

LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON
COUNCIL MEETING - 25 FEBRUARY 2021

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the virtual meeting of the Council held on 25 February 2021 at 7.30 pm.

Present:

Bell-Bradford	Hamitouche	Picknell
Burgess	Heather	Poole
Caluori	Hull	Poyser
Champion	Hyde	Russell
Chapman	Ismail	Shaikh
Chowdhury	Jeapes	Spall
Clarke	Kay	Turan
A Clarke-Perry	Khondoker	Ward
Convery	Klute	Watts
Cutler	Lukes	Wayne
Debono	Nathan	Webbe
Gallagher	Ngongo	Williamson
Gantly	O'Halloran	Woodbyrne
Gill	O'Sullivan	Wolf
Graham	Ozdemir	

The Mayor (Councillor Janet Burgess MBE) in the Chair

125 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 10 December 2020 be agreed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

126 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

127 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

(i) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Comer-Schwartz, Khurana and Mackmurdie.

(ii) Order of Business

No changes were proposed to the order of business.

(iii) Declaration of Discussion Items

None.

(iv) Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor expressed her shock at the murder of Romario Opia on the Elthorne Estate the previous month. The Mayor said her thoughts were with his family and friends at this difficult time.

The coronavirus pandemic and national lockdown had meant that the Mayor was unable to carry out many face to face engagements, however the Mayor had assisted with the delivery of Christmas meals and hampers to those in need. The Mayor had also visited the Whittington Hospital, together with the Mayor of Haringey, to greet people from a Haringey Mosque who were bringing food to the hospital.

The Mayor had attended a number of virtual events, including a very moving event on Holocaust Memorial Day.

The Mayor had also held an online quiz for the Mayor's Charity that raised £3,000, and had attended a virtual event to mark Chinese New Year.

The Mayor had recently received her coronavirus vaccination and encouraged all of those who had been offered the vaccine to take this up at the earliest opportunity. The Mayor thanked everyone who was working to keep Islington's communities safe throughout the pandemic.

(v) Length of Speeches

The Mayor reminded all councillors to stay within the permitted length for speeches.

128 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader thanked the Mayor and commented on the difficulties of the ongoing pandemic.

Leader was pleased that, despite the pandemic and being unable to meet in person, the borough had still been able to mark Holocaust Memorial Day. It was so important that the local community was able to hold this event and stand together against hate.

The government had published its roadmap out of lockdown. The Leader said that it was so important for everyone to continue following the rules to keep our communities safe. Islington currently had the lowest rate of coronavirus in London and the Leader thanked local people for their continued efforts. However, we all must

remain vigilant. Lockdown was incredibly challenging and many families had been separated for several months, but it was absolutely vital that we continue our efforts to defeat the virus, including by taking up vaccines as they become available. The Leader thanked NHS and council staff, the voluntary sector and all of those across the borough who were working to support the vaccine rollout.

The Leader echoed the comments of the Mayor on the tragic death of Romario Opia and said his thoughts were with Romario's family and friends at this very difficult time.

The Leader also confirmed his intention to step down as Leader of the Council in May 2021. The Leader said he was proud of what had been achieved under his leadership throughout a period of national austerity and thanked everyone who had worked to improve the borough over the years he had been Leader. The Leader also commented on the significant challenges that local authorities would face over the coming years as the pandemic ends; coronavirus had further exposed the enormous inequalities and disproportionalities in society. There was a jobs crisis, a climate crisis and a housing crisis and local government needed the powers and funding to be able to tackle these challenges effectively.

The Mayor thanked Councillor Watts for his contribution to the borough.

129 PETITIONS

No petitions had been received.

130 PETITION DEBATE

The Council debated the petition 'Reverse the Road Closures' submitted to the previous meeting.

The lead petitioner, Zak Vora, introduced the petition. Councillor Champion moved the motion to debate the petition. Councillor Khondoker seconded. Councillors Ismail, Russell and Jeapes contributed to the debate. Councillor Champion exercised her right to reply.

The following main points were raised in the debate:

- The petitioners said that congestion had increased on the borough's main roads following the introduction of the council's People Friendly Streets scheme. The petitioners considered that there had been inadequate consultation on the schemes prior to implementation.
- Councillor Champion commented that the administration was elected on a manifesto to make streets more liveable, including reducing rat-running and increasing cycling. Traffic on London's local streets had increased by 72% over the past 13 years. This volume of traffic was dangerous and discouraged people from choosing active travel options. The Council's scheme would encourage residents to lead active lives that would be beneficial to their health and wellbeing, while also helping to tackle the climate emergency.

- London's traffic was a major source of air pollution that was having a detrimental impact on the health and wellbeing of local people and the environment. The People Friendly Street scheme would help to address this.
- The Council's People Friendly Streets scheme was the implementation of national government policy which required local authorities to reallocate roadspace for cyclists and pedestrians in response to the coronavirus pandemic. The schemes had been implemented through national government funding made available for this purpose and was compliant with statutory guidance.
- Councillors were listening to the feedback received on the schemes and this would be taken into account when the schemes were reviewed.
- Councillors considered further improvements that could be made to reduce car usage and improve access to public transport and how active travel options could be further promoted.

RESOLVED:

To continue to encourage residents to participate in local democracy by carefully considering the concerns raised in the petition and to undertake the debate in a spirit of openness and transparency.

