

LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON

COUNCIL MEETING - 11 JULY 2024

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the meeting of the Council held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 11 July 2024 at 7.15 pm.

Present:

Bell-Bradford	Hayes	O'Sullivan
Bossmann-Quarshie	Heather	Pandor
Burgess	Hyde	Russell
Champion	Jackson	Shaikh
Chapman	Jeapes	Staff
Chowdhury	Jegorovas-Armstrong	Steadman
Cinko-Oner	Kay	Turan
Clarke	Khondoker	Ward
Comer-Schwartz	Khurana	Wayne
Convery	Klute	Weekes
Craig	McHugh	Williamson
Croft	Nathan	Woolf
Gilgunn	North	Zammit
Gill	Ogunro	
Hamdache	O'Halloran	

The Mayor (Councillor Anjna Khurana) in the Chair

285 **MINUTES** **RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 16 May 2024 were agreed as a correct record and the Mayor was authorised to sign them.

286 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST** No Declarations were made

287 **MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- (i) Apologies
Apologies were received from Councillors Safi-Ngongo, Graham, Gallagher, Ibrahim, Nargund, Spall and Mackmurdie.

(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

Since being elected in May, the Mayor had actively engaged with the Islington community, with a strong focus on promoting inclusivity. They made it a priority to attend a wide range of events that celebrated the borough's diversity and important historical moments.

In June, the Mayor participated in several key community events. They attended *Windrush Tales*, an intergenerational event that celebrated and amplified the stories of Islington's Windrush generation and took part in the flag-raising ceremony at the Town Hall to honour Windrush Day. The Mayor also joined the Pride flag-raising ceremony at the Town Hall and hosted another ceremony to raise the flag for Armed Forces Week.

The Mayor showed their support for various community groups by attending a Refugee Week celebration in the Assembly Hall. They also participated in the Eid in the Park festivities on Highbury Fields. Additionally, the mayor laid a wreath to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the D-Day Landings in Normandy and joined the community in remembering the seventh anniversary of the Finsbury Park Terror Attack.

One of the Mayor's key priorities was raising awareness of hidden disabilities and championing accessibility. They attended a sports day event during Learning Disability Week and expressed enthusiasm about joining Islington's Disability Staff Forum for an upcoming event.

The Mayor was also closely involved with their chosen charity for the year, Brickworks Community Centre. They attended several events there and looked forward to working with the charity throughout their term to raise awareness of the important work it does for the community.

In their efforts to engage with the borough's youth, the Mayor had hosted Youth Councillors and a Youth Peer Engagement Advocate in the Parlour. They found it fascinating to hear about the young leaders' priorities and the work they were doing to support young people in Islington and looked forward to further collaboration before the new Youth Council elections in the autumn.

The Mayor also took part in the Cally Festival, enjoying the celebrations with the local community. They were excited to continue these celebrations with the start of South Asian Heritage Month, during which they planned to host a panel event on the theme "Free to Be Me" in the Council Chamber.

The Mayor had the honour of serving as the returning officer for the recent general election in Islington, where they announced the results. They expressed deep gratitude to the council staff who worked tirelessly to ensure the election ran smoothly.

The Mayor shared their sorrow over the tragic death of a young man in the borough, Ahmed Habib, calling for a moment of silence in his memory and extending their thoughts to his family and friends.

288 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Leader expressed heartbreak at the fatal stabbing of a young person, Ahmed Habib, in the Finsbury Park area and extended condolences to the victim's loved ones. The council was working with the police to respond to the incident and support the community.

The Leader welcomed the new Labour government's plans to ban dangerous weapons and invest in a Young Futures Programme to support young people and prevent crime. The Leader emphasised that investing in youth and banning weapons were crucial for safeguarding futures and making communities safer.

The Leader also congratulated Emily Thornberry and Jeremy Corbyn on their re-election as MPs, expressing optimism about collaborating on priorities like building new council homes and enhancing climate resilience. The Leader acknowledged the challenges ahead in rebuilding after years of austerity but stressed the importance of advocating for local businesses and the devolution of funding to empower communities.

The council had launched the Adult Carers Strategy, commemorated the 80th anniversary of D-Day and Armed Forces Day, and reaffirmed its commitment as a Borough of Sanctuary by celebrating Refugee Week. The Leader also highlighted efforts to improve the lives of working people, including migrant workers, and expressed pride in pushing back against the disproportionate use of live facial recognition by the Metropolitan Police.

Reflecting on the anniversary of the Finsbury Park terror attack, the Leader emphasised the importance of unity against hate. They cited events like Eid in the Park, London Pride, and Windrush Day as reminders of the need to stand against racism, hate, and intolerance.

The Leader of the Opposition responded. They expressed deep sorrow over the tragic loss of a young person due to violence in the borough, extending heartfelt condolences to the family and friends of Ahmed Habib.

Reflecting on the recent general election, the Leader of the Opposition welcomed the end of 14 years of Conservative rule which had particularly harmed Islington through deliberate deprivation of needed funds.

