

## LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON

### COUNCIL MEETING - 13 JULY 2023

#### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the meeting of the Council held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 13 July 2023 at 7.30 pm.

#### Present:

Bell-Bradford	Graham	O'Halloran
Bossmann-Quarshie	Hamdache	O'Sullivan
Burgess	Hayes	Ogunro
Champion	Heather	Ozdemir
Chapman	Hyde	Pandor
Chowdhury	Ibrahim	Russell
Cinko-Oner	Jackson	Spall
Clarke	Jeapes	Staff
Comer-Schwartz	Jegorovas-Armstrong	Turan
Convery	Kay	Ward
Craig	Khondoker	Wayne
Croft	Khurana	Williamson
Gallagher	Klute	Woolf
Gilgunn	Mackmurdie	Weekes
Gill	Ngongo	Zammit

#### The Mayor (Councillor Gary Heather) in the Chair

#### 233 MINUTES

##### RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 2 March 2023 be agreed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

#### 234 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No Declarations were received.

#### 235 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

##### (i) Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors North, Poyser, McHugh, Weekes, Nathan, Gallagher, and Nargund

(ii) Order of Business

The order of business was as per the Agenda.

(iii) Declaration of Discussion Items

No items were declared.

(iv) Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor extended a warm welcome to the delegates from Angola attending the full council meeting. The Mayor reflected on their nine weeks in office, during which they attended numerous events. The Mayor expressed their gratitude to the staff in the Mayor's office for their support and teamwork. He also acknowledged the Representative Deputy Lieutenant for their valuable work.

The Mayor spoke of their collaboration with Voluntary Action Islington to improve volunteering opportunities in the borough. The Mayor reiterated their pledge to be a "Representative of the People" and highlighted their approach of addressing issues raised by residents by involving council officers.

The Mayor recounted their participation in various events, including those related to the Armed Forces Week, Refugee Week, and special moments like welcoming the 34th Islington Scouts and attending a charity football game.

The Mayor also recognised the significance of the 75th anniversaries of the NHS and the arrival of the Windrush generation, with flag-raising ceremonies and events to honour these milestones. Lastly, the Mayor mentioned attending an event hosted by the borough's previous Deputy Lieutenant and unveiled a memorial in memory of George Durack, a respected community activist.

**236 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader began by expressing condolences for the tragic murders of Leonardo Reid and Klevi Shekaj in Archway, emphasising that violence has no place in the borough. They highlighted the council's ongoing efforts to support young people and steer them away from danger, acknowledging the reduction in serious violent incidents in recent years while recognising the need for further progress.

The murders occurred 15 years after the tragic murder of Ben Kinsella, prompting continued community efforts to combat violent crime. The council's investment in youth services and community safety initiatives, such as safe havens and knife bins, was praised. Charities and community groups were recognised for their vital work with at-risk individuals.

The Leader stressed that keeping people safe was a top priority but acknowledged that it required collective action, not just from Islington but also at the national level. The Leader mentioned the need for trust-building between the community and the police, highlighting concerns and the importance of diversity in the community. The government's failures, including austerity and the cost-of-living crisis, called for real

action to end youth violence. The council committed its efforts to protect the community while calling on others to step up and help.

The Leader of the Opposition responded, expressing their gratitude to the previous Leader of the Opposition. They highlighted their eight-years as the opposition and the work they had done over that time. The Leader of the Opposition hoped to be just half as insightful, thoughtful and good natured at the job.

The Leader of the Opposition addressed the issue of underrepresentation in local government for various groups, including women, ethnic minorities, disabled individuals, LGBTQ+ individuals, and younger people, especially in senior positions. The Leader of the Opposition stressed the importance of diverse representation.

The Leader of the Opposition noted their disappointment regarding the council not flying the Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller (GRT) flag during Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller History Month. They mentioned their earlier request to commemorate the month and the positive community response. The Leader of the Opposition highlighted efforts to find GRT sites and the challenges of racism faced by the community, including offensive emails and graffiti.

The Leader of the Opposition expressed sympathy for the council's financial challenges and the cost of energy, however argued that the recent decision not to reinstate the Sobell ice rink did not make sense. They commented that the ice rink had a positive impact on youth engagement and physical activity. The Leader of the Opposition considered the consultation process to be one-sided and said it appeared that the council was not interested in listening to alternative ideas. The Leader of the Opposition called on the council to reconsider the decision, suggesting that alternative options like greening the rink and third-party providers had not been adequately explored.

**237 PETITION DEBATE: STOP THE CUTS AT LAYCOCK PRIMARY SCHOOL DEAF PROVISION**

The Council debated the petition submitted to the previous meeting. It was noted this petition had received over 2000 signatures.

The Lead Petitioner introduced the petition and spoke for two minutes:

- The deaf provision at Laycock School was at risk of severe budget cuts at the end of last year, which would have significantly affected the students relying on these services. The Lead Petitioner said that there was no effort to involve parents in the decision-making process, however a dedicated group of parents had intervened and helped to prevent significant cuts in services.
- However, there was ongoing concern that the cuts may persist and worsen in the future. Additionally, there are worries about a proposed plan to group year 6 students into three classes, which would neglect the needs of deaf children and place them back in mainstream classrooms.

Councillor Ngongo moved the motion to debate the petition. Councillor Chapman seconded. Councillor Jegorovas-Armstrong contributed to the debate. Councillor Ngongo exercised their right to reply.

The following main points were made in the debate:

- Education is highly valued in this borough. In January 2023, a meeting was held with parents to understand their needs and concerns, with a strong focus on listening to the parents' perspectives.
- A short-term and long-term approach was developed in collaboration with parents. In the short term, engagement with deaf experts led to the suspension of a plan. In the long term, a working group was proposed to work with parents and investigate effective strategies.
- The outcomes included: 1. Establishing clear communication, 2. Ensuring parental involvement in the focus group process, and 3. Maintaining specialist provisions.
- The Council recognised the vital role of Laycock School for deaf children and parents and expressed the importance of collaboration between parents and the council going forward, apologising for any previous lack of collaboration. The Council wanted to support the school's leadership to ensure these children don't lose those vital services.
- Due to government underfunding, 283 teachers had resigned in Islington, emphasising the need to retain experienced teachers.
- The council was actively working with teachers and advocating for increased funding from the central government to protect essential services and ensure the borough's education system flourished.

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

**RESOLVED:**

That the petition be noted

**238 PETITION DEBATE: GREENER GRADE II LISTED AND CONSERVATION AREA HOMES**

The Council debated the petition submitted to the previous meeting. It was noted this petition had received over 2000 signatures.

The Lead Petitioner introduced the petition and spoke for two minutes:

- Residents want to live in warmer homes that are more energy efficient. For this, these homes require solar panels, heat pumps and double glazing.
- The current planning system is often seen as unpredictable, restrictive, and slow. However, there is optimism regarding the upcoming release of the first draft of the Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), with hopes that it will broaden the scope of permissible changes and make these clearer.
- Residents have voiced three key requests:
  1. The new planning system should prioritise sustainability and conservation, recognising that, for instance, some listed homes lack the flexibility to implement double glazing, despite the presence of suitable infrastructure.
  2. Residents require clear and comprehensive guidance on the actions they can take to improve their homes.

3. A shift in planning practices could invigorate the local economy by creating job opportunities in the area.

Councillor Ward moved the motion to debate the petition. Councillor Clarke seconded. Councillor Russell contributed to the debate. Councillor Ngongo exercised their right to reply.

The following main points were made in the debate:

- Councillor Ward welcomed the petition and affirmed the council's commitment to achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2030 and addressing the challenges of the cost of living and fuel poverty.
- Islington is home to numerous listed buildings and street properties, which pose challenges not only to private owners but also to the council.
- Earlier this year, planning permission was granted for retrofitting Bevan Court, a grade 2\* listed building.
- Recognising the need to balance energy efficiency with preserving Islington's historic buildings, the council is developing its own Net Zero Carbon Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This document will provide evidence-based guidance on retrofit measures, including those in conservation areas and listed buildings, and will clarify cases where planning permission is not required for certain retrofitting projects.
- The SPD will undergo two rounds of consultations, and additional workshops will follow.
- Given the escalating bills and the climate crisis, enhancing the energy efficiency of homes is a pressing concern. Clear and consistent guidance for residents regarding potential actions is imperative.
- Islington aims to contribute to achieving Net Zero Carbon by 2030, and the planning processes should support rather than hinder this goal.
- Changes in planning rules would stimulate the local economy and create much-needed job opportunities in the area.
- Although there is much work ahead in finalising the SPD, the council is committed to collaborating with residents to develop a robust document.

