

LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON
COUNCIL MEETING - 3 MARCH 2022

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the meeting of the Council held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 3 March 2022 at 7.30 pm.

Present:

Bossmann-Quarshie	Gill	O'Halloran
Champion	Heather	Poole
Chowdhury	Hyde	Russell
Clarke	Ismail	Turan
Comer-Schwartz	Jeapes	Ward
Gallagher	Lukes	Wayne
Gantly	Ngongo	

The Mayor (Councillor Troy Gallagher) in the Chair

176 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting on 9 December 2021 be agreed as a correct record and the Mayor be authorised to sign them.

177 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

178 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

(i) Apologies

No apologies for absence were received, however the Mayor advised that several members were not present due to the reduced capacity of the Council Chamber, in order to minimise the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

(ii) Order of Business

The order of business would be as per the agenda.

(iii) Declaration of Discussion Items

None.

(iv) Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor said that he has saddened to learn of the death of Sandi Phillips, the Chair of Elthorne Pride. Sandi played a key role in many local initiatives and did all she could to help her community. The Mayor said his thoughts were with her family at this time.

The Mayor reflected on the situation in Ukraine and said his thoughts were with everyone affected by this dreadful tragedy.

The Mayor said he was humbled to attend Islington's annual holocaust remembrance events online, alongside the Leader, Chief Executive and Councillor O'Halloran. The Mayor said that it is important to reflect on our freedoms and the need for tolerance, respect and equality.

The Mayor highlighted a number of events he had attended recently. This included a reception at the Irish Embassy to launch a programme of events to celebrate Irish Month and the contribution of the Irish in Islington. The Mayor had hosted the Mayor of his hometown, Letterkenny, and a delegation from Donegal County Council in the Town Hall.

The Mayor had attended the installation and licensing of the new vicar, Rev Caroline Tilney, of St Andrews Church in Barnsbury. The Mayor had also attended the opening event for Camden and Islington LGBT History Month alongside the Mayor of Camden.

The Mayor said he was pleased to be able to attend the opening of the new Streets Kitchen space on Holloway Road; it was a hub of solace, safety and solidarity. The Mayor said it was important to have such facilities so those less fortunate can receive the support they need.

The Mayor was delighted to receive Ashmount School to tour the Town Hall and speak to the young people about the importance of local democracy.

The Mayor was also pleased to attend the opening of the new MUGA football pitch on the Harvist Estate and thanked all those involved in the project. It was fantastic that young people had somewhere to play sports.

Finally, the Mayor reminded all councillors of the annual Civic Awards ceremony on 15 March, that would celebrate the very best of Islington's communities.

(v) Length of Speeches

The Mayor reminded all councillors to take note of the timer and stay within the permitted length for speeches. The Mayor also reminded all attendees that the meeting was being webcast live on the Council's website.

179 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader began her remarks by expressing her sympathy and solidarity with the people of Ukraine and all those affected by the conflict. The Leader called on the government to do more to facilitate refugees travelling to the United Kingdom and said that Islington was ready to welcome refugees who wanted to make the borough their home.

The Leader also shared her condolences to the family of Sandi Phillips, the Chair of Elthorne Pride. Sandi was a community leader who was passionate about championing and empowering local people and worked hard to make her local area the best it could be. This was previously recognised by being awarded a Mayor's Civic Award in 2020.

The Leader said she was pleased to attend events for Holocaust Memorial Day alongside the Mayor. The Leader said this event was particularly important to her, as the granddaughter of a survivor of a concentration camp.

The Leader was also pleased to attend the opening on the new play space on the Harvist Estate; and thanked all partners involved in the project, including Arsenal in the Community. The Leader had also attended the launch of the No More Red event at Arsenal Football Club, which sought to tackle the root causes of youth violence. This campaign was an opportunity for the Council to work with Arsenal and Adidas to build on its early intervention and prevention work and celebrate the borough's young people.

The Leader said that making Islington a safe space is a key part of everything we do. The Leader was delighted to be able to join women from across the borough on the recent women's walk, highlighting the work of the Council, businesses and community groups, to create hundreds of safe havens for those who need help. The Leader noted that the proposed budget included further investment in the council's strategy to tackle violence against women and girls, and also included funding for the People Friendly Streets programme which sought to improve road safety and encourage local people to walk and cycle. These initiatives were working to make Islington as safe as possible for everyone.

The Leader commented on the cost of living crisis and called on the government to do more to support local people. The Leader was proud of the Council's generous Resident Support Scheme and other programmes to provide financial support to those in need.

Finally, the Leader commented on the importance of the Council's New Build programme, which would help to deliver new genuinely affordable homes and make a real difference to local people.

180 PETITIONS

The Mayor advised that no petitions had been received.

181 PETITION DEBATE - 'STOP ISLINGTON COUNCIL'S CLOSURE OF LOCAL ROADS'

The Council debated the petition submitted to the previous meeting. It was noted that petition had received over 10,000 signatures.

The Lead Petitioner, Jody Graber, introduced the petition and spoke for two minutes.

Councillor Champion moved the motion to debate the petition. Councillors Wayne, Russell, Poole and Ismail contributed to the debate. Councillor Champion exercised her right to reply.