131 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question (a) from Helena Farstad to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

At the Full Council on the 27th June 2019 when Islington Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency, I asked the Executive Member for Transport and Environment at the time, Cllr Webbe, about Islington Council's plans with regard to communicating this important decision of reaching Net Zero by 2030. The answer was satisfactory and promising, however, nearly 20 months later it is deeply disappointing that so little seems to have been done to inform the residents of Islington that we find ourselves in an emergency. An emergency that has in fact caused, and will have even greater implications than, the Coronavirus pandemic. It is of course understandable that a communication campaign setting out in detail what the council is planning to do to achieve net zero carbon by 2030 would need time to develop, however, communicating the basic, why we are in an emergency, why it matters and why the council needs to take new measures, would not be dependent on a plan. Other than a two page spread in Islington life promoting a shift to EV and calling for more recycling, I cannot recall seeing anything meaningful or comprehensive.

I wonder whether Cllr Champion thinks it is about time Islington Council and the current Labour administration starts telling the truth, unpalatable as it may be, about the Environmental Emergency we are all facing?

Response:

Thank you for your question. I think we have been very clear we are facing an environmental emergency, which is why we made a declaration of climate emergency in June 2019. Following consultation, we have now published our Vision 2030 strategy which includes action plan. It's also why the Environment and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee are holding their second public meeting to discuss this issue next month. Officers who are leading on this work will attend the meeting and it's a really good opportunity to discuss the work we are doing. In the budget we are voting on tonight, we are investing more than £17m in projects related to our Vision 2030 strategy. That includes over £6m to develop more People Friendly Streets. Another example is the work we are doing to electrify our own fleet, which means installing multimillion pound infrastructure at Council sites. Of course it has been an extraordinary year, but aside from the pandemic our single biggest communications campaign this year has been the People Friendly Streets programme rolled out in June. Since the summer the Council has put out communications across all of its corporate channels to explain its commitment to tackle the climate emergency and why it matters to us. We are already underway to develop a new communications campaign to raise awareness of the themes and commitments of the Vision 2030 strategy. We will engage residents, businesses and partners on this issue.

Question (b) from Lucy Facer to Councillor Ward, Executive Member for Housing & Development

The Islington Council draft transport policy shows the Councils' commitment to reducing air pollution through greening initiatives such as 'Seek opportunities to use trees and planting to separate residents, pedestrians and cyclists from motor traffic'. The removal of mature trees at Dixon Clark Court at Highbury Corner, where there are illegal levels of air pollution, will remove this important barrier of trees for council tenants and Canonbury primary school. In addition, new homes will be built directly onto the road, exposing these residents to dangerous levels of pollution that cause chronic health risks.

Why is the council continuing to allow the removal of mature green barriers, in a particularly toxic location in the borough, when your transport policy highlights the importance of improving the green environment in Islington in order to reduce air pollution and protect the health of its residents? New homes are needed in the borough but is it acceptable to implement new schemes that will have long lasting detrimental effects to residents health caused by increased exposure to illegal levels of air pollution?

Response:

Thank you for your question. Islington Council is determined to tackle the housing crisis in our borough that has led to 14,000 households on the housing waiting list. We are also committed to tackling the climate emergency. Dixon Clark Court will provide 25 desperately needed new council homes and will also increase the number of trees on the site, include environmentally important landscape improvements, and

planting of shrubs, wildflowers and wild grasses that will help to improve local wildlife. This green-screen will help to deflect particulate pollution. In addition, the new homes will have mechanical ventilation and heat recovery units installed, which include filters to improve internal air quality. Trees and greenspace are an important part of our plan to create a greener and healthier Islington, which is why we are determined to improve canopy cover as we tackle the housing crisis, while we build affordable council homes for local people in need.

Question (c) from Harry Nugent to Councillor Lukes, Executive Member for Community Safety:

With yet another increase of knife crime in Islington recently, what have the council done in the budget to help educate people of the realities and effects knife crime has?

Response:

Your question refers to an increase in knife crime in Islington. However, since 2007 our partnership working has seen the number of knife crime injury victims under 25 fall by more than 46%. We have also seen improvements in other areas such as decreases in youth violence and robbery. We know that one victim of knife crime is one too many and we must do everything we can to keep young people and communities safe. So despite a decade of cuts to Islington's funding by the government, we have protected youth provision in our budget. Since 2016, we have invested £2m over a four year period into targeted youth services to help tackle these issues. Since then, in light of our successful partnership approach, we have protected that additional £500k a year investment, incorporating it into our budget every year.

In December, the Council adopted the new Youth Safety Strategy, building on the progress made with new initiatives to tackle the issues that fuel youth crime, including domestic violence, school exclusions, and social, emotional and mental health challenges that young people in the borough face. To support the Youth Safety Strategy, a new film Love and Loss was produced and we have been working with schools to promote it. The film features bereaved families from the Love and Loss Group; mothers, fathers, siblings and cousins who bravely share their experiences of losing a child within their family. They want to support and educate young people to make safer choices, and want the film to be shared as widely as possible. I urge everyone at this meeting to see it and get others to see it. It is profoundly moving and a really important piece of work. Other projects we have led on include projects to reduce the number of knives in the community. We now have knife bins installed across the borough. There is also a 'no knives' shop campaign that engages local businesses. We are committed to engaging with the Mayor of London to keep everyone in our borough safe and ending needless loss of life, as we saw in January when Romario Opia was tragically killed.