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

#### **RESOLVED:**

That the petition be noted.

#### **239 PETITIONS**

The Council received 4 petitions, as follows:

1. A petition from a young person titled 'Save Sobell Ice Rink';
2. A petition from Linda Scully titled 'Save the Isledon Village Estate', expressing concern about anti-social behaviour connected to the homeless hostel on Stacey Street.
3. A petition from Philip Tsaras titled 'Get Clerkenwell Design Week off our grass!' about the impact of the Clerkenwell Design Week event at Spa Fields and St James' Church Gardens.

4. A petition from Rachel Laverty about the construction impacts and other issues associated with the Holloway prison development.

## 240 **QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC**

Question (a) from Rebekah Kelly to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

The DfT has recently announced that they would no longer fund Low Traffic Neighbourhoods, and the Mayor of London has admitted that some of the schemes are not perfect and should be tweaked or removed. Will Islington Council scale back their plans to create traffic filtering schemes on 70% of Islington's roads? And how will it be funded going forward?

Response:

Thank you for your question, Rebekah. Our Council is determined to create a cleaner, greener, healthier borough, where we help tackle the climate emergency and support local people to take up active methods of travel.

Since the people-friendly streets programme started in June 2020 it has contributed to the council's plans to transform the borough and our ambitions in multiple areas, including road danger reduction, cleaner air, and climate change; all objectives set out in our policies in the Islington Transport Strategy and Islington's Vision 2030 (Net Zero Carbon) Strategy.

The Council has listened to local people's concerns throughout, making changes where necessary, such as a new 'Home LTN' Blue Badge exemption policy trial in its low traffic neighbourhoods. As this is an important priority for the Council, most of these schemes, and any future schemes, will be funded from council and external grant funding where available. Thank you again for your question.

Supplementary Question:

Which ones need removing or tweaking, what is the success criteria, has every trial become permanent? There needs to be a call for data to be audited.

Response:

There had been one issue with the interim report for Highbury and we apologise for that. Any areas that needed tweaking have been tweaked.

Question (b) from Richard Rieser to Cllr Khondoker, Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion:

In light of the recent survey of accessibility of pavements I carried out in Mildmay, can the Council inform us what they are doing to ensure the multiple barriers identified, especially for disabled people, are being addressed across the borough?

Response:

Thank you for your question, Richard. We want to make Islington a more equal place and that includes ensuring that all local people can walk around the borough safely.

Improving our streets for all residents, particularly those who experience restrictions on their mobility, is a key objective for the council as part of our people-friendly pavements programme. This programme will include dropped kerbs, tactile paving and decluttering, to make the borough's pavements more accessible and inclusive for all.

We acknowledge the issues raised in your survey of pavement accessibility in Mildmay. Following our engagement on draft proposals for Mildmay Liveable Neighbourhood earlier this year, we are currently in the process of finalising designs for consultation on the scheme later this year. We are taking the recommendations into account as part of that process, so that we can identify locations to make accessibility improvements in Mildmay as part of the scheme.

Thank you once again for your important question Richard.

Supplementary Question:

Have the concerns raised during several consultations, where the needs of many individuals were seemingly overlooked in favour of bike riders, been addressed? Specifically, have measures been taken to address issues such as uncontrolled shrubbery, tree roots, and steep gradients on pathways, which pose challenges for pedestrians and individuals with impairments? Is the removal of these barriers being prioritized to ensure a more inclusive and accessible environment for all?

Response:

Thank you for raising all those points and we will take these into account as we develop the people friendly pavements.

Question (c) from Jonathan Ward to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance:

In June 2019 the council declared a Climate Emergency. In November 2020 it published a Net Zero vision for 2030. Among other aims the plan was to phase out gas boilers in new-build homes. However, 4 years on, we can see the Climate Emergency not being taken seriously. The council is inexplicably building new homes on the Andover Estate that are heated with fossil fuel gas boilers. Why will these new homes be heated by fossil fuels and when do they plan to retrofit them with low carbon heat pumps?

Response:

Our Labour-run council is focused on tackling the housing and climate crises. The council is committed to tackling the climate emergency and has been phasing out the installation of gas-fuelled heating systems in its new homes, in accordance with the aims set out in our Vision 2030 strategy published in November 2020. Our project at Vorley Road in Archway is an example of the design standards to which our new homes will be built – continuing our track record of delivering high-quality, energy efficient homes with lower energy bills and less impact on the environment. Air source heat pumps will provide the heating and hot water, delivering lower operational carbon emissions in our borough and greater comfort to the occupants.

The new homes under construction on the Andover Estate, which will deliver 36 much needed new council homes for local people, were designed earlier, with planning permission secured in 2017 and construction underway in 2021. The development includes conversion of disused garages into new homes improving thermal performance for the whole building as well as improvements to greenspace on the estate for everyone to use.

The Council continues to invest in all of our homes to reduce carbon emissions and residents heating bills. Recent success includes two waves of Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund adding insulation and other solutions to properties below band C EPC rating bringing in £3.5 million grant for a wider £8 million investment scheme. The Council has also successfully bid for £700,000 Green Heat Networks Funding to install a low carbon heating system in Bevin Court. This shows that we are committed to tackling the climate emergency while also providing genuinely affordable homes in Islington.

Supplementary Question:

Your answer is incomplete, what is the date for the retrofit of the new council houses to take away the gas boilers? In July 2020 there was an application for the Andover estate to reset the energy strategy. There are a multitude of reasons as to why these gas boilers should be removed. Aside from failing to address the climate emergency, these boilers will also cause increased bills to residents, how much financial support will the council give to the residents with these boilers?

Response:

I am not prepared to delay the completion of council homes desperately needed by families in Islington to carry out this work. We are committed to ensure we have energy efficient homes across Islington with new builds and existing stock. I am glad you are showing enthusiasm and interest but please talk with your colleagues, as opposition councillors voted against the budget in February, including a retrofit programme a new council build programme, as well as £1Million fund to those struggling with bills.

Question (d) from Rose-Marie McDonald to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance:

Peabody is now including a second staircase in two of the tower blocks that will be constructed on the Holloway Prison site, in response to new fire safety requirements following the Grenfell Tower fire. What information do you have about the impact this will have on the social homes? How will this affect the size of the flats? Will the new flats still meet the needs of the 15,438 households on the waiting list, especially the needs of overcrowded families?

Response:

The Holloway Prison Site development will deliver hundreds of much-needed new genuinely affordable and social homes in the heart of our borough. We are pleased that Peabody has listened to the fire safety concerns, that I have personally raised with them, and the concerns of the local community and are now amending their proposals.



Two of these buildings are proposed in Phase 1 of the development and both buildings include social rented units, while a further building in Phase 3 would provide homes for shared ownership.

At present, the council's planning officers have not had sight of the amended proposals. We expect to see the amended plans over the Summer. Peabody has told us that they are hopeful that amendments to the plans will be limited to reductions in bedspaces rather than leading to the loss of whole homes or even bedrooms. The current scheme will deliver 60 per cent genuinely affordable housing including 415 desperately needed homes for social rent. We will do everything in our powers to ensure that Peabody holds good to this commitment in any amended scheme.

Supplementary Question:

Islington Council had to take Peabody to court before to deliver social housing, will they deliver this time? Let's make sure we deliver the best homes Islington ever had.

Response:

I am committed to make sure we get these answers, and I will make sure Peabody meet with everyone they need to and provide the answers we seek.

Question (e) from Tomas Fernandez Alfonso to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance:

We now know there will be changes to the Holloway plans to include a second staircase in two of the blocks. It's key that the community has the opportunity to fully scrutinise the new plans for the social housing and for the women's space - how will LBI/Peabody make sure this happens? What will the scope of the new planning application be? What aspects will and will not be considered. When will the consultation period open and when will it close?

Response:

I am pleased that Peabody has acted on my concerns and those of the local community. As I have said in response to the previous question, we are waiting for Peabody to submit amended plans and expect these to be submitted over the Summer. We have not yet had sight of the amended plans.