The following main points were made in the debate:

- The petitioners were dissatisfied with the council's People Friendly Streets programme. Concerns raised included the impact on disabled residents, inaccuracies in the Interim Highbury Monitoring Report, the impact of traffic on main roads, and suggestions that public consultation had been inadequate.
- Members noted that this topic had been debated on several occasions, at council meetings, through consultation events, online and in person. The Council had collected data on the impact of the schemes and had made this available to the public.
- The original purpose of introducing People Friendly Streets was as part of the Covid response. Modelling indicated that, if the Council did nothing, there would be a significant increase in car traffic as people stopped using public transport during the pandemic. The government issued statutory guidance requiring the Council to re-allocate road space to walking and cycling and provided funding for such schemes due to the urgency of the situation.
- In London, traffic on local roads had increased significantly over recent years. The consequence of this was increased congestion and dangerous levels of air pollution which affected the environment and people's health. The People Friendly Streets programme sought to make Islington's streets cleaner, greener, safer places, in response to this public health and environmental crisis.
- It was commented that the Council would be carrying out further engagement with residents on future schemes and would work to hear the broadest range of voices on the proposals.
- The Council had introduced changes to some schemes following consultation and would continue to listen to people's views. The Council recognised the impact of the schemes on some disabled residents, and for this reason had introduced some exemptions for Blue Badge holders.

- The Council was keen to seek feedback on the schemes, and it was suggested that local views on the schemes were nuanced and opinions had shifted over time.
- It was recognised that data errors had been made in the Interim Highbury Monitoring Report, however the Council had apologised and had been transparent about this in order to repair trust and confidence. The Council wanted robust data and had since employed an independent consultant for this purpose.
- A councillor expressed her view that the People Friendly Streets scheme had a disproportionate impact on some communities and it was not right for the schemes to force people to change their behaviour, particularly if they are disabled or vulnerable.
- The Council would consider the impact on main roads and wanted to ensure that these also benefitted from schemes to reduce traffic and improve safety.

The motion to consider the petition was put to the vote and carried.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the Council 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;
- (ii) That the petition be noted.

182 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question 1 from Gill Weston to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development:

In 2012 the Council began work on plans for accommodation for 14 people with learning disabilities to be built at Windsor Street. In 2014 the Council's financial evaluation projected that the development would cost £2.298 million comprising £1.874 million build cost and £0.424 million development fees and other expenses, but noted that after 30 years the scheme would still have a £1.430 million deficit and that it would be over 30 years before the annual and cumulative revenue income would exceed running costs, depreciation charges and debt management costs. In 2018 the Council awarded itself planning permission for the development at Windsor Street (but to accommodate 11 people). Nearly four years later, building work has just begun. Please will the Council explain what are the current estimated costs – in terms of build costs, development fees and all other expenses?

Response:

Thank you for your question. In recent years, Islington has consistently commissioned between 120 and 150 out-of-borough placements for adults with learning disabilities. Placements are made outside the borough for a variety of reasons, however a primary driver is a lack of appropriate accommodation to meet

the care and support needs of individuals. Windsor Street has been designed specifically to cater for the needs of people with learning disabilities and will provide suitable accommodation, ensuring people are placed in appropriate environments, and are supported in living safely and independently, avoiding the need to provide additional support to mitigate needs arising from unsuitable accommodation.

The cost of the site has increased due to a range of factors. The Council has refined designs to ensure that it meets the needs of those who shall be using it, as well as ensuring the highest possible safety standards. Over the last few years, due to Brexit, the pandemic and other inflationary factors, construction costs have skyrocketed, which is something we have seen over a number of other developments too. Due to this, the total scheme cost will now be just over £7 million.

The scheme will provide high quality housing for residents with a range of learning disabilities, 24 hour on-site support available to all residents, flexibility in the building provided by a second entrance, and a variety of social spaces indoor and out. The scheme has been commissioned and designed by the Learning Disabilities Commissioner, along a family carers, who have also had an input into the contractor selection. The scheme as long awaited and will support some of the borough's most vulnerable residents. Thank you again for your question.

Question 2 from John Hartley to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment and Transport:

Barnsbury suffers from some horrendous traffic. Many vehicles cut through totally inappropriate roads such as: Offord Road, Barnsbury Street, Theberton Street and Cloudesley Place. The junction at Roman Way and MacKenzie Road is far too busy for people on bikes to be safe. The whole Barnsbury area is desperately in need of a Low Traffic Neighbourhood and when the Council announced that this would be implemented in March 2021 we were delighted. But that just didn't happen. We look on the other Islington LTNs (in St Peters, Canonbury, Highbury, etc.) green with envy. Now we understand that our LTN will be preceded by an extensive Engagement and Design process, which was due to start "Autumn 2021". We are perfectly willing to "engage" and "design" along with the rest of the community but, please tell us: What will the process be, and most important, when will it start?

Response:

Thank you very much for your question, and thank you for your support for People Friendly streets. I know that Barnsbury & St Mary's Neighbourhood Group, of which I think you are a part, have been very active in getting information out and raising awareness of the programme and trying to encourage people to feed their views in, so thank you.

I agree, there are a number of cut-through routes in the area. We did say that we wanted to do this as part of the recovery from Covid measures, but unfortunately with hindsight that was really just too ambitious. We've introduced eight People Friendly Streets neighbourhoods, but none of them is as complex as the Barnsbury

and St Mary's area. We do believe that the most appropriate approach will be to talk to residents, businesses and others in the community, to understand how people experience our streets, and understand how we can best address traffic problems in the area. We hoped to start this by now, but again, a combination of Covid re-emergence, and resource constraints has meant that this was just not possible.

We are really passionate about this, and sometimes we can be over optimistic about the volume of work we can take on, so I am sorry about the delay. The good news is we will do this as part of the Liveable Neighbourhood programme; that will not only include engagement about the traffic measures, but also about complementary changes such as greening, people friendly pavement measures, and other improvements. Thank you again for your question.

Question 3 from Harry Nugent to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment and Transport:

How can the council let their own fleet of vehicles pass through the LTNs without being fined but Tradesman, Undertaker's and Funeral Processions can't?