The Mayor advised that Questions (d) and (e) would receive a combined response.

Question (d) from John Hartley to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport

The recent report from Transport for All, "Pave the Way", rightly made the case that any changes to road infrastructure should always be designed with people with disabilities in mind. People can be disabled in many different ways: not all drive and not all use mobility scooters. The designers need to speak to the disabled to discover what works and doesn't work for them. What is the Council doing to ensure that People Friendly Streets delivers the most benefit to people with disabilities?

Question (e) from Pierre Delarue to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

Will the Executive Member list all the Disability Equality Impact Assessments that were carried out before the implementation of Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTN) schemes over the last year? How did those assessments affect the design of the schemes and improve the mobility of those residents who because of age, illness or disability find active travel more difficult?

Combined response:

Thank you for your questions. We have carried out a Resident Impact Assessment that considers the impacts on residents with protected characteristics, including those with disabilities. The Resident Impact Assessments for the People Friendly Streets Schemes are available on our website. Each assessment sets out the actions we have taken to prevent any negative impacts. In Islington, approximately 16% of people identify as disabled. Any changes we make as a council that impact on disabled people are carefully considered. The Pave the Way report makes it clear that meaningful engagement with disabled people in the community is needed when implementing low traffic neighbourhoods. As identified in the impact assessment, the Council is committed to focused engagement with groups that represent those with disabilities. Some of this has already taken place and more in depth engagement will take place in future. The report also highlights that low traffic neighbourhoods have a number of benefits for disabled residents, including less danger due to traffic, less noise, easier and more pleasant journeys, and improved physical and mental health. Quieter, safer and healthier streets reap benefits for all. High traffic volumes prevent many people from choosing more sustainable forms of transport such as walking, cycling and wheeling and this applies just as much to people with disabilities as to those who do not have them. Traffic volumes in Islington are far too high and increasing, impacting on people with disabilities who do need to use motorised vehicles, as it does people who walk, wheel, cycle, or use public transport. It's always worth repeating the statistic that 24.3 million more miles were driven in Islington in 2019 than 2013, an increase of around 10%. Young people, less mobile people and people with disabilities are disproportionately impacted by busy, noisy and unsafe streets. We are also looking to see what specific action we can take to improve

conditions for disabled people across the borough, including dropped kerbs, tactile paving and footway improvements. Islington in partnership with Camden also provides a service called ScootAbility which loans mobility scooters to residents. These changes are intended to encourage people with disabilities to participate in more active travel.

The Mayor advised that questions (f), (g) and (h) would receive a combined response.

Question (f) from Rachael Swynnerton to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

It is fantastic that the Council have committed to reducing traffic across the borough to improve road safety and air quality through with the introduction of the People Friendly Streets scheme. We are very much in support of these measures. The council have confirmed they are monitoring the impact of these schemes as they go in. Please can they provide details of their monitoring process and confirm when data will be made available for public consumption?

Question (g) from Helen Redesdale to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

In Tufnell Park, barriers were installed some years ago on Huddleston and Dalmeny Roads to exclude through traffic. Residents now enjoy quieter, less polluted streets. Collecting and sharing data on new Low Traffic Neighbourhoods (LTNs) will help residents understand the environmental benefits of these schemes. What data has been used to design the recent schemes - and what metrics are being used to monitor impact on for example, air quality and traffic volume in the surrounding area and will the Executive Member commit to publishing all data the Council holds on air quality and traffic levels in and around LTNs?

Question (h) from Jeremy Drew to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

When does Council expect to release its first report on monitoring of the St Peter St People Friendly Street, which ended its first 6 months on January 3rd?

Combined response:

Thank you. Analysis the impact of People Friendly Streets is an important part of what we are doing, as is our consultation and engagement with local people. We are happy with how the schemes have been rolled out, but we are looking forward to analysing the data as it becomes available. As part of the monitoring strategy for each scheme, traffic cameras are installed prior to the implementation of each neighbourhood, both in the neighbourhood itself and on surrounding roads, and at various intervals. Air quality is being monitored in each neighbourhood and the council is also collecting data on congestion, anti-social behaviour and emergency response times. The council will analyse data, also taking into account the impact of

the coronavirus pandemic on the figures. Monitoring data will be held to inform what measures are needed to be made permanent after the trial period. In relation to St Peter's, the council is undertaking a peer review on the interim monitoring report, this will be published as soon as possible. We do want to ensure our findings are robust and accurate and that is why we are seeking a peer review.

Question (i) from Kate Pothalingam to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

Islington Liberal Democrats welcome the news that the Council will be consulting residents in Mildmay about the proposed new Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) in that area, as we have proposed. Will the Executive Member confirm that Islington Council will take a consistent approach and will commit to consulting residents and community groups, for example by using Citizen's Assemblies, before any other new LTNs are implemented, e.g. in Barnsbury?

Response:

Thank you. I'm very glad to hear you support the work in Mildmay on People Friendly Streets. I am a bit confused though on what you are supporting, as on your website you are running a petition against the changes, and are calling for the use of cameras to allow residents to access their own streets. Our LTNs are specifically designed to allow resident access. Our schemes also stop residents, children and adults alike, from being put off walking and cycling. You have to make people feel safe, and to do that you have to change the look and feel of the streets, as I think our schemes have done. Effectively allowing residents to drive through filters dilutes the benefits of the scheme and will do nothing to reduce traffic on the main roads. In terms of the consultation you mention, aside from the surveys and website, I have attended a number of ward partnership meetings with officers. We also listen to resident feedback received on the trial. After a year we will undertake a full consultation with local people on if they want us to keep, change or scrap the scheme. It is an exciting time for Mildmay and there is very significant financial investment in the area despite consistent cuts to the council's budget over the last decade from national government.