The amendment of the proposals to include a second staircase in three buildings will require a planning application to be submitted. Once received, the planning application and all submission documents including the amended plans, will be available to view on the council's planning webpages. Public consultation will take place in line with the council's procedures for consulting on planning applications and the relevant statutory procedures. Until such time as an application is received, we cannot say when public consultation will commence and close.

Supplementary Question:

The consultation process needs to be structured in a way that allows real views to be heard that have not been considered before. We as residents want to work with the Council to hold organisations such as Peabody to account.

Response:

I cannot say yet when the consultation will be, but I and other councillors will fight alongside you to hold Peabody to account.

Question (f) from Aya Husni Bey to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

In Islington Council's biodiversity action plan 2020 – 2025 you commit to: "Continually review use of pesticides and herbicides in public realm and housing and look to reduce where possible. Carry out trials for alternative chemical free weed removal options." In light of Lambeth Council going pesticide free what are the barriers to doing similar in Islington?

Response:

Protecting Islington's biodiversity is a top priority for our council. We have removed the use of herbicides in our parks and gardens with the extreme exception where invasive weeds are prevalent. There is no use of herbicides on tree bases or parklets and we have reduced its use on housing land. This is in conjunction with the council's biodiversity plan, agreed in 2020. As part of that plan, we are also aiming to increase Islington's biodiversity by introducing more green space, new parklets and planters across the borough. Our Islington Greener Together programme, working with the community to introduce and look after new green spaces, is a key part of this.

Supplementary Question:

How are you addressing those barriers to phasing out pesticide use to protect biodiversity in our borough?

Response:

We will keep looking at alternative methods and reviewing other options to maintain the right balance.

Question (g) from Ben Pearson to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

We know that walking and cycling, powered e-bicycles and public transport are specifically defined as sustainable transport modes by Islington Council, but electric motorcycles and mopeds currently are not. Electric motorcycles and mopeds don't contribute to congestion. Their air quality impacts from brake and tyre wear, and climate change impacts from manufacture and energy use, are similar to that of e-bicycles, lower than large e-cargo cycles, and far less than any public transport mode. Given these facts, it seems clear that electric motorcycles and mopeds would fit any definition of sustainable transport. On what criteria has the Council excluded electric motorcycles and mopeds from their list of sustainable modes, and what evidence do they have to support this?

Response:

Islington's Labour-run Council is determined to create a cleaner, greener, healthier borough, supporting more people to take up active forms of travel and help tackle the climate emergency.

The council's approach is to support and promote the use of walking, cycling and wheeling because of the multiple benefits these deliver.

The council encourages the use of regulated electric bikes including the electric bike hire schemes operating in the borough, however the larger electric motorcycles and mopeds are different to these as contribute more to poor air quality, create noise pollution and take up more road space when parked.

We recognise that electric motorcycles are more environmentally friendly than fossil fuel-powered vehicles and as a result, offer a lower parking permit price for owners of electric motorcycles and mopeds. However, we do believe it is right to charge something for these parking permits.

Supplementary Question:

I was asking about the criteria that underpins the councils' decisions that mopeds are not sustainable travel. The council is imposing baseless and irrational costs such as charging the same parking as an electric car for a 2-wheel vehicle. Does the council consider the lack of evidence for these charges an issue therefore will they be scrapping these charges?

Response:

Whether something is or isn't sustainable doesn't determine the charges and how these are treated by the council.

Question (h) from Rachel to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

We are disappointed by the introduction, without prior consultation, of new parking charges for motorcycles in solo motorcycle bays where no charges had previously existed. Proper consultation is a vital part of Council decision making, in order to afford those affected fair opportunity to engage with the process, and to avoid unforeseen errors. For this reason, it is important that Councils make adequate efforts to advertise and reach out to groups likely to be affected. Does the Council regret not contacting motorcyclists or representative groups before the decision on charging was made, or advertising the proposal in such a way that responses from motorcyclists could have been considered prior to the decision?

Response:

As I mentioned in my previous answer, Islington's Labour-run Council is determined to create a cleaner, greener, healthier borough, supporting more people to take up active forms of travel and help tackle the climate emergency.

The council's approach is to support and promote the use of walking, cycling and wheeling because of the multiple benefits these deliver, and our parking permit policy is based on this.

As part of the statutory consultation process for a legal Traffic Management Order, a notice was published in the Islington Gazette and Tribune advising of the proposed £1 per day charge for Motorcycles in the dedicated motorcycle bays, the notice also advised that there was the standard 21 days for any objections to be submitted.

The decision to charge motorcycles £1 per day (reduced by 50% for Electric Motorbikes) was taken in response to the net zero carbon ambitions of the authority, Islington is very committed to providing a cleaner and healthier environment for our residents and promoting more sustainable and active modes of travel i.e., cycling and walking. We also offer Motorcycle annual, quarterly and monthly permits for these bays which would equate to 17p per day to park.

Supplementary Question:

There needs to be a suitable consultation on the new charges, councillors were refusing to meet with us which was disappointing. Does the lack of consultation mean these charges are baseless?

Response:

We have met and responded to many emails and have come to a fair and reasonable scheme.

Question (i) from Phil Edwards and Steve Jones to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

Are councillors fully aware of reasons that Lambeth council removed GLL as managers of their sport and leisure facilities across their borough? What are councillors' views on GLL's management of Sobell ice rink, given the restricted opening hours compared to other rinks, and their lack of marketing?

Response:

GLL's leisure contract with Lambeth had a natural expiry date of April 2023, having been in place for 16 years, it was extended twice for an additional 6 years. After that, Lambeth opted to bring the services in-house at that time, which reflected the direction of travel the Council had taken with other previously outsourced services and that their contract with GLL was not providing best value. Alternatively, Islington Council's contract with GLL is one of the best in the country and brings in important revenue for the Council.

The ice rink at the Sobell was fully available for bookings, however, there hadn't been a demand for many daytime bookings. The ice was marketed to the community alongside all other Sobell activities and included in marketing materials. As part of the consultation, we have reviewed the operations of other rinks by specialist ice providers, those learnings and findings will be factored into the decision-making process over the future of the Sobell and whether there are different ways to operate the rink that might address the significant financial issues that have been set out regarding the future of the rink.

Supplementary Question:

Any good rink runs from 5am to 1-2am for the ice to be sustainable. The Sobell rink was not used like that. GLL Stratham was the same and the council had to invest thousands to put these wrongs right. Sport is good for the community and provides direction especially for young girls, please can you not let this investment go to waste?

Response:

Thank you, we have had a consultation and have had responses, we are looking at these and it will take time. The government has cut 70% of the council's budget and we have to fund services. We are trying our best to protect all sports in the borough, but this is hard with such a limited budget.

The Mayor advised that the time for questions had expired. The remaining questions received written responses, as follows:

Question (j) from Mahdis Farsi to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

In 2021 GLL received £50M of support from the UK Government and local councils, following £64M of support received in 2020. As of 31 Dec 2021, GLL had increased its accumulated cash balance to £33.4M. Despite this tremendous financial assistance, GLL does not appear to have managed these funds appropriately and have instead run the Sobell ice rink into the ground by not promoting or maintaining it, restricting the opening hours (even after the lifting of all covid restrictions but more importantly prior to the pandemic also) and simply not increasing the entrance fees. How comfortable are Islington councillors with the way GLL ran the ice rink given the Council's financial support to GLL over the last 3 years?

Written Response:

As part of its Covid support, the Council agreed with GLL to defer the rent for an agreed period. The Council met regularly with GLL's senior directors to understand their overall financial position as an organisation as well as the impact on the contract with Islington. The Council is satisfied that GLL have managed their finances effectively through an incredibly challenging period where overnight most of GLL's income stopped because of the pandemic. GLL has recovered effectively but still faces huge challenges with the cost of gas and electricity increasing two and a half fold. GLL are a charitable social enterprise and do not make profits. All surplus generated is applied solely to a general reserve for the continuation and development of the society. We do not accept that GLL has sought to run the ice rink into the ground. The flood was an unexpected event that has given us the opportunity to re-evaluate and re-think what the best offer for the Sobell is, given the challenges that we face. Thank you for your question and I hope our response clarifies the position.

Question (k) from Ola Sendecker to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

The annual carbon footprint of the rink was 125 tonnes, approximately the same as one return flight from London to Rome. This puts into perspective the real emitters of carbon, and carbon emissions are not a basis for the closure of this community sport infrastructure, which could be made more energy efficient. Given the rink could be run on renewable electricity, does the council consider the removal of a local community sport facility to be a fair decarbonisation strategy, particularly in the context of the continued proliferation of short haul flights?