Response:

Thank you for your question. For these schemes to work, it's important that as few vehicles as possible drive through the filters. Council vehicles are not exempt from restrictions in our LTNs generally, but to ensure that a small number of services can operate safely for residents, clients and staff, a limited number of Council vehicles are exempt. These are broadly Community Transport passenger vehicles, and large refuse and recycling and street cleaning vehicles.

When not on operational business, vehicles will use main roads as far as practically possible, and will not make short cuts across residential areas. Exemptions for these classes of vehicle are written into each scheme's Traffic Order, and there are no other exemptions for council vehicles.

We are currently exploring ways to reduce the council's impact on the borough's traffic, because important that we do what we say others should be doing, to reduce short car journeys where possible. We've recently introduced electric bikes for our street supervisors to travel around the borough, and we're looking at other options for other services. We are also electrifying our council fleet, with investment in this year's budget to retrofit more of our vehicles. So while that's not as good as getting vehicles off the road, we are trying to reduce our impact by going electric where we can. Thank you.

Question 4 from Rebekah Kelly to Cllr Lukes, Executive Member for Community Safety:

In response to the Islington Together, Walk for women and the Safe Haven scheme. Why is women's safety fears in LTNs not considered a priority? Women feel unsafe walking through deserted neighbourhoods, where there are no businesses to act as

"Safe Havens", women feel unsafe after dark when there is often no people around. The restriction of traffic adds to this feeling of being alone, and these concerns have been diluted in the consultation process that has been lobbied by cycling campaigns.

Response:

Thank you very much your question Rebecca. It was a pleasure meeting at our community conversation last week.

Making our streets safer for everyone, and especially women and girls, is a priority for us in Islington. Last year we published our strategy for tackling violence against women and girls, setting out the steps we are taking to make improvements, such as rolling out more safe havens, working on rehabilitation for perpetrators of domestic abuse, and supporting the survivors. Islington Council was one of the first in the country to undertake a consultation of all residents and businesses to better understand where people feel safe and unsafe in the borough. In July 2021 we launched the Safer Spaces campaign, and every household and business in the borough received a letter and leaflet where they are able to mark locations they don't feel safe. The Council also developed an online platform where locations could be marked so the Council and its partners can develop plans to take further action.

We are also currently running some community conversation events to feed back our findings and hear from residents. The Council's Community Safety Team constantly review crime and anti-social behaviour trends across the whole of the borough, including those within low traffic neighbourhoods. So far, we have not seen any trends that suggest that those neighbourhoods are making any part of our borough less safe. I understand you have concerns, but I personally don't believe that having more cars around makes streets safer. I did tell you at the event, in 40 years of living in Highbury I've had the misfortune to have my bag snatched twice, and one of those occasions was by somebody who was in a car, and then drove off. Cars can be enablers of crime. Conversely, I would say that our People Friendly Streets make roads safer, because they reduce the risk of road danger, which injures somebody in Islington more than once a day on average. Thank you for your question.

Question 5 from Finella Craig to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

From the comparative lack of garden waste generated locally, to the high proportion of flats where architectural issues often make recycling more difficult, the obstacles faced by boroughs such as ours who are working hard to improve recycling rates are complex and structural. What steps are being taken to address these challenges and Increase recycling rates, as well as driving down waste generation through reduce and reuse initiatives, and in particular what action is being taken to tackle period waste?

Response:

Thank you very much for question. The comparative lack of green waste generated in Islington does give us a lower recycling rate than other boroughs, however that

isn't a question of failing to recapture recyclable materials. However, lower levels of recycling on estates compared to street properties is an issue, and addressing this is a key priority. I'd like to share a few examples of what we're doing. We are now offering food waste recycling service to flats in the borough, and we are also considering how we offer this to residents in flats above shops.

One of the more important programmes is the improvement of recycling facilities on estates. We are investing more than £100,000 a year to make it easier and more convenient for residents on estates to recycle more. We know that attractive clean bins can have a real impact. You mentioned driving down waste generation, and of course it is better to reduce waste in the first place. We are offering initiatives to encourage reuse and to reduce waste, for example by opening Islington's Library of Things, introducing low plastic zones, and promoting reusable nappies and period products. These are promoted via social media, schools, and a dedicated week or month, such as Real Nappy Week and Plastic Free July.

But, to be as effective as we can, we need the government to take climate change seriously, put in place a national framework to reduce waste and increase recycling. Until then, we are operating with one hand tied behind our back. We know we can't wait, so we are reviewing our Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan, published in 2019. We are going to publish revised proposals aimed at delivering on and exceeding our recycling targets and supporting our net zero carbon ambitions. Thank you very much for your question.

Question 6 from Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong to Cllr Chapman, Chair of the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee:

The last Children's Services Scrutiny Committee meeting happened before last Full Council (December 2021), over 100 days ago. There has not been a meeting in January or February, why? May the council make sure that there is a Children's Services Scrutiny Committee meeting by next Full Council?

As Cllr Chapman was not present, the question was answered by Cllr Gill, Executive Member for Finance and Performance, as the relevant Executive Member with portfolio responsibility for Democratic Services:

Thank you for your question. This year the Committee has been carrying out a review of education transitions for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. It's a very significant piece of work and the Committee looks forward to sharing the outcomes of this review in due course.

The Council agrees a programme of meetings each year, setting out the dates for committee meetings. The last meeting of the Committee was held on 6th December. It was intended to hold another meeting on 11th January, however unfortunately this was cancelled due to significant concerns about the Omicron variant at the time. Unfortunately, it is not lawful for council committees to hold virtual meetings, and there has been a campaign from across the local government sector asking the

government to act on this issue, but they have not yet done so. The next meeting will be held on 28th March.