They expressed hope that the new Labour government would tackle the significant challenges ahead, while acknowledging that these issues would take time to resolve. The Leader of the Opposition congratulated Emily Thornberry and Jeremy Corbyn on their electoral success; and praised the hard work of volunteers and activists who contributed to the election effort.

The Leader of the Opposition noted that many Islington voters chose candidates with policies bolder than those of the Labour government. The Leader of the Opposition urged their Labour colleagues to advocate for a more radical platform, emphasising that the material needs of the country require principled and decisive actions. The Leader of the Opposition referenced recent events in France as a warning of the consequences when centre parties fail to deliver.

289 PETITIONS

No Petitions were received.

290 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Question (a) Ajay Makan to Cllr Diarmaid Ward, Executive Member for Finance & Performance:

What steps has The Council taken to engage with Barclays about the bank's investments in and provision of loans to companies complicit in the Israeli state's violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the West Bank and Gaza, what has the outcome of this engagement been and If this engagement has not led to firm commitments by Barclays to end its relationships with these companies, will The Council commit to tendering for a new banking provider to take over from Barclays at the end of the council's current contract and make a public announcement to this effect so that Islington sets an example that other local authorities might follow, what would be the penalties for ending the contract with Barclays early?

Response:

Thank you for your question, Ajay. I share your concerns about Barclays investment practices.

The Council has engaged with Barclays Bank on multiple occasions over the last two years, including meeting with the Chief Executive in 2023, and challenging their positions on fossil fuel investments and raising concerns over their environmental record. This has contributed to some positive change, with Barclays committing to halting new investment in some of the most harmful fossil fuel projects, such as tar sands.

The Council will seek to begin procurement for a new banking contract in 2025. As part of this process, a working group is being established to draw up tender documentation and evaluation criteria for this procurement to ensure that being an environmentally and ethically best in class bank will score highly. It is also important to include mechanisms for holding banks to account when they renege on their promises or do not deliver in this area. The Council must do this legally, by following public contract regulations which restricts what Councils can and cannot do during procurement.

This is a lengthy process that takes approximately 18 months from start to finish to conclude, including any required implementation for any new partner. This implementation is highly complex due to the integration of the Council's bank into crucial services and back-office functions. As such even if the Council was free to end its contract with Barclays tomorrow, it would not be able to change provider quicker than in that time.

The Council will incorporate the most robust criteria possible around social value (including the record on climate and ethical practices) as part of its scoring process. Regardless of who the Council chooses to provide our banking services, it is vital that Barclays do more to address climate concerns. We will continue to ensure that our own ethical procurement strategy doesn't include procuring goods and services by oppressive regimes. Thanks again for your question.

Supplementary Question:

Would the procurement process exclude any bank that funds investing in companies that supply arms to Israel, if legally possible to do so? And will you publish any legal advice received?

Response:

Yes, I will seek robust legal advice and if possible, we will do that and publish the advice received.

Question (b) Esme Waterfield to Cllr Diarmaid Ward, Executive Member for Finance & Performance:

How much of the pension fund managed by Islington Council is invested, directly or indirectly, in companies complicit in violations of human rights and international humanitarian law in the West Bank and Gaza, Will you commit to disclosing the fund's investments in full and, if any are found to be complicit, initiating the process of divestment immediately?

Councillor Ward invited Councillor Convery, the Chair of the Pensions Committee, to respond.

Response from Councillor Convery:

We've had some correspondence over recent months, and your inquiry is indeed well-timed.

Last December, at the council meeting, a question was raised regarding whether the pension fund had any investments in companies identified by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) as having commercial interests in the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories. At that time, and continuing to the present, we confirmed that there were no directly owned investments in any of the companies listed by the UN body. I was assured that a due diligence exercise would be conducted against the latest list of UNHRC-listed companies, updated and ratified in July 2023, to ensure that there were no indirect holdings in any such companies.

By "indirect," I emphasise that our holdings are spread across hundreds of companies through arms-length or pooled funds. We own a small fraction of very large funds, which in turn invest in company equities, debt, and other financial instruments. Therefore, we do not directly own shares in these companies and cannot buy or sell them; only the external fund manager has that authority. Over the past few months, we have closely interrogated the fund managers of these pooled vehicles to identify whether they hold shares in companies listed by the UN body. We have identified 10 such companies, currently valued at £2.6 million, which represents a very small proportion—0.14%—of the pension fund's total value of £1.8 billion.

You may also be aware that, until recently, there was impending legislation, the Economic Activity of Public Bodies (Overseas Matters) Bill, which could have obstructed any attempt by authorities like ours to divest from these companies. We debated that legislation in this chamber last year, expressing our opposition. We were advised by a consultant that any divestment could potentially violate the bill's provisions once enacted, and it would do so retrospectively.

