curriculum

- d) ensure that the G8 nations:
 - i) keep their promise to make sure there is HIV/AIDS treatment for everyone who needs it by 2010; and
 - ii) increase their contributions to the Global Fund for HIV/AIDS, TB and Malaria.
- 16) Recognises its own responsibility to educate, inform and care for residents of this borough, and resolves to work in partnership with the PCT and other agencies to ensure the level of services provided in Islington are amongst the best in the country.

5. Archway Town Centre

Councillor Willoughby moved, seconded by Councillor Kasprzyk, the following amendment:

In point 1) after 'Council notes the' add 'excellent', then after 'have been' add 'very successful'.

In point 2) after 'major transport' add 'hub' then remove all from Commercial to Manager. After 'hub and' add 'has a thriving local economy.'

Add a new point three that reads "Council notes that if Islington benefited from the Local Authority Business Growth Incentives we could use this funding in parts of the borough such as Archway where business growth is lower" and a new point 4 that reads "Council welcomes the administrations efforts to regenerate the Archway area through attracting more inward investment and more businesses into the Area and notes that the A1 Borough Scheme has already identified the need for a Town Centre Manager as part of this."

On the old point three now point five after 'businesses' remove 'and' and replace with a comma, and after 'traders' add 'and residents'. Remove all after 'vicinity' to 'area' then add to the end "to promote inward investment into the Archway and to make it feasible to employ a town centre manager."

This was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED: That Council

- 1) Notes the excellent work of the borough's Town Centre Managers at the Angel and Nag's Head which, in partnership with businesses, traders and other groups in their respective areas, have been very successful in working to improve and regenerate each area.
- 2) Also notes that Archway is another major transport hub and has a thriving local economy.
- 3) Notes that if Islington benefited from the Local Authority Business Growth Incentives we could use this funding in parts of the borough such as Archway where business growth is lower.
- 4) Welcomes the administration's efforts to regenerate the Archway area through attracting more inward investment and more businesses into the Area and notes that the A1 Borough Scheme has already identified the need for a Town Centre Manager as part of this.

- 5) Resolves to work with businesses and traders and residents in the Archway vicinity to promote inward investment into the Archway and to make it feasible to employ a town centre manager.

6. Supporting our Playcentres

Councillor Pulham proposed, seconded by Councillor Debono, the motion.

Councillors Ece, West and Gowers contributed to a debate.

The motion was put to the vote and declared LOST.

7. Bride Street Park

An amendment was moved by Councillor Kasprzyk, duly seconded, to refer the motion to the West Area Committee for consideration. This was put to the vote and declared CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

That, in accordance with Part 4, para 14(e) of the Council Procedure Rules, the motion be referred to the West Area Committee for consideration.

The meeting ended at 10.37pm.

Mayor