Question 7 from Nicholas Brainsby to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment and Transport:

A lack of charging points is one of the main reasons why consumers are reluctant to buy an electric vehicle (EV). What plans does the Council have to materially increase and properly maintain the number of fast charging points in Islington? I am an EV driver and am frustrated by the lack of fast chargers in Islington and the fact that often they are out of order for long periods of time.

Response:

Reducing emissions from vehicles is a key part of our strategy for tackling the climate emergency, and our Transport Strategy and Vision 2030, both adopted in November 2020, sets out actions support the roll-out of electric vehicle public charging infrastructure across the borough, and that includes on-street charging points.

By the end of December 2021, 285 on-street electric vehicle charging points had been installed. These are a mix of slow chargers, 103 of those in the lamp columns, 163 fast chargers, and 19 rapid chargers. We recognise a mix of all types of chargers is important to meet the needs of residents, business users, and visitors in the borough. By the end of April, we anticipate that we will have met our target of 400 charging points installed since 2018. We do want to continue the programme, and we are continuing to seek grant funding to support the roll out of charge points through 2022/23.

We will continue to meet demand in partnership with third party providers, and this will include a mix of slow, fast and rapid charge points. All the on-street charge points in the borough are installed and maintained by network operators. Further details are available on the Council's website. If you do have any problems with these, please do get in contact.

Question 8 from Minda Burgos-Lukes to Cllr Lukes, Executive Member for Community Safety:

Every one of us has a role to play in making Islington a safe place for all – where women are free from harassment and violence, young people can grow up in safe environments with bright futures to look forward to, and Black and Brown, migrant, disabled, LGBTQ+, working class people and people of faith can go about their lives freely and happily, without fear of prejudice and discrimination. What plans does the Council have to make Islington a safer and more dignified place for all over the coming years, and what's your message to the wider community about how we can help build this place together?

Response:

Thank you for your question. Islington is absolutely committed to making the borough safer place for all that live, work and spend time here. I've already explained the Safer Spaces campaign in the answer to a previous question. The Council have also been running a very successful Safe Haven scheme for many years now; these are a practical way of helping everyone in Islington enjoy their community, knowing that support is easily available if they need help from public premises such as shops, cafes, pubs, libraries and other places of interest. Venues can register to be officially known as a safe haven. Many already are, of course, but having the sticker builds confidence, makes us all feel safer wherever we go in the borough, and encourage us all to live our lives to the full. In Islington there are currently just over 100 safe havens, and we made a commitment to treble that number to over 300 within the next 12 months. I visited the Blackstock Pub last week to thank them for joining recently, and you may have seen that on BBC London News, alongside a good explanation of the scheme by the journalist, the pub manager and myself.

I'd like to take this opportunity to ask all residents, businesses and all our local councillors to nominate and encourage possible safe-haven sites in your area. We love practical solutions, they are an important part of our strategies to deal with complex issues. We recently launched the Women and Girls Strategy, and are working with local communities on the development of a five-year violence reduction strategy for our borough. We see violence as a public health problem, and one that can only be dealt with by us all working together, focusing on prevention, accountability, support and empowerment. Because the only way to tackle serious violence and the fear of violence is to come together to look after each other and build our power as a whole partnership and community, determined to make Islington safe for all. No one is safe until we are all safe. Thank you again for your question.

Question 9 from Benali Hamdache to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development:

Can the Council let me know how much money the Council has had to spend responding to housing disrepair legal cases each financial year since 2019?

Response:

Thank you very much for your question. Providing good quality, genuinely affordable housing for local people is a top priority for our Council, and that starts with good council housing. I am proud of our 93 percent first-time-fix rate for repairs last year.

I agree that the increase in housing disrepair legal cases is concerning. Landlords across London have identified a steep rise in legal action, and there has been an increase in legal firms contacting residents and encouraging them to make claims. I've had one resident call me up in distress recently, she had a cold caller saying her house was in disrepair, encouraging her to take legal action.

While cases have increased over the last couple of years, we have seen repairs performance improving, and the level of compensation paid out by the Council has decreased. In 2018/19, £408,982 was paid out for 84 cases. In 2019/20 £309,267 was paid out for 130 cases, in 2020/21, £239,921 was paid out for 144 cases, and in 2021/22, £361,245 pounds was paid for 204 cases.

The average per case is as follows: in 2018/19, £4,868; in 2019/20 £2,378; in 2020/21 £1,480; in 2021/22, £1,637. Thank you again for your question.

183 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Question 1 from Cllr Poole to Cllr Comer-Schwartz, Leader of the Council:

To ask the Leader of the Council, why has there be no progress on the urgent work to save the Royal Northern War Memorial despite the Leader's assurances given to Council in September last year?

Response:

Thank you, may I take this opportunity to thank Councillor Poole, who I understand is not re-standing for election in May.

I really do appreciate the importance of the war memorial to the Islington veterans and their loved ones. We have been working behind the scenes to take steps to find a solution to the memorial's decay. To ensure that this project makes more timely progress going forward, I have asked Councillor Una O'Halloran, the Executive Member for Community Development, to have oversight of the project. She will work with the relevant officers to ensure that a project plan is developed and implemented in a timely manner.

This project has previously stalled due to a lack of project management capacity. New project managers have been recruited to the council and have started only this week. Their recruitment will free up capacity for a project manager to work with Councillor O'Halloran to take this project forward. The steering group with the veterans will be restarted once we have a project plan in place.