Question (j) from Maria Gallastegui to Councillor Ward, Executive Member for Housing & Development:

We are very alarmed at the persistent tree felling program that appears to be spreading, not just in Islington, but all over London and beyond. This seems to be driven by the lack of social housingor is it? I feel that the council are acting in a reckless manner as we are in a confirmed Climate Emergency. The very poor re-modelling of the Highbury Corner roundabout has left it 17 trees less, and a higher pollution level. This lack of planning is unacceptable. Dixon Court stands to lose 7 trees, which is on a school run.

We say HOMES AND TREES! There is huge empty capacity in London to rehouse everyone. Many Europeans are returning home and Londoners leaving London. With

Covid, so many buildings will become disused. Why destroy what little open space we have left and fell trees for no REAL reason?

Response:

Thank you for your question. Islington Council is determined to deliver decent, secure and genuinely affordable homes. The Dixon Clark Court development will deliver 25 new council homes for local people. This scheme is a big step towards our ambitious target of 500 new council homes by 2022. Part of Islington's largest council home building programme in a generation. Trees play an absolutely vital role in tackling the climate emergency and helping us to achieve our ambitious target of net zero carbon by 2030. We have just under 40,000 publicly managed trees in Islington and the borough currently has canopy cover of 25%, which is better than the London average of 21% and the UK average of 17%. The council never takes decisions to remove trees lightly, an assessment is always made before permission is given for removal, and we have also pledged to replace more trees than are removed. We are planting a total of 63 new trees to replace the six that will be removed at Dixon Clark Court. This means that we will exceed the amount of carbon absorption from the felled trees, as well as providing hedgerow and landscape improvements. I completely agree that we need homes and trees, and that's why we are providing both for local people.

Question (k) from Dominic Martin to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

Successful Low Traffic Neighbourhood (LTN) schemes require the support of the people who live in the LTN area. The Council plans to consult residents about the recently rolled-out LTN schemes in St. Peter's, Canonbury and Highbury within 12-18 months of implementation. If the feedback from that consultation indicates that residents would like to see exemptions to camera filters using Automatic Numberplate Recognition (ANPR) technology, and/or if Disability Groups request this, will the Executive Member commit to (a) introducing ANPR technology in existing LTNs and to (b) using ANPR technology in future LTN schemes in Barnsbury and elsewhere, as Islington Liberal Democrats have proposed?

Response:

I will refer to my previous answer. It's important for residents to have a say in how measures are working, and we have chosen to implement the schemes in a way that allows an opportunity to consider feedback after 12 months. I am sure people will make a number of submissions on aspects such as ANPR. The problem is, as I said earlier, there are very good reasons not to exempt residents from the filters. Creating a safer environment for all really means changing how the road feels. If private vehicles are still able to travel through then we will not see the benefits on air quality and noise pollution. We need people to feel safe. If you travel through those neighbourhoods now, you can see people using the streets in a different way, and that is what we want. We must also reduce congestion and air pollution on the main roads, the objective of People Friendly Streets is to reduce the overall number of

trips, not to simply displace traffic from side streets onto other roads. If you give local people exemptions, it would be easier for them to drive around as there is less traffic on those side roads. We really need to do something fundamentally different and show people that streets can be community spaces; we can only do that if we change how those spaces are used and how those spaces feel. We are consulting and we will listen to feedback, but we need to be doing something for the people of Islington.

Question (l) from Zak Vora to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

The ill-planned Highbury Corner road system has seen continual road works for several years leading to no improvement in traffic flow. With the intended new flats being built on the corner, where currently stand much loved trees, leading to further traffic disruption and congestion, what assurances will the Council make regarding the building work and its impact on local residents and businesses along with traffic flow?

Response:

Thank you. We are trying to do something very different with Highbury Corner. Previously it was a roundabout designed to get traffic through as quickly as possible, discounting the needs of people who were walking or cycling. Previously, if I was going around Highbury Corner, I would always get off my bike. The works at Highbury Corner have encouraged and enabled walking and cycling.

The traffic arrangements at Highbury Corner are controlled by TFL, but we are working closely with them, and we have highlighted concerns which residents, councillors and officers have raised. TFL is committed to carrying out a review of the arrangements at Highbury Corner; however unfortunately this work has been delayed because of Covid. It does remain a priority for us and TFL to address this as soon as possible. The council is building new homes on the nearby Dixon Clark Court estate, and the contractor has produced a construction and environmental management plan to minimise the impact on local residents and the nearby Canonbury Primary School. They are a member of the 'Considerate Contractor' scheme and will use best practice through the build, including the use of a resident liaison officer to be a point of contact for local people.

Question (m) from Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong to Councillor Gill, Executive Member for Finance & Performance:

How has the council supported its employees who are working from home?