However, with the dissolution of Parliament six weeks ago, that bill effectively died, and with the formation of a new Labour government last week, there is now, in my view, no possibility of such legislation being introduced in Parliament in the foreseeable future. The new Attorney General, Richard Hurrah KC, stated that the bill would have had, and I quote, "a profoundly detrimental impact on the UK's ability to protect and promote human rights overseas."

Therefore, I believe there is no longer any major legal block to this council's divestment. Although there are some other legal, financial, and regulatory hurdles, I am confident these can be cleared. I will present a report at the next quarterly meeting of the Pensions Committee later this month to begin the process of divesting the pension fund from all those identified companies.

Supplementary Question:

- Can you ensure that the commitment to divest is made public and that all relevant information, including a more comprehensive list of companies beyond the UNHRC list, is disclosed to the public?

Response from Councillor Convery:

- The Pension Committee would be making the decision later this month. We committed to taking legal and technical advice to ensure full compliance, aiming to be as thorough as possible. There were a few essential tests that needed to be met, including confirming support from the members of the pension fund and ensuring that there would be no significant financial detriment to the fund because of this action.

While our goal is to run an ethically sound pension fund and use our investments for good, our primary responsibility remains to the members of the scheme, ensuring that all liabilities and expectations are met. On behalf of the entire Council, I express our horror at the violence inflicted on the people of Gaza and our belief that Israel should stop the unfolding humanitarian catastrophe. The Council had called for an immediate ceasefire, an exchange of hostages and prisoners, and expressed support for a two-state solution.

We recognised the moral imperative to disassociate our pension fund from companies supplying Israel with the capability to conduct its present war, including defence manufacturers like the U.S. Caterpillar company, known for building military bulldozers used in the conflict. However, we emphasised the need for a legal framework to identify such companies with certainty, using the methodology applied by the UN body. This is an evolving debate, and we believed we were among the first local authorities in the country to take this step, aiming for clear and specific divestment criteria.

Question (c) Paula Feehan to Cllr Rowena Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality & Transport:

- If the British population ate meat-free lunches on weekdays, improved health could save the NHS as much as £2.2B a year and we'd see 11,000 fewer cases of Type 2 Diabetes and 366,000 fewer cases of cardiovascular disease. In addition, if we implemented meat-free defaults in public catering, we could save the NHS £74M a year. Plant-based meals have the lowest environmental impact in terms of greenhouse gas emissions, water use, land use, and pollution, delivering significant health benefits to the planet and our community. 30 towns and cities have endorsed the Plant-Based Treaty, and many are developing Plant Based Treaty action plans to promote and encourage people to eat plant-based foods. Exmouth is transitioning catering at climate meetings and events to 100% plant based. Haywards Heath is building a test case for 100% plant-based catering at events. Edinburgh is trialling carbon labelling in schools and universities, and Lambeth is delivering public information campaigns. In Amsterdam, the city has pledged vegan Fridays in all public institutions. The Chair of the London Assembly's climate committee has called for a Plant Based Treaty for London. Will Islington become the second London Borough to endorse Plant Based Treaty and develop an action plan?

Response:

Thank you for bringing the Plant-Based Treaty to my attention, Paula.

We recognise that livestock farming is a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and are working to encourage a reduction in meat consumption and an increase in plant-based alternatives as part of our commitment to a greener, healthier borough. It is our policy for all catering at the Town Hall to be meat free and we continue to develop our approach on this.

Our current school meal contractor serves vegetarian or vegan meals for all pupils once a week, and on one other day a week the meat option contains 50% plant-based protein. On two or three days a week there is a vegan meal served. We are renewing our school meals contract and through this procurement are actively encouraging suppliers to increase their commitment to plant-based menus.

We also support the Islington Food Partnership which is a broad coalition of voluntary sector, local authority, NHS and business partners. The partnership delivers the Islington Food Strategy (updated in March 2023) which works towards reducing consumption of products of animal origin. It encourages businesses, including contract caterers to introduce more vegetable options on menus, to introduce plant-based days e.g. meat free Mondays. Thanks again for your question.

Supplementary Question:

Will the council endorse the treaty or not?

Response:

There is quite a lot of information within it, but I am more than happy to look into it.

Question (d) Sheridan Kates to Cllr Una O'Halloran, Executive Member for Homes & Neighbourhoods:

It was reassuring to see Islington among the 20 councils appealing to the new government for much needed improvements to local housing funding.

However, Rachel Reeves has repeatedly said that her economic approach is to stick to rigid fiscal rules, and her government will have to make "tough decisions" until we have economic growth. These fiscal rules have been debunked as unnecessarily constraining by countless sources from former Bank of England officials to think tanks like the New Economics Foundation.

How will you put pressure on her government to provide the required funding now, rather than waiting for private businesses to produce economic growth that may or may not materialise?

Response:

Thank you for taking the time to put forward this thoughtful question,

We have been really clear with government that there needs to be a fair and sustainable long-term rent settlement and reimbursement of funding lost because of rent caps, and a new Green Decent Homes programme to help us make the investment that we need in existing council homes.