I am also very pleased to say that we have identified a budget of £10,000 for this project. This funding has been generously provided by the Tollington and Highbury West Ward Councillors. It will be used to support our fund raising efforts with external bodies by providing match funding.

I congratulate the Ward Councillors on agreeing this funding at a time when there are huge pressures on all sources of council funding. We will also ensure that Bellway Homes delivers on its commitment that it made to the previous Leader of the Council, that Bellway Homes will contribute to any future project to conserve the memorial and commemorate those who have served our country.

Question 2 from Cllr Chowdhury to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an enormous impact on the mental health of people in every part of our community. From those of us who've lost loved ones, to the trauma experienced by our dedicated health and social care staff, and the endemic loneliness felt by those living alone and in isolated care settings, this terrible time has touched us all. As we emerge from pandemic, what steps is the Council taking to support our community and those who've cared for us throughout it?

Response:

Thank you for your question. The pandemic has had a very serious impact on our residents, including an effect on many people's mental health, but this council has been there for them, to support them throughout. At the start of the pandemic a number of measures were put in place to reduce the impact of loneliness and isolation, including staff from We Are Islington being trained to talk with residents who may be feeling lonely or isolated, and a directory of services was developed to support in signposting to services.

We also brought together a network of voluntary and community sector organisations to share learning and resources to help keep residents connected, and embedded social prescribing services in GP practices across the borough. We have continued working with residents to connect them with support and activities within the area. We are also very aware that many in our community lost loved ones during the pandemic, and as a result bereavement support has been a key feature of the council's response to Covid-19. Public Health commissioned a leading bereavement charity to advise and support the council's response; they provided training to around 500 workers and volunteers on the frontline enabling them to support the bereaved signposting to local and national support services. Capacity for counselling support was increased and adapted to respond to the traumatic bereavements that some people have faced.

We are aware that the poor mental health was an issue before the pandemic, and will continue to be an issue once it is over. All services continue to support our residents, including access to improved green spaces and wellbeing support, as well as a pilot project to support young black men's mental health, however we could do so much more if the government provided proper funding to mental health and kept their promise of parity of esteem. Thank you again for your question.

Question 3 from Cllr Ibrahim to Cllr Ngongo, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families,

It was deeply moving to see the parents of so many young people who've been lost to and affected by the horrors of knife crime gather in my ward at Arsenal Football Club in January for the No More Red campaign. Their bravery and dignity in standing against violence is truly inspiring and we will always stand in

solidarity with them. What actions are the Council taking to reduce youth violence, support young people into better life choices, and make this tragic cycle of heartbreaking loss a thing of the past?

Response:

Thank you for your question. You are right, the stories from parents at the launch of the No More Red campaign were very moving. We are focused on making our borough the safest place possible for our young people to grow up in. The Council launched its youth safety strategy in November 2020. This is focused on protecting young people from violence, abuse and exploitation. We have made good progress so far. Last year we had a 12% reduction in knife crime in Islington, a 6.1% reduction in youth violence, and a 27.5% decrease in knife injuries where the victim is aged 24 years or under.

We know one victim of knife crime is one too many, and we are committed to doing more. Our Integrated Gangs Team provides one-on-one youth work with young people at risk of gang involvement, and also work with schools, for example through the production of the 'Love and Loss' film about knife crime. The roll-out of knife bins has taken over 1,000 knives off the streets in recent years. Our work with local partners such as Arsenal in the Community and the Police also support our work to make Islington a safer place to live. Thank you.

Question 4 from Cllr Ismail to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development:

It is almost 12 years since the Labour administration took over this Council and I would like to congratulate them on building more homes. This said, many Islington social housing residents, in particular, Holloway, live in some of the worst properties that are riddled with dampness and include households with children under five, who are also living with mice and vermin. They are being left behind and are not being cared for as they should be due to Islington Labour's exceptionally bad record for not resolving these issues. The inadequate services (as per my casework and yours) as Ward colleagues, have seen the mice cases and damp issues increase over the past 8 years, which is clearly shown with regards to cases in my inbox and yours. Some of the most vulnerable are suffering as are our children.

As you are fully aware, these damp properties impact our residents' health and are costing our NHS. These tenants regularly visit their GP's, they are calling the ambulance services because they are hospitalised due to the health issues raised by living with dampness. Our NHS has had a lot to deal with during the pandemic and these damp properties are contributing to putting further pressure on our NHS. Some of our Holloway residents are paying a very high price with regards to their health because of your lack of leadership and commitment on housing and development during the last 6 years as the executive lead.

What have you done for your tenants and what will you be telling them when you ask them to vote for you in the May 2022 Elections; it has been 8 years since you

became Ward Councillors and it has been 6 years as an executive. When will you resolve the issues that are paramount to your tenants and your prospective voters?

Response:

Thank you for your question. I'm incredibly proud that we have reached our target of building 550 council homes since 2018. We are tackling the housing crisis in this borough and if the government provided more funding for this Council, we could do an awful lot more.

While the Council is building new homes, it is also investing in its existing stock to improve conditions for residents. There is a large and varied stock which is repaired by the in-house team formed in 2014. Since coming in house, repairs satisfaction is now regularly at 85%, whilst first time fix rates have also increased to 85% in 2021/22.

About 6% of the Borough's repairs are in Holloway ward, suggesting that there isn't a the disproportionate number of repairs in the ward compared to others. The Council invests over £40 million annually in our existing stock of 25,500 tenanted properties, including improving heating systems, insulation, kitchens and bathrooms, and replacing windows. In the Holloway ward, in the last two years, the Council has invested £10.4 million, improving 316 homes, 26% of the ward stock, and the investment plan for the ward will undertake a further £12.6 million investment to 801 homes by 2026.