Response:

Thank you for your question. The past year has been tough for everyone and large numbers of Islington Council staff have been working from home since March 2020. We have a clear policy for staff to work at home wherever possible. Staff are

provided with guidance to help them with remote working tools, training on video calls, and advice and guidance on working safely at home. We have a Wellbeing Hub on our intranet with support and advice, signposting to free support such as our Employee Assistance Programme. I'd also like to thank our trade union colleagues for the work they have done in supporting and helping us over the last year. We have set up systems to enable staff to keep in touch with one another while working at home. Employees are able to order desks, monitors and ergonomic chairs for home delivery and we are also directing staff to the government portal to claim tax relief on additional costs of heating and electricity.

Question (n) from Devon Osborne to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

In line with the Mayor of London's 2017 initiative and with special reference to the pollution benefits of mature versus sapling trees, what are the council's current plans to improve Islington's tree canopy?

Response:

Thank you. We know that trees play a vital role in the life of local people; our own tree officers feel very passionately about them too. We have committed to increasing the borough's canopy cover from 25% to 27% by 2030. The London average is 21% at the moment. We have committed funds to tree planting and this is covered in both our Vision 2030 document and also our biodiversity action plan. We will do so by maintaining the trees we have, planting where trees are lost, and planting more where we can.

Question (o) from John Ackers to Councillor Lukes, Executive Member for Community Safety:

There have been reports on nextdoor about bike hangars being broken into e.g. Battledean Road on Nov 18th, 2020 and also Aberdeen Road on Mar 19th 2019, Arlington Square. I believe that bikes are being removed by thieves using cordless grinders to cut the owners D locks. How many bikes have been stolen from bike hangars?

Response:

Thank you. Installing more bike hangars is part of our commitment to creating a greener, healthier, cleaner Islington by encouraging more people to cycle. Unfortunately, on the issue of bike thefts, the data is recorded by the Police and the data is not held in such a way that we can establish how many are stolen from bike hangars. However, we are aware of thefts from hangars and we are looking at ways to improve their security. All of our Cycle Hoop hangars have been updated with shields, and new hangars will be to a higher spec with improved security.

Question (p) Eilidh Murray to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

Can the council explain how chopping down mature trees in different locations in the borough delivers to their declaration of a climate emergency delivered publicly with such conviction in June 2019 on the steps of the Town Hall with our two MPs in attendance ?

Response:

Thank you. Unfortunately we do lose mature trees every year; this can be for a variety of reasons including end of life and disease. We do have robust processes to protect and monitor our trees and we have very passionate and experienced officers in this regard. They will challenge tree removal and we have a policy that sets out when we will and when we won't remove trees. Where trees are being removed, we work to ensure adequate mitigation. We also seek funding to plant trees where we can and are working to secure increased canopy cover and the associated benefits.

Question (q) from Meg Howarth to Councillor Ward, Executive Member for Housing & Development:

How can the loss of the Dixon Clark Court 'little forest' of 52-year-old mature trees - a Highbury Corner public-realm amenity - be justified for a maximum additional 25 council homes on the estate, a number likely to be further reduced by the Right to Buy?

Response:

Thank you. Demand for council housing massively outstrips supply in our borough; more than 14,000 households are on our housing register, including those who are homeless or in extremely overcrowded conditions. We are working to address this very serious issue and building 25 new council homes at Dixon Clark Court will help with this. We are currently undertaking the largest council home building programme in a generation. Since we came to power in 2010 we have been building as many affordable council homes as possible and this includes building on garages, car parks and at areas like Dixon Clark Court. I entirely agree that Right to Buy is a terrible policy and if we had our way we would abolish it. Housing homeless families must be our priority. I would be delighted if you joined us in campaigning to scrap the Right to Buy to make sure we have affordable homes in our borough.

132 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Question (a) from Councillor Heather to Councillor Watts, Leader of the Council:

The pandemic has highlighted the "digital divide" in the UK and in Islington. In schools, to assist children with remote learning, the Council has done its best to facilitate the provision of both computer hardware and connectivity to the Internet. Meanwhile the Tory Government's strategy and record on digital inclusion is one of

dismal failure. Their scheme to roll out computer devices to schools was paused in October 2020. And the UK will miss its latest target for the roll-out of full-fibre broadband by 2025 – just another in a long line of failures caused by relying on a strategy of private enterprise and completion to deliver the telecommunications broadband network that we need to assist digital inclusion and equality of opportunity.

The Covid-19 crisis has highlighted the need for universal access to broadband services to end the digital divide. Working and learning at home saves lives. And only a publicly funded, owned and accountable service will get the job done and also boost other public services and the economy. Would you therefore agree with me that it is the right time to push for a Government policy more akin to the Labour Party's publicly owned free full-fibre broadband pledge?

Response:

Thank you. As I said in my introductory remarks, the pandemic has highlighted and exacerbated inequalities that were already in our society. Digital access is one of the key inequalities that has been made worse by the pandemic. Throughout the pandemic the council has worked hard to tackle this issue; we have worked with local organisations and charities to supply laptops and tablets to families in need. We now believe that every family in need has either got a device or one is arriving very shortly. However, as you know, the reason we are now almost a year into a pandemic and still having to work on this issue is because it feels like at every stage we have been undermined by the government. Last summer we were promised thousands of laptops for families in Islington, schools placed orders with the DfE, and we were preparing for the laptops to arrive. Astonishingly, the Department for Education then cancelled all of those orders with no notice to schools or the Council. We then had to quickly secure laptops for children far too late in the day, while government ministers were claiming the scheme was some sort of success.