Written Response:

You are correct that there are lots of other sources of carbon in society. Short haul flights as the example used is not something that Council has any control over, but this is. It is acknowledged that any new ice rink would have more energy efficient kit and that was considered as part of the key decision report. However, there remains the issue of financial sustainability as the principle driver of the increased costs of running the rink has been the increased cost of energy that remains high.

Question (l) from Pietro Barbagallo to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

Fifty years ago, Sir Michael Sobell made a donation to establish a sports centre, including the ice rink, for the common good, social-purpose and wellbeing of the Islington community. We would like to ask the council what they think Sir Michael Sobell would want for the future of the sports centre.

Written Response:

The Council recognises the tremendous legacy of Sir Michael Sobell in enabling the establishment of the Sobell Sports and Leisure centre. Sir Michael's legacy was to establish a community leisure and recreational facility and sports centre, without specific reference to an ice rink. A lot has changed in 50 years both in the sports and leisure industry and the financial position of local authorities. As a Council we are determined to protect that legacy and ensure that the centre provides a wide range of activities and services to support all Islington's residents to be active. That means providing different ways for people to be active outside of traditional sports but also ensuring a sustainable financial future for the centre to ensure it is supporting the health and wellbeing of Islington's communities for the next 50 years as well.

Question (m) from Madeleine Beasley to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

Meetings have taken place between the council and other experienced and lucrative Ice Rink operators who have shown interest in running Sobell Ice rink the same way they currently and successfully run other Ice Rinks in the UK. They are confident that Sobell can operate viably. What are the outcomes of these meetings and when will the results be made public?

Written Response:

The Council has met with two external, commercial operators and the Sobell Ice Skating Club and those discussions have given all parties a better understanding of some of the issues. It also visited an ice rink of similar size to gather more information about its programming, maintenance, and operations. The information and insight that officers have gained from these meetings were used to help inform the recommendations in the key decision report as part of the considerations for the future of the Sobell Leisure Centre. The Council has now made the decision to not re-instate the ice rink and proceed with the proposals for a new Active Zone and to work to develop a new programme of community sports and activities that are inclusive for all. The Council has published its comprehensive key decision report and supporting documents which we invite you to review.

Question (n) from Charlie Nevile to Cllr Khondoker, Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion:

The council's EQIA report states that 74% of Sobell ice rink users are female, 60% are non-white, and 68% are younger than 30. This is far greater than the equivalent proportions within the general Islington population, so removing the rink would disproportionately affect young women and ethnic minorities. How does the council justify this social discrimination of removing the rink, and what evidence is there that teenage girls would prefer the proposed soft play facility?

Written Response:

Thank you, Charlie, for your important question. To clarify those figures, refer only to the learn to skate programme and not the wider casual skating which due to the nature of the bookings does not provide the demographic profile. We acknowledge that ice skating does have a higher use by female users.

The proposals are not a soft play facility, that is an element, significantly improving the previous soft play offer at the Sobell but a comprehensive Activity Zone, providing lots of opportunities to be active with trampolines, "ninja-warrior" style facilities, interactive sports pitches, and inflatables. This offer is more gender neutral, but the significantly greater capacity and engagement would lead to many more females and girls being active. We are still reviewing the outcome of the consultation, and no final decision has been made yet. Thank you for your question and I hope our response clarifies the position.

Question (o) from Lucy Facer to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

Upper Street is a main A road designed to carry higher volumes of traffic in and out of the city. It has red routes, limited parking and is mainly commercial. Liverpool Road is a B road and classified by the Department of Transport as a minor road. In addition, it has a cycle lane and residential parking. It has 2600 residents living on or immediately adjacent to it, with a high proportion of vulnerable people who are more likely to suffer chronic illness due to high levels of air pollution: half are living in social housing, 17.6% are disabled, 1 in 5 are under 19 and 10% are 65 or over. There is also a large secondary school with a sports field directly facing the road. Residents have long been highlighting the high level of traffic volumes and the number of unhappy residents was noticeable at the Barnsbury and Laycock liveable neighbourhood zoom call. However, no action has been taken to address the traffic issues and residents continue to suffer from high levels of air pollution and dangerous junctions. Pedestrians, cyclists and drivers report feeling that the road space is dangerous and in particular junctions where all three meets. Although it is a wide road there are lots of users contending for space making it a hostile environment but most of all for pedestrians. The proposed Liveable Neighbourhood for Barnsbury and Laycock must address the issues of traffic on the road, greening and small interventions such as banning lorries are welcome but will only reduce traffic by 370 vehicles and will not address the issues. With traffic levels on Liverpool Road North higher than the adjacent section of Upper Street and only 33% of residents owning cars, we ask the council's Liveable Neighbourhood proposals are robust and take

bold action. Will the designs re-prioritise road users, filter traffic, invest in vulnerable residents, pedestrians and active travel?

Written Response:

Thank you for your question, Lucy. Our current programme of LTNs, school streets and cycleways aims to do this, with our future programme of Liveable Neighbourhoods aiming to extend this. The council is aware that there are existing traffic and safety concerns on Liverpool Road and across the Barnsbury and Laycock area, and we are taking this very seriously.

This is why the council has prioritised its work on the Barnsbury and Laycock Liveable Neighbourhood. A key part of this work, which is currently underway, is an assessment of how we should tackle those traffic and safety concerns. This will make a significant contribution towards our aim of ensuring that Islington is a cleaner, greener, and more welcoming borough.

The second phase of engagement on the emerging Barnsbury and Laycock Liveable Neighbourhood including Liverpool Road is planned for the autumn of this year. At that point there will be further discussion of the council's plans for the area, and we look forward to sharing a range of draft proposals and seeking input and comments from all residents, business and stakeholders.

Thank you for posing your question and I hope that my response clarifies the position.

Question (p) from Eve Norridge to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

Given that other London Councils, for example Lambeth, have demonstrated that weeds in public spaces can be managed without the use of environmentally harmful pesticides such as glyphosate, why is Islington Council still spraying glyphosate in our streets, will the Council commit to ending this harmful practice and, if so by what date?

Written Response:

Biodiversity is one of our top priorities. That's why we have a really ambitious programme to increase trees, planting and parklets in our streets and this includes working with local people through Islington Greener Together and Trees for Streets. And we are looking at how we link areas to form wildlife corridors.

But as is always the case in Islington where space is so constrained, we have to do what we can to get the balance correct. In this case making sure our streets are clean of trip hazards and we maintain our pavements to make sure that they are accessible for people walking, wheeling and using other mobility aids is important too.

An officer has visited Lambeth, we remain of the view that currently the balance remains in favour of using a herbicide alongside other measures.

We are, however, continually reviewing what we can do to reduce our use. And it is the case that some of electric machines which are becoming available may assist us to go further. Saying that, we have taken significant steps so far. We do not use herbicides in our parks and greenspaces, except to tackle invasive weeds such as Japanese Knotweed.



We have reduced our use on housing estates, only using on hardstanding such the paved areas, where if left weeds can cause damage or present trip hazards and attract detritus. Caretakers do try to keep weeds down but that is very time consuming, and they have many demands on their time. To try to overcome that we are looking into the option of push along deweeder to see if that can assist. We use bicarbonate of soda and hoses on moss growth.

We have taken steps to reduce the amount used on the streets. We do not use herbicide on tree pits or parklets our street cleaners have hoes and brushes; we are trialling the use of mechanical brushes which may be effective in some areas and where residents wish to weed their own streets we will support them to do so. We are also looking at ways of increasing our support for community weeding.

However, there remains a need for weed removal and having looked at all options, we are very firmly of the view that the only sustainable alternative to herbicide is manual weeding, which is very time consuming, labour intensive and expensive. Budgets are under extreme pressure. Where we do use herbicide, we use a system which is targeted in that it uses lasers to locate the plants which greatly reduces the amount used and the area impacted. Thank you very much for your work in this area.

Question (q) from Caroline Royds to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

The NLWA has agreed to investigate the scope for Mixed Waste Sorting at its Edmonton site to maximise the recovery of recyclable materials before incineration. Could the Scrutiny Committee ask it report on progress, including any proposed actions?

Written Response:

Thank you, Caroline for your question. Our Council is determined to help tackle the climate emergency and increase recycling in the borough. Islington Labour's manifesto last year committed to reaching 40% recycling by 2030 and we are taking action to achieve that.