We should be able to keep all income from Right to Buy sales to build more council homes and we should be able to borrow money for council-house building at affordable rates in the long term.

Government could do more to help provide decent temporary accommodation for people in need by increasing Local Housing Allowance rates by inflation on an annual basis; awarding more Homelessness Prevention Grants; and continuing to build on our successful Right to Buy, buy-back programme in Islington.

The measures above would help us build more homes and deliver sustainable investment into our existing homes and wouldn't breach sound fiscal rules.

We will continue to promote these with the new government and secure as much investment for council homes as we can get.

Supplementary Question:

Can the Council consider exploring the ideas in Stephanie Kelton's book, *The Deficit Myth*, to better understand the UK central government's spending capabilities, and would you be interested in a discussion on how this could impact funding for housing, social care, and other services, I would be more than happy to come in and speak on this to councillors.

Response:

Yes, I am more than happy to set up a meeting to discuss this further with you.

291 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Question (a) Cllr Janet Burgess to Cllr Flora Williamson, Executive Member for Health & Social Care:

You are no doubt aware of the recent study, by the Institute for Social and Economic Research of the University of Essex, into the effect of giving free school meals to primary school children in the four London boroughs which had been doing this for some time (Tower Hamlets, Southwark, Newham and Islington). The then Labour opposition forced through this measure just before winning control of Islington Council in 2010, and it has been in operation ever since. Apart from the cost-of-living help to parents – which is considerable - there was an associated increase in reading. It suggested that by the age of 11, the impact was equivalent to approximately two weeks' additional progress in school. Additionally, levels of obesity were reduced by 7% to 11% among reception children in the four boroughs and for children in year six, who had been given free school meals for their entire time in primary school, there was a 5-8% reduction. This is a really important public health outcome. What further measures can be taken by the Public Health Department to reduce childhood obesity?

Response:

Thank you, Councillor Burgess for your question on this important topic.

Universal free school meals in primary schools are an important part of our response to long term trends in childhood excess weight. For well over a decade in Islington, the scheme has provided all primary school-aged children with healthy and nutritious food that meets national food standards, and has brought additional educational benefits. As well as the original reasons for introducing universal free school meals, it represents an additional practical way

in which our Labour-run Council are now helping local children and families with cost-of-living pressures.

We recognise that the underlying causes of excess weight in children and young people are deep rooted and complex, with strong links to deprivation and child poverty. In Islington, we therefore take a whole systems approach to support children to achieve a healthy weight, with action at multiple levels to encourage healthier diets and more physical activity.

As a local authority we have taken steps to reduce childhood obesity, including:

- A 0-5 obesity prevention action plan developed through a multi-agency group that has overseen the development of new healthy weight pathways for Bright Start professionals with staff training and accompanying resources.
- This year we launched the new Family Kitchen First Steps programme which is focused on starting solids, led by our health visiting service who have been trained to teach cooking and infant feeding with new parents.
- Islington Council's Holiday Activity and Food Programme continues to support children to access food and activities during school holidays, targeted to children and families eligible for free school meals.
- In the last year, we have also focused efforts on increasing the uptake of Healthy Start vouchers for pregnant women and children under 4 on very low incomes. The scheme provides access to financial support to buy fruit and vegetables and milk.
- Islington's active together strategy sets out priorities to promote physical activity for children and young people by increasing access to recreational facilities, promoting access to more outdoor activity and adapting our environments. This includes opportunities through early years and schools settings, our Parks for Health scheme and 12 adventure playgrounds, youth clubs and leisure centres across the borough.

Liveable neighbourhoods and school streets provide a major opportunity for the future to increase physical activity among children and young people, through commitments to make walking, wheeling and cycling safer and more appealing.

Once again, thank you for your important question.

Supplementary Question:

Will you ensure that the progress made through initiatives like the Free School Meals programme continues to be effectively communicated and supported, considering the challenges and opposition faced?

Response:

Yes, of course.

Question (b) Cllr Benali Hamdache to Cllr Sheila Chapman, Executive Member for Equalities, Communities & Inclusion:

It was announced that £50,000 of grant allocations for the Black Leaders Alliance was going unspent and was being drawn down. Could you let us know

what that money was promised for, why it wasn't spent and how the council will deliver on the original promises of that money?

Response:

Thanks for your question, Cllr Hamdache.

You will be aware that in September 2020, the Voluntary and Community Sector Committee agreed to allocate £30,000 a year for just under 3 years (so a total of £82,500) for the creation of a Black Leaders Alliance.

In January 2021 the Ubele Report commissioned by the council showed that there was a lack of black led organisations in our borough and a perception that there was a lack of provision for Black and Caribbean communities as well as limited capacity for Black organisations to come together to contribute to change and concerns.

So it felt like the work the council was doing in this space was timely and vital.

A recommendation was made in May 2023 that the money be repurposed, so that the Council's work in this area could be more effective. The suggestion was that £50,000 be allocated to support the creation of a Black cultural centre and that the remainder go back into the core partnership grants program for 2024 to 2028.