I agree with you, relying on private sector donations is simply not a way forward through this crisis. Laptops and data access are something that is clearly fundamental to all of our lives. They should be seen as a public utility like heating and electricity, not as some sort of luxury add on. I think there is a very strong view to say that public utilities should be provided by the public sector as ultimately that is in the public interest. Throughout the pandemic we have proactively worked with schools in trying to get more data and equipment; and the partnership of Islington schools has resisted efforts to marketise our schools and get them to compete, instead of working in partnership together. Our approach has paid dividends. We are almost there now, but the situation would have been resolved much quicker and much easier with proper government investment and support from the start.

Question (b) from Councillor Ismail to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

Islington has a target of zero net carbon by 2030, What is the plan going forward and how is it going to benefit my residents who are on low-income?

Response:

Thank you. As you know, the Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and we committed to the ambitious goal of net zero carbon by 2030. We published our strategy and action plan earlier this year that sets out how we are going to get there. The action plans focus on a number of themes; buildings, transport, planning, natural environment, green economy, and sustainable and affordable energy. The targets are incredibly important; carbon emissions have a detrimental impact on all of our residents, both for those who are on low-income, and those who are not. We also know that climate change impacts on people around the world. Our targets are ambitious and need a serious commitment by everybody. Unfortunately, achieving this target has been made harder by the government. We have seen nowhere near enough action from the government and their actions are now coming far too late. If the government is serious about helping us and tackling climate change they really need to step up now and do better. We need actions like retrofit programmes for homes that would have such an impact on people on low-incomes, an impact in fuel poverty, so we can provide warm homes to people. Not only that, but we have seen a decade to cuts to our budgets, so it makes it harder for us to do what we need. However, we have taken positive steps towards our target, and it is a priority across the Council. Since the Council cannot deliver the 2030 target by itself, the programme will focus on working with residents, businesses and partners on what we can all do to create a cleaner, greener, healthier Islington to benefit us all – especially the least well-off local people. Our fairness approach means we will target the issues affecting lower income households; for example by helping those in fuel poverty, improving energy efficiency in our homes, and work to maximise income.

Question (c) from Councillor Ismail to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

Islington has frozen energy costs for 700 homes from the award winning Bunhill Heat and Power Network, which means that each household connected to the Bunhill network will make a saving of £321 less than the average costs for heating in London.

Can you demonstrate and confirm the savings Bunhill residents made in 6 years total and are they still making this saving?

Response:

The Bunhill and Bunhill 2 energy centres will provide cheaper and greener energy for local people. In terms of savings, from 2015/16 to 2020/21, a two bedroom flat connected to the Bunhill network will have paid £648 less for heating and hot water than the average London home connected to a gas supply. That's £108 per year less. A leaseholder will have paid £957 less. The Council continues to provide a 10% discount on the standing charge for tenants connected to the Bunhill Heat and Power network. By providing clean and cheap energy for local people, we can reduce our emissions and make life easier for residents. Again, this is not made easy by austerity

from national government. Despite this, we have continued to look after our most vulnerable residents and the least well-off.

Question (d) from Councillor Russell to Councillor Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

How many insurance company requests for tree felling in Islington have been refused by the council in 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20 and how many trees have been felled each year?

Response:

Thank you. Trees play a vital role in tackling the climate emergency and helping us to achieve our ambitious target of net zero carbon by 2030. We have around 40,000 publicly managed trees in Islington and, as I said before, tree canopy of 25% that is better than the London average. Subsidence is a serious threat to our trees, and trees across London; the council always challenges insurance companies that call for tree felling and request the highest level of evidence, while demonstrating the value of trees in line with best practice and guidelines. We undertake a full tree inspection and take an informed decision based on case law and balanced against the financial risk to the council. Of the 40,000 trees managed by the Council, in the last five years we have lost an average of 14 trees per year to subsidence claims. To put this into context, we expect to lose around 400 per year due to end of lifespan or defects. But sadly it is frequently the larger trees that need to be removed.

With regard to tree work applications, the planning database doesn't record the reason for removal or the total numbers felled. Officers could extract the information but it would take time to individually work through around 3,500 tree work applications over the past five years. However, to demonstrate that we are committed to this, the Council has made 12 new tree preservation orders over the last three years to stop trees being removed. The last five tree preservation orders were all to stop trees being removed due to subsidence claims.

Question (e) from Councillor Russell to Councillor Ward, Executive Member for Housing & Development:

2,700 of Islington's 4,500 defective front doors were replaced with glass reinforced plastic (GRP) fire doors between 2014 and 2018, when serious defects in the GRP doors were exposed.

Last year you told me it will take up to two years before the 1,800 remaining defective doors and the 2,700 GRP doors are all replaced. Is the roll out of compliant front doors on track or has it been delayed by the pandemic?

Response:

Thank you for your question. Keeping people safe is a top priority for the Council. Sadly, the pandemic has delayed our fire door project considerably. Last summer our

contractor furloughed their staff for a number of months and in this time no work was carried out. When it was considered safe to return to site, we had to devise new method statements to allow doors to be replaced safely, both for operatives themselves and for residents. That took time to put in place, required PPE and strict procedures that added to the installation time for each door. We also identified manufacturing problems that needed to be resolved. So sadly the pandemic has delayed our programme, as for a period the programme had to be paused entirely. However, we have still managed to replace 600 doors during the pandemic and are working to catch-up. However, it is likely that the overall programme will be delayed. I also have a breakdown of the number of new doors per block and I am happy to share this with you outside of the meeting.