I was pleased to come with you to look at some of the great work has been done on the Loraine Estate recently. Good quality housing is vital to health, and the Council works closely with our health colleagues, but I repeat we could do so much more if this government ended austerity, which has led the Council being forced to make £281 million of cuts since 2010.

Question 5 from Cllr Ismail to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment and Transport:

As a resident of Bunhill for decades, many of my friends and neighbours are linked to Bunhill Heat and Power Energy 2. They have mentioned to me that they are not saving on heating and power as they were promised they would when signing up for this and it is not working properly as you know, and residents have complained too. Should we be asking what the overspend is for Bunhill Heat and Power? We believe this to be in the region of £7m for taxpaying residents and why are residents connected to Bunhill Heat and Power Energy 2 not saving on energy costs as promised by Islington Council and how much is the Council actually subsidizing this? The customer services can only be described as an extremely poor level of service, not to mention the other issues as myself a Islington Council tenant too.

Response:

Thank you for your question. We have spoken about Bunhill Heat and Power before, and I remain extremely proud of the innovation that has come out of the council for both Bunhill 1 and Bunhill 2. The 10% discount on heating charges for those connected to the Bunhill heat network is still being applied. I suspect those concerns are about rising energy bills. We are in a cost of living crisis which this government is not making any better.

In 2012/13, when the network started operating, heating and hot water charges were £13.64 a week for a 2 bed flat. In 2021/22, for an estate connected to Bunhill, charges were £9.10 a week, which is 33% lower. Even accounting for the proposed increase in charges next year, due to the large increase in gas prices, charges for tenants connected to Bunhill will still be 16% lower than 2012/13.

When we talk about Bunhill 2, we have to remember it is a world first. It is seen to be a pilot, not just for us, but to be replicated across London and across many cities. As the first project is kind in the world, is not entirely unexpected that we have face major technical challenges, from which we have learned. Importantly, this learning will help shape future projects by us, but also by others who seek to emulate it. Following a fundamental review, the Bunhill 2 project was amended to reflect its rising cost in 2019, the details of which were set out in a report to Full Council in December of that year. However, additional funding was allocated from the council's carbon offset fund, and some external funding was secured, and the project is still operating within the budget agreed in 2019.

We are immensely proud of Bunhill Heat and Power network, a world first and revolutionary step towards zero carbon. If you believe that people are not seeing savings in their pockets, it is probably because of the policies of this government. Can I also please say I am extremely proud of the work of the council teams supporting residents suffering from the cost of living crisis, and also Shine, who work with people in fuel poverty, who unfortunately have seen their workload increase. I am concerned that the actions of the government are wholly inadequate to address the crisis that many residents are now facing.

Question 6 from Cllr Jeapes to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment and Transport:

Last month saw the introduction of Islington's eighth people-friendly streets neighbourhood in the St Mary's Church area, reducing traffic, making our streets more liveable with easier and safer walking, wheeling and cycling. It's been particularly pleasing to see so many greening elements included as part of the scheme, as well as Blue Badge exemptions for camera-enforced filters from day one. As Islington moves forward with plans to make our streets cleaner, greener and healthier, what additional steps will the Council be taking to ensure that all residents are able to enjoy the benefits of this transformative work?

Response:

We are absolutely focused on making Islington a cleaner, greener and healthier borough. That includes the People Friendly Streets schemes, which are important part of that programme. Since July 2020, 24% of the borough's geographical area has been included in new low traffic neighbourhoods; with 8% already in historic LTNs, which means that nearly a third of the borough's areas have the benefit of quite and safer streets. We are committed to rolling out more neighbourhoods where feasible, but with enhancements. As you said, going forward, this will now include Blue Badge exemptions for people living in LTNs, as well as engaging local people in the changes.

In some areas, often where there have been historic traffic calming measures. there may be complexities and difficulties which will require cross-borough working, and working alongside TFL where the strategic road network may be impacted. But we are making progress and conversations are happening.

Reducing traffic is only one step; we need to reimagine our public spaces. Going forward, we want to build on our work to make streets greener and more accessible; but not just those areas which we turned into Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, now People Friendly Pavements is also a key part of what we're doing, but other things too like seating, greenery shade, and even looking at opening access to public toilets. It's all important to make Islington more accessible for all.

We are developing a network of strategic cycle routes so people in our communities have access to quality cycle ways near to them and can make positive healthy choices about the way they travel. We're supporting local people to cycle more by delivering bike training sessions, offering an affordable cycle purchase scheme, working with cycle hire firms on e-bikes across the borough, and rolling out a popular on-street bike hanger scheme for residents to rent spaces. But we also need to see what else we can do to make cycling more accessible; the motability scheme doesn't fund the purchase of adapted cycles and I think we really do need to campaign to change that. There are many changes that we're making to our streets, but we need to continue.

We know that climate change is having such a huge impact already in parts of the world, and it's beginning to have an impact on an Islington streets too. We've had surface water problems over the last few years. We need to make our streets more sustainable, before these problems become worse. Thank you.

Question 7 from Cllr Russell to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development:

I was concerned to see in the report of the Executive Member for Finance to Policy and Performance Committee on Jan 20th 2022, that there has been a 60% increase in housing disrepair legal cases since 2019/20 financial year. Has the council analysed what investment is required in the housing team to reduce housing disrepair legal cases in the first place?

Response:

Thank you for your question. Building good, genuinely affordable accommodation is a top priority for the Council, and that starts with our council housing. I'm delighted that we will shortly be welcoming the management of 4,000 social homes back in house from Partners for Improvement, putting an end to privatisation, allowing the Council to provide repairs and management to those tenants; and our first-time-fix rates as a council are increasing, reaching 93% last year.