I'd like to take this opportunity to recognise that there has been drift in this area. In the aftermath of covid and with various changes in staffing at the council, the teams involved could and should have been more proactive in realising that the original allocation of money wasn't being used to achieve the strategic aims of an alliance of Black Leaders.

I appreciate that as an organization we've lost goodwill with some of our Black community leaders and organisers.

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge that this project hasn't gone in the way that was originally planned due to various factors as outlined, but I am optimistic that by working with the community, we will make our borough a more equal place.

It's my job to build bridges and to make sure we work in partnership with members of our Black community to create a Black Cultural Centre that is the envy of other boroughs. I am absolutely committed to doing just that.

Thanks again for your question.

Supplementary Question:

Considering the ongoing frustration expressed by Black leaders and communities, particularly regarding unmet promises such as funding for the Black Cultural Centre, the lack of progress with the Black Mental Health Barbers project, and the delay in publicising the Bailey report—where even participants have not received copies—how will the Executive address these issues? Additionally, what measures are being taken to ensure that accurate, timely information is provided to the public, and what specific steps will be implemented to rebuild trust and restore faith in the council's commitment to supporting Black residents in Islington?

Response:

The first point you raised was the deep disappointment felt by some members of our Black community, and I want to acknowledge that openly. Just this week, I have personally visited Finsbury Park Mosque, met with members of Go Africa, visited the My Women's Centre, and I plan to meet with other leaders, community activists, and campaigners. I understand these concerns and am actively engaging with our community to address them.

On the issue of the Ubele report, you're right—it hasn't been made freely available. I want to publicly commit to distributing the report and ensuring the community receives it in full. As I mentioned earlier, some of the key findings highlight a lack of belonging and the feeling within the Black community that they lack pathways to share their concerns. While I've summarised some of these findings, I will make sure to share more and do everything in my power to be transparent moving forward.

Regarding the Black Cultural Centre, I completely understand your concerns. While I can't discuss specific details about ongoing arrangements between the Council and certain providers in a public forum, I can tell you that we have secured a venue and have a robust group of Black leaders and community organizations backing this project. My commitment to establishing the Black Cultural Centre is unwavering, and I assure you, as soon as I can release more information, I'll be announcing it far and wide.

Lastly, on the topic of Black men's mental health, I acknowledge your request for greater visibility and transparency about the programme's impact. I will take this forward and provide more detailed information on the progress outside of this chamber. I know that several providers have already been trained and are delivering essential mental health support in our borough, which is crucial at this time. I am happy to share the positive impacts we've seen and will make sure to update you with more data on this important work.

Thank you again for your question

Question (c) Cllr Caroline Russell to Cllr Rowena Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality & Transport:

Could you provide an update on your negotiations with Transport for London (TfL) on the redesign of the junction of Highbury Grove and St Paul's Rd?

Response:

- Thank you for your question, Cllr Russell. The council is aware of ongoing concerns from residents and businesses regarding the levels of traffic along this corridor and specifically the congestion at Highbury Grove.

Officers are currently in the early stages of exploring options for improving the operation of the Highbury Grove and St Paul's Road junction. This piece of work is focusing on improving the operation of the junction, improving the movement of traffic (especially buses) along St Paul's Road and Highbury Grove and on what can be done to improve the safety of the junction for pedestrians and cyclists.

The nature of this work is highly complex and requires ongoing negotiation with TFL. Council has commissioned extensive surveying and traffic modelling to better understand how to optimise the operation of the junction, this work is due to complete in early 2025. Thanks again for your question.

Supplementary Question:

- Given that traffic modelling takes time and progress at Transport for London can be slow, will you commit to reviewing the possibility of turning the bus lane along St Paul's Road towards Highbury Corner into a 24/7 bus lane, particularly as this junction is critical to supporting the mayor's target of 80% of journeys being made by walking, cycling, or public transport?

Response:

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I think we are already looking at this, but I am happy to take this away.

Question (d) Cllr Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong to Cllr Michelline Safi-Ngongo, Executive Member for Children, Young People & Families:

– May we have an update on the child friendly strategy?

Response:

– In Cllr Safi-Ngongo's absence, the Leader of the Council responded.

Thank you for your question. Cllr Safi-Ngongo is unable to be with us this evening, so I am answering on her behalf. We are excited that we will be focusing on making Islington a child-friendly borough and look forward to sharing the full plans in September.

We are excited that we will be focusing on making Islington a child-friendly borough. Led by the Council Executive members, officers have drafted the range of opportunities to implement a child-friendly approach alongside young people that encompasses the 2030 Plan priorities of a greener, healthier, safer, and inclusive Islington. We look forward to sharing the full plans in September.

Supplementary Questions:

– Since the Council committed to developing Islington's own child-friendly strategy in September 2023, with a key principle of empowering young people and ensuring their voices are heard, can you confirm whether the upcoming strategy due in September has effectively engaged young people? If not, are there plans to include their voices in the next stages of the strategy's development?