We are continuing to work with the North London Waste Authority to increase recycling in Islington and they will be a key part of us achieving our goals. The NLWA is currently undertaking waste service modelling work, which includes different collection scenarios. We will provide updates and progress reports as they come available, and work with the NLWA to implement changes where we can. I will also pass your question onto the Chair of the Environment Scrutiny Committee for their thoughts. Thank you for posing your question and I hope that my response clarifies the position.

Question (r) from Anne Bentham to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

Regarding the closure of Sobell ice rink, given the internal emails showing that the outcome of the consultation has been pre-determined, when will the council be reopening a legitimate consultation?

Written Response:

The council is grateful for all the feedback it received during the consultation, which closed on the 7 July. We've worked hard to ensure that as many people as possible, from a broad range of backgrounds, took part in the consultation. This resulted in 1,003 people contributing to the consultation, and we would like to thank the community for really engaging with this process. The out-of-context email exchange that has been released relates to full and frank discussions about how local people and Sobell users could have the greatest say in the options available, while recognising the huge challenges associated with reinstating the ice rink. Following these discussions – which took place before the consultation began – the council decided to have a fuller consultation, which included the option of retaining the ice rink, so that it could better understand people's views before taking a final decision.

The consultation has helped us better understand what local people would like to see from their leisure centre and will help us to start to shape the programme of sports and activities. Our consultation and extensive engagement with the local community has highlighted how well-loved a facility the Sobell ice rink has been. While 54% of the people that responded to the consultation said they would not be impacted by the ice rink not being reinstated, 36% said they would be impacted – and we listened carefully to their feedback which will be built into the design of the new offer to mitigate some of these impacts. We've also explored a range of possible ways to reinstate the ice rink but unfortunately the Council did not consider any of these viable. For these reasons, we've taken the very difficult decision to not reinstate the ice rink.

Question (s) from Tamara Cizeika to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

Islington has a canopy cover of 25% - significantly higher than the England average of 16% - but residents want us to go even further with more trees on our streets. They want trees planted more quickly and many would like to plant trees themselves, in empty tree pits. What is the Council doing to support residents with this please? And what can we tell residents who want to do it themselves?

Written Response:

Thank you for your question, Tamara. Islington Council is doing all it can to tackle the ongoing climate emergency, by planting new trees, and introducing school streets for example. The Islington Labour manifesto last year pledged to ensure a net gain of 600 trees in Islington each year, and we are progressing towards this goal.

Residents can be more directly involved in our tree planting programme. We have a partnership with Trees for Streets to provide a tree sponsorship scheme for the borough. Residents can go online and say where they would like to sponsor a tree, and during hot weather we often ask Islington residents to assist with watering freshly planted trees. Tree planting in the Highway needs to be done by qualified contractors. Not all empty tree pits can be replanted because of a range of factors and every planting location needs to be properly assessed first. Thank you for posing your question and I hope that my response clarifies the position.

Question (t) from Colin Keatley to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

Many types of accommodation are unsuitable for people with long term needs. What opportunities are there for supporting people who do not want to live in residential, supported living or other formal care environments?

Written Response:

We always support people to live in accommodation that is right for them. In addition to residential homes and supported living, there is a service called Shared Lives where people can live independently as possible in a family home environment. It is a brilliant service that supports residents aged 16 and over to develop skills and meaningful friendships and relationships, living within their local communities.

Shared Lives carers are recruited from those communities. They are people who want to make a difference and give something back to their local area. Carers are paid for their time and supported by our team of co-ordinators. They all receive and can join a community of carers across Islington. The Islington service is seen pioneering as it provides opportunities for young people from the age of 16. While most of the people they support have Learning Disabilities, the Shared Lives team are also working in partnership with colleagues in Camden & Islington Mental Health Trust to extend the offer to people in recovery from mental ill-health.

Question (u) from Buffy Sharpe to Cllr Bell-Bradford, Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs:

We know that there is a booming life sciences industry in London, with many hubs in the Islington area. While this is great for our borough and brings much needed well-paid jobs, how will the Council make sure that the jobs and wealth this brings benefits all parts of the Islington community, including the most disadvantaged?

Written Response:

Thank you, Buffy, for your question. We know Islington is home to world leading, growing industries. However, despite having these developments on the doorstep, the benefits of the knowledge economy are not shared with everyone – often disconnected from our local, diverse communities. Only 1 in 9 of the senior leaders in tech come from a Black, Asian or minority ethnic background, yet these residents make up over 40% of the population in London. In the Life Sciences sector, Black/African/Caribbean/Black British individuals occupy less than 1% of roles within the sector and just 9% of professionals are from a working-class background.

We are now working with central London boroughs to develop an inclusive programme for the Life Sciences sector. We have already secured nearly £1.5m to help local social impact businesses develop their services and products, so that they can benefit from this boom. We are also designing an apprenticeship programme so that new businesses coming to the borough can easily access our talented communities.

We have added a range of life science opportunities to our innovative 'World of Work' programme and are working with stakeholders to design clear career pathways for our young people into the sector. Through our planning process, we are negotiating a series of local benefits packages from the various Life Science developments – ranging from affordable workspace, skills programmes, guaranteed interview schemes, new jobs, and community innovation facilities. So far, over 1,200 people have participated in skills programmes, outreach events and world of work experiences; helped 60 people go into good jobs; and supported 13 people to start their own business. In this, 75% of participants from BAME backgrounds and over 60% of participants were female.

Through these types of progressive programmes, we will make sure to will open this exciting sector to our local people and local businesses.  
Thank you for your question and I hope our response clarifies the position.

## **241 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL**

Question (a) from Cllr Convery to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

Islington has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with "dockless" electric bike operators including Lime (Uber) and Human Forest. What elements of the Memoranda provide the Council with control against irresponsible parking; is the Council prepared to enforce against irresponsible parking using such control; and is the Council prepared to enforce the provisions contained in the September 2018 TfL guide, "Dockless bike share code of practice For Operators in London"?

Response:

In the past year there have been 1.5m trips made by dockless hire bikes in Islington, and I believe this plays an important role in making Islington cleaner, greener and healthier working towards our Net Zero Carbon target. With the marked increase in trips last year, we have also seen an uplift in the number of poorly parked bikes causing very significant and understandable concerns amongst residents.

In the medium term, the council is looking at ways of managing this, making it fairer for those using the bikes and those using our pavements. This may include a system of designated parking spaces for dockless hire bikes to help maintain good pavement access.

On your question regarding what elements of the Memoranda provide the Council with control against irresponsible parking, the council has several mechanisms agreed within the memoranda with the three providers, Lime, Tier and Human Forest, to help address this issue.

When notified by the council or individuals, operators are required to remove bikes if badly parked within 1.5 hours between 7.00am and 10.00pm. Operators have a system to fine or ban users, which includes fines for inconsiderate parking, and parking in no parking zones. Operators have a geo-fence system to communicate where rentals can be ended and to prevent a build-up of bikes in an untidy and

unsafe manner in popular areas. The council also reserves the right to remove any bikes that cause an obstruction and/or that pose a health and safety risk.

On the second part of your question, yes, the council is using these controls to enforce against irresponsible parking. We work cooperatively with operators to address issues and they have been very responsive to the issues we've raised with them, for example creating geo-fenced no parking zones around the RNIB building on Pentonville Road, and most recently around Moorfields Eye Hospital.

The council meets with operators each month to discuss and address issues and concerns. We are now asking operators to proactively identify no parking zones at sensitive locations. To the final part of your question, the TfL Code of Practice (2018) does not contain any enforcement provisions that are not set out in our Memoranda with the operators. No operators have formally signed up to the Code, it is rather a set of expectations, whereas the operators have signed up to the memoranda with the council.

The TfL Code represents a reasonable set of base level expectations for dockless services but remains advisory as the bike and e-bike rental market remains unregulated.

Supplementary Question:

A small minority of users do not park these bikes in a responsible way. This causes disruption and has a big impact on those with disabilities and impairments. Why aren't we enforcing against pavement obstruction such as these dumped bikes. Camden and Westminster are doing something about it why aren't we now, instead of waiting a year.

Response:

Thank you. We have an officer working on it and are trying to roll it out as fast as we can.