133 DRAFT LOCAL PLAN - MODIFICATIONS FOR CONSULTATION

Councillor Ward moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Shaikh seconded. The recommendations in the report were put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the modifications proposed to the Draft Local Plan and supporting documents for consultation be approved:
 - Strategic and Development Management Policies schedule of modifications (Appendix 1 to the report)
 - Site Allocations schedule of modifications (Appendix 2 to the report)
 - Bunhill and Clerkenwell Area Action Plan schedule of modifications (Appendix 3 to the report)
 - Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) examination addendum (Appendix 4 to the report)
 - Proposed changes to the Policies Map (Appendix 5 to the report)
- (ii) That officers be authorised to make minor changes to the consultation documents and authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration (in consultation with the Executive Member for Housing and Development) the power to authorise other changes;
- (iii) That it be noted that public consultation on the modifications to the Draft Local Plan and associated documents (subject to feedback from the Planning Inspectors examining Islington's Local Plan) is provisionally scheduled to take place for a minimum of six weeks starting in March 2021. Following this, all revised documents including responses (known as representations) received will be submitted to the Planning Inspectors examining the Local Plan;
- (iv) That the Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration, in consultation with the Executive Member for Planning and Development, be authorised to approve appropriate changes to the Draft Local Plan during the rest of the Independent Examination process.

134 CONSTITUTION REPORT

Councillor Hyde moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Woolf seconded. The recommendations were put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

That the amendments to the constitution be approved as set out in the report submitted.

135 CHIEF WHIP'S REPORT

Councillor Hyde moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Woolf seconded. The recommendations in the report were put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the appointment of Cllr Ngongo as Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families be noted;
- (ii) That Cllr Burgess be appointed to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed;
- (iii) That Cllr Ngongo be appointed to the Health and Wellbeing Board, and the Haringey & Islington Health and Wellbeing Boards Joint Sub-Committee, for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed;
- (iv) That Cllr Ngongo be appointed to the Disciplinary Appeal Committee for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed;
- (v) That Cllr Champion be appointed to the London Councils Leaders Committee for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed;
- (vi) That Cllr Ward be appointed as a council representative to the LGA General Assembly for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed;
- (vii) That Cllr Ngongo be appointed to the Dame Alice Owens School Foundation Advisory Committee until the end of the term of office in May 2022 or until a successor is appointed;
- (viii) That Cllr Burgess be appointed to the Archway Town Centre Management Board for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed;
- (ix) That Cllr Ngongo be appointed to SACRE for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed;
- (x) That Cllr Ngongo be appointed to the Corporate Parenting Board for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed.

136 BUDGET PROPOSALS 2021/22

Councillor Gill moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Watts seconded.

Councillor Russell moved an amendment to the budget.

Councillors Gantly, O'Sullivan and Bell-Bradford contributed to the debate.

Councillor Russell and Gill exercised their rights to reply.

The amendment was put to the vote. Voting was recorded as follows:

For: Councillor Russell

Against: Councillors Bell-Bradford, Burgess, Caluori, Champion, Chapman, Chowdhury, Clarke, Clarke-Perry, Convery, Cutler, Debono, Gallagher, Gantly, Gill, Graham, Hamitouche, Heather, Hull, Hyde, Jeapes, Kay, Khondoker, Klute, Lukes, Nathan, Ngongo, O'Halloran, O'Sullivan, Ozdemir, Picknell, Poole, Poyser, Shaikh, Spall, Turan, Ward, Watts, Wayne, Webbe, Williamson, Woolf.

Abstention: Councillor Ismail.

The amendment was **LOST**.

The recommendations in the report were put to the vote. Voting was recorded as follows:

For: Councillors Bell-Bradford, Burgess, Caluori, Champion, Chapman, Chowdhury, Clarke, Clarke-Perry, Convery, Cutler, Debono, Gallagher, Gantly, Gill, Graham, Hamitouche, Heather, Hull, Hyde, Jeapes, Kay, Khondoker, Klute, Lukes, Nathan, Ngongo, O'Halloran, O'Sullivan, Ozdemir, Picknell, Poole, Poyser, Shaikh, Spall, Turan, Ward, Watts, Wayne, Webbe, Williamson, Woolf.

Against: Councillor Ismail

Abstention: Councillor Russell

The recommendations were **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

General Fund Budget 2021/22 and Medium Term Financial Strategy

- (i) That the latest assumed Medium Term Financial Strategy and balanced 2021/22 budget, including the underlying principles and assumptions, be approved as recommended by the Executive (Paragraphs 3.1-3.30, Table 1 and Appendix A of the report submitted).
- (ii) That the unprecedented level of uncertainty in the estimates due to COVID-19 and the wider local government funding outlook be noted (Paragraphs 3.31-3.41 of the report submitted).
- (iii) That the proposed 2021/22 net budgets by directorate be approved as recommended by the Executive (Paragraph 3.5, Table 2 and Appendix A of the report submitted).
- (iv) That the 2021/22 savings, which in some cases remain subject to consideration of individual consultations before implementation, be approved

as recommended by the Executive (Paragraphs 3.42-3.45, Table 6 and Appendices B1-B2 of the report submitted).