Response:

– I can assure you that in everything we do within Children's Services—whether it's reviewing the Youth Council, handling casework, or youth offending work—the voice of children is always central to our approach. Their perspectives and how they view our borough are intrinsic to making Islington a truly child-friendly place, and I am confident that this will be strongly reflected throughout the upcoming plan. Thank you for the question.

Question (e) Cllr Saiqa Pandor to Cllr Flora Williamson, Executive Member for Health & Social Care:

– Arsenal Women will be playing 11 of their WCL games at the Emirates this season, which is a huge step forward for the women's game and its growth. How is the Council working with local partners, including the Arsenal to promote football as a sport to young women and girls growing up in Islington?

Response:

– Thank you, Saiqa, for your question.

Making Islington a healthier place to live and work is one of the top priorities for this Labour administration. Whether it be through our initiatives to encourage active travel or making sports pitches more accessible, our Labour-led Council is working to make the borough healthier.

The Islington Football Development Partnership is made up of the Council, GLL and Arsenal in the Community. Together, they work with several local partners to deliver Women and Girls football opportunities, which has continued to increase year on year.

For example, women beginner sessions have increased from 25 participants in 2019 to 200+ women currently. We are seeing more women and girls become volunteers, coaches, administrators and referees. We also have the Islington Borough Ladies FC which currently has 350+ members. They have 2 adult women's teams, several youth teams, several 5/6 aside women's teams and a large recreational programme.

With the new pitch at Barnard Park we have dedicated roughly 30% of the peak time programme to women and girls football and that will increase in September as start a new league from this site.

We will continue to work with our partners to grow this programme and try to meet the ever-increasing demand for pitch time and space across all forms of the game. Once again, thank you for your important question.

Supplementary Question:

Following the recent Parliamentary report on health barriers for girls and women in sport, which highlighted obstacles such as gender disparity in schools, lack of confidence, and female-specific health issues, what is the Council doing to address these barriers? Specifically, how is the Council encouraging participation among women and girls, particularly from ethnic minority communities, who face even greater marginalization in sports and physical activity?

Response:

A core aspect of our 'Active Together' strategy is ensuring that residents from minority communities are empowered to participate in physical activities. That's why we are working closely with various local partners to identify barriers and focus on how to effectively tackle them. One example of this is our women-specific swimming sessions, which have been designed to encourage greater participation.

We understand that positive experiences in sport and physical activity lay the foundation for a healthy and active life, especially for young girls, people with disabilities, those with long-term health conditions, and individuals from Black, Asian, or ethnic minority groups, as well as those from less affluent backgrounds. I'm proud of the work we've done so far to ensure a wide range of activities are available in our leisure centres, and we will continue to expand these opportunities to make sure underrepresented communities have equal access to these resources. Thank you.

Question (f) Cllr Sara Hyde to Cllr John Woolf, Executive Member for Community Safety:

Numerous studies have shown the negative impact of gambling, and gambling addiction, on mental health, levels of antisocial behaviour and crime. In my ward on Caledonian Road we have 3 gambling venues, within 100 steps of each other. What is the Council doing to address the concerns raised by residents about these premises and stop new gambling shops opening?

Response:

Thank you for your question, Sara. I agree. Harms related to gambling are manifold. They encompass financial problems, work disruption, mental health distress and relationship breakdowns. They can lead to theft, fraud, street robbery, anti-social behaviour, child neglect and domestic abuse.

As a small borough with high levels of deprivation and inequality we are absolutely committed to making our borough safer and more equal for everyone and we are determined to do all we can to minimise the harm associated with gambling premises using all the tools at our disposal including planning, licensing, data and lobbying.

We reviewed and updated our 3 year Licensed Gambling Premises Policy in 2022 setting clear expectations and a wide interpretation of the licensing objective to protect vulnerable people from harm.

As a Planning Authority and Licensing Authority we are duty bound to consider each gambling premises application on its merits and in accordance with relevant local and legal frameworks. We have scrutinised applications and refused those where there is sufficient evidence to support our decision making. Where our decisions have been overturned on appeal we have reviewed our approach to identify lessons learnt.

The cumulative impact of a number of gambling premises in a small geographic area (such as Caledonian Road), is of particular concern and we are lobbying for local communities to have a stronger voice and for councils to have the legal power to adopt cumulative impact areas with the presumption that applications for gambling premises will normally be refused.

I have instructed officers to undertake a deep dive into recent relating to gambling establishments to better understand how the council can more robustly defend its position on such uses. Officers will also be examining current clusters of gambling establishments and reviewing available evidence as to their impact.

The Council's Licensed Premises Gambling Policy is due to be reviewed in 2025 and this represents an opportunity to review and update our current Policy, as well as further aligning the Licensing and Planning regimes. Once again, thank you for your question.

Supplementary Question:

Will you work with me, my ward colleagues, and Councillor Weeks on licensing issues to call on the new Secretary of State for DCMS, Lisa Nandy, to grant local authorities greater power to reject gambling venues, especially in cases of cumulative impact? Additionally, how can we collaborate to minimize gambling harms and strengthen local authorities' ability to address this issue effectively?