Question (b) from Cllr Williamson to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

Islington currently has no step free overground stations. This makes it extremely difficult for people with disabilities, parents and others to get around. Whilst I understand this is the responsibility of the Department for Transport (DfT), what is the Council doing to support the bid for Access for All funding to make Crouch Hill Station accessible?

Response:

The lack of step free overground stations in Islington is a huge issue that must be tackled urgently. People with disabilities, parents with pushchairs and many more people should be able to use our public transport but this means many cannot use their closest station. Improving accessibility at Crouch Hill Station remains a key priority for the council. However, this work is likely to require significant funding from TfL and Network Rail. The Department for Transport offers funding to support the delivery of accessibility changes to stations as part of their Access for All programme.

The council has previously asked the DfT to fund improvements at Crouch Hill station but unfortunately has not been successful with our bids.

In recent months, we have written to the Department for Transport calling for the funding to be granted, and the Islington Labour councillors for Tollington and Hillrise have been running a campaign to grow support locally.

We are continuing to push for improvements at Crouch Hill Station and in September 2022 the council submitted a joint bid with TfL to the DfT for the provision of two lifts at Crouch Hill station. This would offer step free access between the street and each platform. We expected to hear an announcement from central government in April this year, but this announcement has unfortunately been delayed.

Supplementary Question:

We are disappointed by DfT not to fund step free access at crouch end station. We have had hundreds of residents sign our petition for this. Please join us on writing to the DfT to demand this.

Response:

I will.

Question (c) from Cllr Hamdache to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

It's positive news that the council is exploring third party operators for Sobell ice rink. Can you give us an update on how these conversations are going?

Response:

We know how important the Sobell Leisure Centre is to local people across the borough, and how devastating last year's flood and the resulting closure of the ground floor has been. It's really important that we ensure that the rebuilt centre provides a space that local people of all ages and backgrounds can enjoy.

Like councils up and down the country, Islington Council is facing huge financial challenges – due to the cost of living crisis, the huge rise in energy prices, and more than a decade of austerity. That means that, like other councils, we're having to make difficult decisions.

While it has been a much-loved facility for many residents over the years, the number of visitors to the Sobell Leisure Centre ice rink are low compared to other facilities at the site, and the proposals that we have put forward will help attract more visitors to the site. Furthermore, the opening of larger facilities, such as the new double Olympic-sized rink at Lee Valley and the rink at Alexandra Palace, would have led to a further fall in numbers.

Throughout the consultation exercise, we've been clear that we're listening to local people, while also stating the challenges that reinstating the ice rink would pose. Regarding alternative operators for the ice rink, the Council has met with two external, commercial operators and the Sobell Ice Skating Club and those discussions have given all parties a better understanding of some of the issues. It

also visited an ice rink of similar size to gather more information about its programming, maintenance, and operations. There is no outcome from this yet. The information and insight that officers have gained from these meetings will be used to help inform the final decision on the future of the Sobell Leisure Centre in the coming weeks.

Supplementary Question:

I understand there is financial pressure. However, I thought the council would be more optimistic with an upcoming election. Do you not think that finances will improve under a Labour government?

Response (from Cllr Ward):

Over the past decade, our council has faced a substantial reduction of 70% in funding, leaving us with just 30% to run all services. Despite these challenging circumstances, we have remained committed to safeguarding essential front-line services. While we are dedicated to preserving sports programs, the current financial constraints necessitate difficult decisions. It was disappointing the opposition voted against our budget. Please work with us not against us in the future.

Question (d) from Cllr Russell to Cllr O'Halloran, Executive Member for Homes and Communities:

How much compensation has the council paid out to council tenants and leaseholders each year since 2018 due to disrepair?

Response:

Ensuring our council tenants have the best possible homes is a top priority for our council. The service invested £42million in repairs and maintenance completing 88,000 repairs in 22-23. The council invests approximately £45m in addition to this improving homes through our capital program.

In a time of continuing government austerity which has seen us have to make £300 million of savings since 2010, we would love to invest even more in our repairs and maintenance programme but it isn't possible. We know that some residents have repairs that we don't manage fix in time and as a result, we pay compensation to those tenants.

The Council has paid an average of £130,000 per year in damages since 2018. An increase in recent years is seen to be due to a combination of increased workloads, resolving a number of historic PFI cases and an increase in claims farming. I am happy to forward a table of the exact amounts.

Islington along with other local authorities is seeing an increase in legal cases from claim management companies encouraging residents to submit and pursue disrepair claims. We want every resident to enjoy a decent home, so we are working hard to improve our repairs service and invest in our stock to prevent disrepair.

Supplementary Question:

£130,000 a year that could be better spent on upgrading systems for managing repairs. It is important the systems and processes work well. Can you try to shift that

investment instead of compensation so we can upgrade the systems to manage all the housing repair cases?

Response:

We are working to reduce these cases, but we cannot stop claim management companies encouraging residents to submit claims.

Question (e) from Cllr Jegorovas-Armstrong to Cllr O'Halloran, Executive Member for Homes and Communities:

Under Estate Management the council states, "Your Estate Services team will inspect each estate thoroughly at various frequencies over a 12 month period for: cleaning standards, safety and repairs standards in communal areas" How many estates have had an estate inspection in 2022, how many have not had an inspection and what percentage is this of the whole number of estates applicable?

Response:

Ensuring our council tenants have the best possible homes is a top priority for our council. This is why we regularly inspect our estates to ensure they are clean, well-kept and any issues are addressed.

I'm proud to say that all council managed estates and purpose-built blocks received an inspection for cleaning, safety, and repairs during 2022. From 1st January 2022 to 31st December 2022, we carried out a total of 15,313 inspections averaging 1,276 a month.

Supplementary Question:

I am proud of our estates too. When these scheduled checks are taking place can they be uploaded so not only councillors but residents can see when they have taken place?

Response:

Thank you. Residents also go out and do inspections and I am very proud of what our estate services teams do.

Question (f) from Cllr Staff to Cllr Woolf, Executive Member for Community Safety:

What steps is the Council is taking to ensure LGBT+ residents and visitors to the borough continue to feel safe and welcome, including addressing incidents of LGBT+ hate crime?

Response:

Hate Crime has no place in Islington, and we support tough action against those who perpetrate hate and fear against marginalised communities.

We saw last month, during Pride Month, the impact our large LGBT+ community has in our borough and the we take their safety incredibly seriously.

We have a wide range of approaches we take to tackling hate crime and keeping people safe, including having over 300 safe havens and our regular safer spaces discussions.



We are also supporting the independent, community-led, Islington Hate Crime Forum to give communities a voice in how the council and police are tackling hate crime, we have developed the Hate Crime Prevention Champion scheme, where members of the community come together to tackle discrimination by raising awareness of hate crime, encouraging the reporting of hate crime and signposting victims to support services, and we encourage people who live, work and socialise in Islington to sign the Islington Hate Crime Pledge, to encourage everyone to unite against hate crime. We also work closely with the Metropolitan Police to understand the nature of hate crimes in Islington and with Forum+ to understand the nature of LGBT+ hate crimes in Islington and look at how we can improve our services to ensure victims feel listened to and supported. But there is always more we can do, and we are happy to work with anyone who is keen to tackle hate crime in our borough.

Supplementary Question:

How is the council working with the Police to improve this?

Response:

There have been a range of things. We are central to negotiations and consultations to the Met Police turn-around plan. When the Baroness Casey report landed, we demanded tangible action plan. We are the only Borough to have a 10-point action plan from the Police. There is a strong understanding with the Police that we are clear on expectations.

Question (g) from Cllr Bossman-Quarshie to Cllr Bell-Bradford, Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs:

Many people who rely on cash have a low income, or other vulnerability, including visible and invisible disabilities such as low motor skills. Since the pandemic, shops and services increasingly only accept cards as a method of payment and research by Which? showed 1 in 5 consumers have been stopped from making cash payments for items such as groceries, small purchases in shops and refreshments. How will the Council support an inclusive economy and encourage our local SMEs to accept cash from customers?

Response:

We know that many small, local businesses and some groups of residents prefer to use cash. It is easier to manage for a number of reasons and doesn't have the ability to eat into business profits in the same way as card payments, which incur fees.

The Bank of England noted in late 2022 that, while Covid has had a lasting impact, with some permanent shifts in payment habits towards digital payment methods, surprisingly cash use has proved resilient. This is promising. To underpin this resilience, we will commit to ensuring that council-run facilities and services continue to accept cash. We will also work with business groups to encourage local businesses to continue to accept cash. Digital payments just don't work for everyone. And if there is cash, people and small businesses are empowered.