- (v) That the Dedicated Schools Grant settlement for 2021/22 and related funding assumptions be noted (Paragraphs 3.46-3.55 of the report submitted).
- (vi) That the fees and charges policy and the General Fund fees and charges for 2021/22 that have been approved by the Executive be noted (Paragraphs 3.56-3.63 and Appendices C1-C5 of the report submitted).
- (vii) That the policy on General Fund contingency and reserves, including the target level of General Fund balances, be approved as recommended by the Executive, and the movements to/from earmarked reserves assumed as part of the 2021/22 revenue budget be approved (Paragraphs 3.64-3.72 and Table 7 of the report submitted).
- (viii) That authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer for any technical adjustments required to be made to the 2021/22 budget (in line with the council's Financial Regulations), be approved as recommended by the Executive.
- (ix) That centrally held demographic growth be allocated to service budgets if and when the need materialises and approved by the Section 151 Officer, be approved as recommended by the Executive (Paragraph 3.9 of the report submitted).

Housing Revenue Account Budget and Medium Term Financial Strategy

- (x) That the balanced Housing Revenue Account 2021/22 budget be approved as recommended by the Executive, and the latest estimates over the 3-year Medium Term Financial Strategy period be noted (Paragraphs 4.1-4.3, Table 8 and Appendix D1 of the report submitted).
- (xi) That the Housing Revenue Account rents and other Housing Revenue Account fees and charges for 2021/22 that have been approved by the Executive be noted (Paragraphs 4.4-4.30, Tables 9-12 and Appendix D2 of the report submitted).

Capital Investment and Treasury and Investment Management

- (xii) That the proposed 2021/22 to 2023/24 capital programme, including investment in projects related to the council's net zero carbon priority, be approved as recommended by the Executive, and the latest indicative capital programme for 2024/25 to 2030/31 be noted (Paragraph 5.1-5.5, Table 13 and Appendix E1 of the report submitted).
- (xiii) That the estimated funding of the 2021/22 to 2023/24 capital programme be noted, and authority be delegated to the Section 151 Officer, where necessary, to apply capital resources to fund the capital programme in the most cost-effective way for the council (Paragraphs 5.6-5.7 and Table 14 of the report submitted).

- (xiv) That the Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy and Investment Strategy be approved as recommended by the Executive (Paragraph 5.3 and Appendices E2-E5 of the report submitted).

Council Tax and Retained Business Rates

- (xv) That the 2020/21 council tax and business rates forecasts and budgetary impact over the medium term be noted (Paragraphs 6.1-6.3, Table 15, Paragraph 6.17 and Table 23 of the report submitted).
- (xvi) That the calculations required for the determination of the 2021/22 council tax requirement, and the level of council tax as detailed in Section 6 of the report submitted and summarised below, be approved as recommended by the Executive:
- 1) 2021/22 council tax requirement of £99,248,682.10 (Paragraph 6.6 and Table 16 of the report submitted)
 - 2) The relevant basic amount of Islington Band D council tax of £1,276.72, a 4.99% increase compared to 2020/21 (comprising 3.00% for expenditure on adult social care and 1.99% for other expenditure), and that this is not 'excessive'. (Paragraphs 6.7-6.8 and Table 17 of the report submitted)
 - 3) The basic amount of Islington Band D council tax for dwellings to which no special item relates (i.e. outside of the Lloyd Square Garden Committee area) of £1,276.48. (Paragraph 6.9 and Table 18 of the report submitted)
 - 4) The amount of 2020/21 council tax (excluding the GLA precept) for each valuation band over each of the Council's areas. (Paragraph 6.11 and Table 19 of the report submitted)
 - 5) The total amount of 2020/21 council tax (including the GLA precept) for each valuation band over each of the Council's areas. (Paragraph 6.13 and Table 21 of the report submitted)
- (xvii) That the council's estimated retained business rates funding in 2021/22, as per the 2021/22 NNDR1 return estimate be noted (Paragraph 6.14-6.16 and Table 22 of the report submitted).
- (xviii) That the London Business Rates Pool will not continue in 2021/22 be noted (Paragraph 6.17 of the report submitted).
- (xix) That the significant funding risk for the council in relation to Material Change in Circumstance (MCC) business rates appeals due to COVID-19 be noted, and that additional appeals provision for this threat in 2020/21 or 2021/22 was not included in the 2021/22 NNDR1 return be noted (Paragraphs 6.19-6.22 of the report submitted).

Matters to Consider in Setting the Budget

- (xx) To have regard to the Section 151 Officer's report on the robustness of the estimates included in the budget and the adequacy of the proposed financial

reserves when making decisions about the budget and the level of council tax, as required under Section 25(2) of the Local Government Act 2003, be agreed (Paragraphs 7.1-7.9 of the report submitted).

- (xxi) That the Monitoring Officer comments be noted (Paragraphs 7.10-7.14 of the report submitted).
- (xxii) That the Equality Impact Assessment be noted, and to take fully account of it in approving the overall budget and related proposals (Paragraphs 7.15-7.17 and Appendix F of the report submitted).
- (xxiii) That the council invited business rate payers or representatives of business rate payers in Islington to comment on the draft 2021/22 budget proposals, as required under Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and that no responses were received, be noted (Paragraphs 7.18-7.20 of the report submitted).
- (xxiv) That the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2021/22 be approved as recommended by the Executive (Paragraph 7.21 and Appendix G of the report submitted).

The meeting closed at 9.20 pm

MAYOR