Response:

Yes, absolutely.

Question (g) Cllr Roulin Khondoker to Cllr Rowena Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality & Transport:

Keeping our pavements as clear and spacious as possible is imperative to providing a safe passage for those with mobility and visual impairments to use our streets safely. E-bikes have caused a huge disturbance to pavements and pathways when they are left parked or are abandoned in the middle of pavements. What is the update on progressing with holding e-bike operators to account to reduce and cease the practice of e-bikes being parked in the middle of pavements, and how soon will the public see any impact?

Response:

Thank you for your question. The 3.2m trips taken by hire e-bikes in the last year plays a significant role in helping the council achieve our Vision 2030 and our Transport Strategy aims to help people get healthier through active travel and reducing carbon emissions.

However, the council does not have powers to regulate hire e-bikes as there isn't legislation giving us these powers. So, the council works with the operators to move these bikes whenever we detect problems and they have agreed to remove any obstructively parked bikes within 1.5 hours. At the same time, operators issue warnings and fines to users who park their bikes inconsiderately, culminating in a ban on users who persistently behave this way. Further, the operators undertake regular patrols to address issues.

In the medium term we are considering working with TfL to create a London-wide contract for cycle hire which will have many benefits, including a limit on the number of bikes deployed in the borough and mandatory bay parking which will go a long way to managing this problem.

The council understands the ongoing concerns of residents, especially for those with visual or mobility impairments, and is working to deliver a network of 250 parking bays for hire e-bikes. We think bays offer the best opportunity to limit badly parked bikes because we can work with operators to ensure riders can only end their rides when they park e-bikes in the bays. In authorities where parking is in designated bays only, there have been improvements to parking behaviour and pavement access.

We launched a pilot of 10 bays in February this year, which is going well, and a further 50 bays will be installed by the end of this year.

In the meantime, we are working closely with the operators to ensure badly parked hire bikes are relocated as soon as possible, and fines issued to customers who park their bikes inconsiderately or in No Parking Zones.

Thank you once again for your important question about the accessibility of Islington's pavements.

Supplementary Question:

I welcome the introduction of new initiatives, but I am concerned that such initiatives may sometimes prioritize one agenda over others, particularly in relation to protected characteristics and groups with mobility issues. How will you ensure that new initiatives, such as those addressing climate priorities, also consider and integrate the needs of people with protected characteristics to ensure that these changes are fair and inclusive for everyone in Islington?

Response:

I understand your concerns about ensuring that new initiatives do not disproportionately impact people with protected characteristics, including those with mobility issues. For example, we have considered the introduction of hire scooters but opted against it due to concerns about their potential impact on individuals with disabilities and others who use the pavements.

We recognise that while some people with disabilities might find hire scooters beneficial, it's crucial that any changes do not negatively affect those who rely on pavements for walking, regardless of their mobility needs. We are committed to rolling out new initiatives in a way that balances these considerations and ensures fairness for everyone. Your feedback is

valuable, and we will continue to work towards inclusive solutions that address both climate priorities and the needs of all our residents.

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

Question (h) Cllr Heather Staff to Cllr Una O'Halloran, Executive Member for Homes and Neighbourhoods:

- At a time when funding and space for new housing is increasingly difficult, looking after our current housing stock is as important as building new ones. What is the council doing to improve the quality of our existing homes, so that they are resilient to common reoccurring issues such as mould and damp, cold, adaptive to climate change?

Written Response:

- Thank you for your question, Heather. The council continues to invest in its existing stock. This has increased significantly over the last three years. The works range from improving windows and roofing, insulation and ventilation, replacing kitchens and bathrooms, external works and renewing mechanical and electrical installations. Last year we spent over £60million investing in our stock.

However, with such a large stock it is a challenge funding these works given the below inflation rent caps imposed by the government- total impact on the business plan of these alone is over £1.5 billion lost investment funding, the cost of materials and the cost of borrowing. We would expect a stock of 35000 to have over £150m of investment unfortunately HRA finance only allows for £50m meaning tough choices are needing to be made to choose how best to invest. This function sits separately from the delivery service of Capital Investment Team in Property Services under the Housing Investment Team. There is a project underway overlaying the net zero carbon opportunity for insulation and ventilation with the damp and mould case clusters to see if we can lever maximum investment benefit by targeting certain areas of the borough.

The regulatory focus in housing is on building safety and ensuring homes continue to meet the decent homes standard, which is also very important, rather than climate preparedness, so these projects tend to be the hardest to fund. We have bridged this gap by successfully bidding for a range of grants to offset the costs of creating net zero carbon heating and insulation works for our poorest performing homes. We are developing some flagship projects, that tackles these important issues including developing a low carbon communal system at Bevin Court and tackling multiple issues of insulation, building fabric, high-cost heating and general condition at the Harvist Estate. This will help inform investment going forward, as solutions to funding these important schemes are pursued with the Government.