The Mayor advised that the time for questions had expired and the remaining questions would receive a written response.

Question (h) from Cllr Cinko-Oner to Cllr O'Halloran, Executive Member for Homes and Communities:

Over the last few months, we've seen how the cost-of-living crisis has made it difficult for people to heat their homes, causing issues with damp and mould. What is the Council doing to support people to reduce condensation and moisture in their homes, as well as reduce some of the financial strain they are currently facing?

Written Response:

Thank you for your question Ilkay, this is a very important issue that the Council is doing lots of work to tackle.

The cost-of-living crisis and the issue of damp and mould go hand-in-hand. When money is tight, people put their heating on less, leading to more damp and mould issues.

The cause of damp and mould can be from a variety of factors such as fuel poverty. We are currently investigating current cases and three years of historical cases to identify which causes are most common on certain estates so resources can target assisting our tenants.

The council has been given over £3 million in Social Housing Decarbonisation funding to contribute to a £7.5million programme to invest in our street properties and harder-to-insulate homes making them easier for tenants to keep warm and free from damp and mould.

The council is also funding and working with SHINE and VCS groups to ensure the best advice and assistance is there for tenants.

I'm proud that our council is also investing in direct support for people to avoid them washing their clothes in their home and reducing the risk of damp and mould. The new free community launderette on the Andover Estate will help residents with cost of living, and help reduce damp and mould in homes. It has already had a lot of local people using it since it opened, and I hope many more will in the coming months.

Question (i) from Cllr Clarke to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

Thames Water's disastrous flooding of the Sobell has resulted in the ice rink being destroyed, instead it is proposed that it will continue in a different form but still as the Islington people's sport centre. Is the planned extension of the activity area more sustainable economically and environmentally than continuing with an ice rink?

Written Response:

We're determined to create a more equal Islington, and we work hand-in-hand with local people so that they can help shape the borough they live in. We know how important the Sobell Leisure Centre is to local people, and we've run a major public consultation so that local people can help shape the future of the site.

While it has been a much-loved facility for many residents over the years, the number of visitors to the Sobell Leisure Centre ice rink is low compared to other facilities at the site. The opening of the new double Olympic-sized rink at Lee Valley and the new rink at Alexandra Palace would likely lead to a further fall in usage.

Like councils up and down the country, we're facing huge financial challenges from the cost-of-living crisis, the rise in energy prices, and more than a decade of austerity.

The proposals would see a significant increase in user numbers to the Sobell Centre enabling a wider range of people to be active more often. It would be a more financially viable facility as well because of the numbers of users it would attract. This would also support other community sports offers at the centre as new users are exposed to different programmes that are on offer.

Thank you for posing your question, I hope my response clarifies the position.

Question (j) from Cllr Ozdemir to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance:

The Holloway Prison site development is underway, and residents have highlighted issues concerning noise and dust. What is the Council doing to hold the developer, Peabody to account and mitigate noise and pollution on the site so it doesn't affect nearby residents?

Written Response:

Thank you for your question Gulcin and for your continued support of your residents in Tufnell Park.

The Holloway Prison Site development will bring hundreds of much-needed new genuinely affordable and social homes to our borough, which I know we are both very excited to see.

We also know that large developments can be disruptive to local residents so, to ensure that the development is being carried out in accordance with the planning controls and national legislation, the council employs a Construction Monitoring Impact Officer. This officer regularly visits the site, has access to monitoring information and is in very regular dialogue with the developer and residents to manage any adverse impacts on the local area.

We are aware of recent incidents of noise and dust nuisance and have therefore met directly with the developer to set out expectations and address concerns.

A subsequent residents meeting was organised to ensure that issues could be raised directly with the developer, which we both attended. The developer has committed to further consultation with residents regarding noisy works. Additional monitoring has been provided at the site and further mitigation measures, including measures to address dust, have been implemented. The council has also underlined the importance of good communication with residents and transparency in relation to the sharing of monitoring data. In addition to this, the Council has served a formal notice on the developer under the Control of Pollution Act. This requires strict adherence to permitted construction hours, defines measures for reducing noise and vibration,

implements quiet periods during construction hours and requires appropriate liaison with residents.

Question (k) from Cllr Jeapes to Cllr Khondoker, Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion:

The European flag is the flag which defends human rights and promotes European culture. Other European institutions - such as local governments - were encouraged to adopt the European flag, and thereby stand in solidarity with the ideals of European unity and defenders of human rights - freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law, promoting peace and stability. Therefore, please could we show the true colours of Islington and its people by flying the flag as we are Europeans and defenders of human rights and culture?

Written Response:

Thank you for your question, Clare. I completely agree that Islington is European and believes in the traditions of freedom, democracy, equality, and the rule of law, promoting peace and stability.

At the referendum in 2016, Islington voted to Remain with 75% of local people choosing to stay in the EU. I'm sure that this figure has increased since, having seen the disaster the Tories have made of Brexit. Sadly, while we would love to fly the European flag at certain times of the year, the Tory Government took the disgraceful decision of banning this in 2021. I know the GLA recently faced this problem when hoping to fly the flag on the anniversary of the referendum. The decision to ban the flying of the flag is in complete contradiction to the values of Islington and the EU, as you have stated.

Thank you for your question and I hope our response clarifies the position.

Question (l) from Cllr Bossman-Quarshie to Cllr Ngongo, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families:

In light of Child Q, what is the Council doing to ensure we are safeguarding young Black girls?

Written Response:

Thank you for your question, Val. We were all horrified by the Child Q incident which took place in Hackney last year and we are committed to ensuring our services are safe for all our young people, including young Black girls.

Following the publication of the review into the case, the Islington Safeguarding Children Partnership formulated an action plan based on the recommendations made in the report. This was used to analyse our local services and to ensure that we have effective services in place for Black girls and children from minority backgrounds.

As part of this, we have reinforced the responsibilities of practitioners to advocate for, and on behalf of, the children they are working with/who are in their care as part of their training. We also sought assurances from the Police regarding the amount of strip searches conducted in the education settings. Central North Police reviewed

their data and in 2020 there were 6 Stop & Searches in a school environment. In 2021 4 stop and search were conducted and there were none for 2022 or in 2023 so far.

Another of the recommendations was to develop an awareness raising programme across schools and colleges about stop and search activity by the police. Senior officers at Central North Police (who have specific responsibility for Safer Schools, YET officers) have ensured that all officers have been briefed about Child Q so that no Black girls in the borough are subjected to the same appalling treatment. School Safety Officers are also delivering workshops to Black girls and other children and young people about their rights and 'know your rights cards' are shared with young people to understand this area further.

In addition to this, the Council's Children's Services department is working hard to help safeguard Black girls from harm and exploitation. We commission two Young Women and Girls workers from the organisation Abianda, working alongside Council staff to safeguard and support young women and girls affected by criminal exploitation and violence. We also have a range of services in our Targeted Youth Support team aimed at young Black people to keep them safe.

I hope you are assured that we are working hard to ensure that nothing like this ever happens in Islington, and hopefully never happens again anywhere.

**242 ARMED FORCES COVENANT - ANNUAL UPDATE**

Councillor Comer-Schwartz moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Spall Seconded. The recommendations were put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED:**

To note activity over the past year to celebrate and support Armed Forces personnel, veterans, and their families.

**243 STANDARDS COMMITTEE REPORT TO COUNCIL - UPDATED MEMBER CODE OF CONDUCT AND DISPENSATIONS**

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

**RESOLVED:**

- i. It be noted that the Code of Conduct for Members has been reviewed for compliance with the Local Government Association Model Councillor Code of Conduct 2020 and best practice;
- ii. That personal interests (in paragraph 12 "Declarations of Interests") be amended as detailed in tracked changes in Appendix A of the report, be agreed;
- iii. That the dispensations detailed in paragraphs 3.12 and 3.13 of the report, be granted to all members in respect of participation in discussion and voting at meetings, with immediate effect until the Annual Meeting following the next local elections in 2026, be agreed;

- iv. That future requests for individual dispensations in respect of statutory and non-statutory disclosable interests be submitted to the Standards Committee for determination.