I agree that the increase in housing disrepair legal claims is concerning. As I've said earlier, landlords across London have identified a steep rise in legal action from residents, and an increase in firms targeting residents and encouraging them to make claims. As I said in a previous answer, I have had a resident very distressed about cold callers from one particular firm, and I hope you'll join me in condemning those cold calling practices.

Cases have increased over the past couple of years, we have seen repairs performance improving, and the level of compensation paid out by the council has decreased. In 2018/19, £408,982 was paid out for 84 cases, whereas in 2020/21, £239,921 was paid out for 144 cases. The number of cases is increasing in line with other landlords' experience.

The Council constantly reviews cases to ensure the service learns from mistakes and improves service. One case of housing disrepair is one too many, and we are determined to ensure our homes are of the highest possible quality.

One way we would provide more investment in our homes would be if we did not have to spend money on occupations to stop council housing being built. The occupation of Dixon Clark Court cost this Council over £500,000. That is money that should have been spent repairing homes and building new homes that are desperately needed. Thank you for your question.

184 FUTURE ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE MANAGEMENT OF ISLINGTON'S WASTE: ADOPTION OF THE NORTH LONDON WASTE PLAN

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

The recommendations in the report were put to the vote and CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the adoption the North London Waste Plan (appendix 1 of the report) which incorporates the main modifications recommended by the Planning Inspector (appendix 3 of the report) and other minor modifications previously approved by officers, be approved.

(ii) That authority be delegated to the Corporate Director of Wealth Building to approve administrative alterations, typographical amendments, to improve cross referencing (e.g paragraph numbering, page numbering) and typographical errors prior to the publication of the final plan.

(iii) That it be noted that the approval of the NLWP is separate to that for any planning application for a waste facility, including the proposed Energy from Waste facility in Edmonton which was granted a Development Consent Order by the Secretary of State on 24 February 2017.

185 UPDATE ON THE LOCAL AUTHORITY EXTERNAL AUDIT MARKET & APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS FROM 2023

Councillor Gill moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Comer-Schwartz seconded.

The recommendations in the report were put to the vote and CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

(i) That the wider context in which the new appointment of External Auditors will be conducted within, as set out in section 3 of the report, be noted.

(ii) That the considerations relevant to making a decision in relation to the appointment of its External Auditors from the financial year 2023/24, as set out in section 4 of the report, be noted.

(iii) That the submission of the form of acceptance notice to the PSAA to opt in to the national auditor appointment arrangements for the audit years 2023/2024 to 2027/2028 be approved, and authority be delegated to the Section 151 officer to make the necessary arrangements.

186 CHIEF WHIP'S REPORT

Councillor Hyde moved the recommendations in the report.

The recommendations were put to the vote and CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

(i) That Councillor Klute be appointed to the Licensing Regulatory Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, or until a successor is appointed.

(ii) That Councillor Poyser be appointed to Environment & Regeneration Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, or until a successor is appointed.

(iii) It be noted that Councillor Khondoker has stood down as a substitute member of the Licensing Committee.

- (iv) That Councillor Burgess be appointed to the Cloudesley Charity for a four year term or until a successor is appointed.
- (v) That Councillor Bossman-Quarshie be appointed to the Islington Community Chest Panel for the remainder of the municipal year, or until a successor is appointed.
- (vi) That Councillor Graham be appointed to St Sepulchre United Charities for the remainder of the municipal year, or until a successor is appointed.
- (vii) That Councillors Spall and Nathan be re-appointed to the Sadler's Wells Foundation for the remainder of the municipal year, or until successors are appointed.
- (viii) That Councillor North be appointed to the Corporate Parenting Board for the remainder of the municipal year, or until a successor is appointed.
- (ix) That Jon Stansfield be appointed as the Parent Governor Representative (Primary) on the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee until 26 September 2023, or until a successor is appointed.

187 BUDGET PROPOSALS 2022/23 AND MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY

Councillor Gill moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Comer-Schwartz seconded. Councillor Russell moved the amendment.

Councillors Heather, Bossman-Quarshie and Ismail contributed to the debate.

Councillor Russell exercised her right to reply on the amendment. Councillor Gill exercised his right to reply on the budget report.

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

For: Councillor Russell

Against: Councillors Bossman-Quarshie, Champion, Chowdhury, Clarke, Comer-Schwartz, Gill, Gantly, Gallagher, Poole, Heather, Hyde, Jeapes, Lukes, Ngongo, O'Halloran, Turan, Ward and Wayne.

Abstention: Councillor Ismail

The motion was lost.

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

For: Councillors Bossman-Quarshie, Champion, Chowdhury, Clarke, Comer-Schwartz, Gill, Gantly, Gallagher, Poole, Heather, Hyde, Jeapes, Lukes, Ngongo, O'Halloran, Turan, Ward and Wayne.