## **244 CONSTITUTION UPDATE**

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

### **RESOLVED:**

- i. That the work of the Audit Committee and Standards Committee in reviewing the Constitution and Code of Conduct for Members and proposing revisions to ensure legal compliance and high ethical standards are maintained, be noted.
- ii. That the proposed revisions to Part 1 of the Constitution, detailed in Appendix 1 of the report, be adopted.
- iii. That the proposed revisions to the Articles in Part 2 of the Constitution detailed in Appendix 2 of the report, be adopted.
- iv. That the proposed revisions to Part 3 of the Constitution as detailed in Appendix 3 of the report, be adopted.
- v. That the revised Officer Employment Procedure Rules, which now incorporate the previously separate protocol document and the change to Dispensation arrangements in the Access to Information Rules, be adopted as detailed in Appendix 4 of the report.
- vi. That the revised Terms of Reference for the Audit Committee to establish it as the Audit and Risk Committee, including authority to revise and keep up to date the Council's Financial Regulations and Procurement Rules, be adopted as detailed in Appendix 5 of the report.
- vii. That revised Terms of Reference for the Standards Committee be adopted, as detailed in Appendix 5 of the report.
- viii. That new Terms of Reference for the Pension Sub-Committee to establish it as a Pensions Committee appointed by the Council be adopted, as detailed in Appendix 5 of the report.
- ix. That new Terms of Reference for the Pensions Board be adopted, and to their addition to the Constitution be approved, as detailed in Appendix 5 of the report.
- x. That new Terms of Reference for the Personnel Sub-Committee be adopted, and to establish it as an Employment and Appointments Committee appointed by the Council, as detailed in Appendix 5 of the report.
- xi. That revised Terms of Reference for the Statutory Officer Grievance Committee and Appeals Committee be adopted, so that it only applies to the Chief Executive, as detailed in Appendix 5 of the report.
- xii. That the addition of the Code of Conduct for Employees, and the amendments to the Code of Conduct for Members, be agreed as detailed in Appendix 6 of the report.
- xiii. That the new organisation chart in Appendix 7 of the report be agreed.

- xiv. That the amendments to delegations and officer designations in the Appendices to the Constitution be agreed as detailed in Appendix 8 of the report.
- xv. It be noted that the re-appointment of the existing sub-committee members to the new committees will be confirmed in the Council Appointments Report, also on the agenda for this meeting.
- xvi. That a review of the Overview and Scrutiny function should be undertaken and will include revised Terms of Reference for the Scrutiny Committees and Scrutiny Procedure Rules, be agreed.

## **245 COUNCIL APPOINTMENTS REPORT**

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

### **RESOLVED:**

- i. That Councillors Khurana, Burgess, Comer-Schwartz, Gill and Ward be appointed as members of the Employment and Appointments Committee, with immediate effect, until Annual Council on 16 May 2024 or until a successor is appointed, be agreed.
- ii. That Councillor Khurana be appointed as Chair of the Employment and Appointments Committee, with immediate effect, until Annual Council on 16 May 2024 or until a successor is appointed, be agreed.
- iii. That Councillors Kay, Poyser, Chowdhury, Jackson, Bell-Bradford, Champion, Khondoker, Ngongo, O'Halloran, Turan and Woolf be appointed as Substitute members of the Employment and Appointments Committee, with immediate effect, until Annual Council on 16 May 2024 or until a successor is appointed, be agreed.
- iv. That Councillors Convery, Ward, Gill and O'Sullivan be appointed as members of the Pensions Committee, with immediate effect, until Annual Council on 16 May 2024 or until a successor is appointed, be agreed.
- v. That Councillor Convery be appointed as Chair and Councillor Ward be appointed as Vice Chair of the Pensions Committee, with immediate effect, until Annual Council on 16 May 2024 or until a successor is appointed, be agreed.
- vi. That Councillors Kay and Mackmurdie be appointed as Substitute members of the Pensions Committee, with immediate effect, until Annual Council on 16 May 2024 or until a successor is appointed, be agreed.
- vii. That that Linzi Roberts-Egan, Chief Executive and Head of Paid Service, is officially leaving the council on 30 July 2023, and is taking leave from 15 July onwards be noted.
- viii. That Stephen Biggs, Corporate Director – Community Wealth Building, will be deputising for the Chief Executive from 15 – 30 July be noted.
- ix. That Stephen Biggs be appointed as Acting Head of Paid Service with effect from 31 July 2023, until further notice, be agreed.
- x. That the acting up arrangements to cover the role of Corporate Director – Community Wealth Building from 4 July until further notice, be noted.

- xi. To appoint Alison Stuart as the Council's Director of Law and Governance and Monitoring Officer, with effect from her contractual start date, be agreed.

## **246 NOTICES OF MOTION**

### **Motion 1: Divest from the Arms Trade**

An alteration to the proposed amendment was formally noted.

Councillor Hamdache moved the motion. Councillor Russell seconded.

Councillor Convery moved an amendment to the motion. Councillor Hamdache exercised his right of reply.

The amendment was put to a vote and CARRIED. The amended motion was put to the vote and CARRIED.

#### **RESOLVED:**

This Council resolves to continue our pension fund's development and adoption of responsible investment policies and recommends that the Pensions Committee proceeds with an upcoming three yearly review of the Fund's ethical investment framework. This already includes:

- Actively seeking to invest in companies that will reduce greenhouse gas emissions and minimise climate risk.
- Continue the adopted strategy to reduce the fund's carbon footprint to achieve the Paris Agreement target holding global warming to within 1.5 degrees Celsius.
- Allocate 15% of the fund (and extend to 20%) invested into renewable infrastructure, resulting already in an estimated 94,000 tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>e reduction.
- Strongly urge the next Labour government to adopt a foreign and defence policy to restrict export licenses to prevent the sale of weaponry to autocratic and repressive regimes.

### **Motion 2: Anti-Strike Legislation**

Councillor Graham moved the motion. Councillor Cinko-Oner seconded. Councillor Jegorovas-Armstrong contributed to the debate.

The motion was put to the vote and CARRIED.

#### **RESOLVED:**

- (i) To defend the right of workers to strike
- (ii) Islington Council as an employer will do everything possible within its powers to protect employees right to strike.



- (iii) To write to the Government to oppose the changes that will restrict workers' right to strike.
- (iv) To show our full solidarity with striking workers, standing on the picket lines.
- (v) To continue to support the TUC's campaign to protect the right to strike.
- (vi) To continue to work collaboratively with our trade unions who represent our Council workers and encourage union membership to Islington residents.

### **Motion 3: Diverse Councils Declaration**

An alteration to the motion was formally noted.

Councillor Bossman-Quarshie moved the motion. Councillor Chapman seconded. Councillor Hamdache contributed to the debate.

The motion was put to the vote and CARRIED.

### **RESOLVED:**

- (i) Adopt The Co-Operative Party's Diverse Councils Declaration to increase diversity in our local government.
- (ii) Provide a clear public commitment to improving diversity in democracy.
- (iii) Set out a local Diverse Action Plan ahead of the next local elections, including:
  - o Appoint Diversity Ambassadors for each political group on the council to work with each other and local party associations to encourage recruitment of candidates from under-represented groups.
  - o Encourage and enable people from under-represented groups to stand for office through the provision of activities such as mentoring and shadowing programmes and information and learning events for people interested in standing as official candidates.
  - o Proactive engagement and involvement with local community groups and partner organisations supporting and representing underrepresented groups.
  - o Encourage all members and candidates to complete a candidates' and councillors' survey distributed at election time.
- (iv) Provide flexibility in council business by:
  - o Regularly reviewing and staggering meeting times
  - o Supporting remote attendance at meetings where it is lawful.
  - o Agreeing recess periods to support councillors with caring or work commitments.
- (v) Continue to encourage members to take up allowances and salaries to which they are entitled, particularly any reimbursement for costs of care, so that all members receive fair remuneration for their work and that the role of member is not limited to those who can afford it.

- (vi) Ensure that councillors from under-represented groups are represented whenever possible in high profile, high influence roles.

**Motion 4: Upholding the right to protest.**

Councillor Russell moved the motion. Councillor Jegorovas-Armstrong seconded.

The motion was put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) Engage with the Camden and Islington Metropolitan Police Basic Command Unit to understand how they are upholding the right to peaceful protest.
- (ii) Work with community and civil society campaign groups in Islington to support their right to protest.
- (iii) Write to the Home Secretary in opposition to the Government's severe restriction of the right to protest.

The meeting closed at 10:29pm

**MAYOR**