Against: Councillor Ismail

Abstention: Councillor Russell

The recommendations in the report were **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

The General Fund Budget 2022/23 and MTFS (Section 3 of the report)

- (i) That the latest MTFS and balanced 2022/23 budget, including the underlying principles and assumptions, be agreed as recommended by the Executive (**Paragraphs 3.1-3.36, Table 1 and Appendix A of the report**).
- (ii) That the proposed 2022/23 net budgets by directorate be agreed as recommended by the Executive (**Paragraph 3.3, Table 2 and Appendix A of the report**).
- (iii) That the 2022/23 savings be agreed as recommended by the Executive, and it be noted that individual savings may be subject to individual consultation before they can be fully implemented. (**Paragraphs 3.37-3.41, Table 5, and Appendix B of the report**).
- (iv) That the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) settlement for 2022/23 and related funding assumptions be noted (**Paragraphs 3.42-3.49 of the report**).
- (v) That the fees and charges policy and the General Fund fees and charges for 2022/23, as approved by the Executive, be noted (**Paragraphs 3.50-3.57 and Appendix C of the report**).
- (vi) That the policy on General Fund contingency and reserves be agreed as recommended by the Executive, and the movements to/from earmarked reserves assumed as part of the 2022/23 revenue budget be agreed. (**Paragraphs 3.58-3.67, Table 6 and Table 7 of the report**).
- (vii) That the Section 151 Officer be delegated responsibility for any technical adjustments required for the 2022/23 budget (in line with the council's Financial Regulations) be agreed as recommended by the Executive.
- (viii) That centrally held gross demographic growth be allocated to service budgets only when the need materialises and as approved by the Section 151 Officer be agreed as recommended by the Executive (**Paragraph 3.14 of the report**).

The HRA Budget and MTFS (Section 4 of the report)

- (ix) That the balanced HRA 2022/23 budget be agreed as recommended by the Executive, and the latest estimates over the three-year MTFS period be noted (**Paragraphs 4.1-4.3, Table 8 and Appendix D1 of the report**).
- (x) That the HRA rents be noted, and following minor revisions to the version agreed by the Executive on 13 January 2022, the other HRA fees and charges for 2022/23 be agreed (**Paragraphs 4.4-4.29, Tables 9-11 and Appendix D2 of the report**).
- (xi) That the introduction of a points-based apportionment method from April 2022, to revise the way in which Housing Leaseholder Service Charges are calculated, be agreed (**Paragraph 4.9, and Appendix D3 of the report**).
- (xii) That it be noted that the HRA 30-year business plan will be updated to reflect the impact of the latest rent setting proposals as well as other agreed increases in expenditure not previously anticipated. (**Paragraph 4.2 of the report**).

Capital Investment and Treasury and Investment Management (Section 5 of the report)

- (xiii) That the proposed 2022/23 to 2024/25 capital programme be agreed as recommended by the Executive, and the indicative long-term capital programme for 2025/26 to 2031/32 be noted (**Paragraphs 5.3, Table 12 and Appendix E1 of the report**).
- (xiv) That the estimated funding of the 2022/23 to 2024/25 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. (**Paragraph 5.10 and Table 13 of the report**).
- (xv) That the Capital Strategy, Minimum Revenue Provision (MRP) Policy Statement, Treasury Management Strategy, and Investment Strategy be agreed as recommended by the Executive (**Paragraph 5.12 and Appendices E2-E5 of the report**).

Council Tax and Retained Business Rates (Section 6 of the report)

- (xvi) That the 2021/22 council tax and business rates forecasts and budgetary impact over the medium term be noted (**Paragraph 6.1-6.3 of the report**).
- (xvii) That the calculations required for the determination of the 2022/23 council tax requirement, and the level of council tax as detailed in **Section 6** of the report and summarised below, be agreed as recommended by the Executive:
 1. The 2022/23 council tax requirement of **£105,425,368.21** (**Paragraph 6.8 and Table 15 of the report**)
 2. The relevant basic amount of Islington Band D council tax of £1,314.89, a 2.99% increase compared to 2021/22 (comprising 1% specifically for expenditure on adult social care and 1.99% for all expenditure), and that this is not 'excessive' in accordance with the council tax referendum principles for 2022/23. (**Paragraph 6.9 and Table 16 of the report**)
 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 £1,314.65. (**Paragraph 6.11 and Table 17 of the report**)

4. The amount of 2021/22 council tax (excluding the GLA precept) for each valuation band over each of the council's areas. (**Paragraph 6.13 and Table 18 and Table 19 of the report**)
5. The total amount of 2021/22 council tax (including the GLA precept) for each valuation band over each of the council's areas. (**Paragraph 6.15 and Table 21 and Table 22 of the report**)
- (xviii) That the council's estimated retained business rates funding in 2022/23, as per the 2022/23 NNDR1 return estimate, be noted (**Paragraph 6.17 and Table 23 of the report**).
- (xix) That the council's forecast NNDR surplus/(deficit) in 2022/23 be noted (**Paragraph 6.18 and Table 24 of the report**).

Matter to Consider in Setting the Budget (Section 7 of the report)

- (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. (**Paragraphs 7.1-7.7 of the report**).
- (xxi) That the initial assessment of compliance against the CIPFA Financial Management Code, and that this will be re-visited at least annually as part of the budget process, with any actions or recommendations implemented on an ongoing basis, be noted (**Paragraph 7.5 and Appendix F of the report**).
- (xxii) That the Monitoring Officer comments be noted (**Paragraphs 7.8-7.12 of the report**).
- (xxiii) That the Equality Impact Assessment (**Paragraphs 7.13-7.15 and Appendix G of the report**) and the requirement to consider it fully in approving the overall budget and related proposals be noted.
- (xxiv) That it be noted that the council invited business rate payers or representatives of business rate payers in Islington to comment on the draft 2022/23 budget proposals, as required under Section 65 of the Local Government Finance Act 1992, and that no responses were received (**Paragraphs 7.16-7.18 of the report**).
- (xxv) That the Annual Pay Policy Statement 2022/23 be agreed as recommended by the Executive (**Paragraph 7.19 and Appendix H of the report**).

The meeting closed at 10.20 pm

At the conclusion of the meeting the Council expressed their thanks and best wishes to councillors standing down at the May 2022 local elections.

MAYOR