Thanks again for the question.

Question (i) Cllr Roulin Khondoker to Cllr Santiago Bell-Bradford, Executive Member for Inclusive Economy, Culture & Jobs:

- Access into shops and buildings is a barrier for many people especially those with mobility issues, visual impairments and those with prams and young children. While this is a historic issue of urban and building design, what is the council doing themselves and to work with businesses and building owners in the borough to make their spaces mobility accessible especially so that those in wheelchairs can have equal access to the spaces that Islington have on offer, and what is the impact of the council's efforts?

Written Response:

Thank you for your question, Roulin. Since 2021, the Council's Local Economies and Planning teams has commissioned AccessAble to carry out accessibility studies/reports for Archway, Caledonian Road and Finsbury Park town centre. AccessAble is an organisation whose mission is to maximise independence and choice for disabled people in accessing their local area and the places they want to visit.

As part of the Council's UK Shared Prosperity Funding, £50,000 has been identified to improve accessibility to business in Finsbury Park town centre. Support will be in the form of training, followed by the opportunity for businesses to benefit from a small grant to make changes to their premises. Finsbury Park town centre is predominantly composed of smaller SMEs mainly specialising in retail and hospitality, who trade from converted premises and Victorian-era properties. As such, it is a priority location to make improvements because accessibility issues were not considered in the original design of the buildings, and most have experienced piecemeal fitout over many years. As further funds become available, the geographical scope of the project will be expanded to other town centres depending upon business interest in the project. In the meantime, the AccessAble reports in Archway and Caledonian Road have been fed into the liveable neighbourhood schemes in those areas, with physical changes to the high street being made for the benefit of wheelchair users and others.

In addition, the Council's Local Economy Officers regularly advise individual businesses and trader associations on best practice, and legal requirements on access where they spot issues such as lack of space to move or turn in a wheelchair e.g. where stock is blocking the aisles of a store. They have also arranged visits for Inclusive Design colleagues and Anti-Social Behaviour Team colleagues for more detailed advice.

Thanks again for your question.

Question (j) Cllr Ilkay Cinko-Oner to Cllr Sheila Chapman, Executive Member for Equalities, Communities and Inclusion:

What is the update on the provision of the Martin Luther King adventure play centre and the use of the outside space?

Written Response:

Martin Luther King adventure play reopened in the Summer of 2023 after the refurbishment. The playground offers open access, free supervised play sessions for children aged 6 and up, both after school and during the school holidays. Activities include den building, fire making and arts and crafts. Children help to cook their own free lunches under the supervision of staff.

The outside space is fully operational with new equipment, a sandpit, a vegetable and flower garden, a wormery, fire pit and play structures. Camps and dens are built by children with the support of staff and a new 'Tango' swing and cantilever swing have just been built by the staff. Children play football and other games on the small sports area and are free to dig for worms and find bugs, dress up, create their own adventures and explore. Art and crafts materials are available for children to be creative and the ethos is to follow and support children's interests and ideas.

The playground is constantly evolving and changing with the needs and ideas of the children, and through this approach children develop a sense of ownership and belonging. The

playground also offers free family play sessions on a Saturday during term time and operates as much-valued community hub.

Question (k) Cllr Mick Gilgunn to Cllr Diarmaid Ward, Executive Member for Finance and Performance:

Neil Hayes, an Archway resident, tragically lost his life in a construction accident involving a hydraulic asphalt lorry in Goods Yard Camden on May 24th. The incident is currently under investigation by the HSE, and both his family and campaigners are eagerly awaiting the full report. Last year, there were 45 fatalities reported in the Construction industry alone, with a total of 135 work[1]related deaths across industries, excluding illnesses like asbestos-related cancer. The need for improved compensation for victims of diseases like Mesothelioma was highlighted on Mesothelioma action day on July 5th. The previous government's approach to health and safety at work was criticized for its deregulation stance, as highlighted by former Prime Minister David Cameron in 2012 who declared that "The health & safety culture is an albatross around the necks of big business". With a new government in place, there is a push to enhance safety measures, especially in areas like Islington with numerous infrastructure projects. How can we reverse the tide and improve our own HSE workplace inspections, and enforcements when necessary to ensure all our workers are working in a safe environment and involve the Trade unions in terms of health & safety and welfare at work at the procurement stage when drawing up contracts?

Written Response:

Thank you for your question, Mick. The loss of any life on a construction site or related to asbestos exposure or even in any workplace is an avoidable tragedy and a loss.

Here in Islington, we take our Health and Safety duties very seriously. The Council's health and safety policy is endorsed by the Chief Executive and reviewed annually, this includes an assessment on statistics of all incidents which also covers near misses. We report quarterly to senior colleagues by Directorate and involve the unions who are invited to actively participate in all matters pertaining to health and safety.

In terms of construction site safety, we adhere to all the CDM regulations as do our contractors and this is regularly monitored by our project managers throughout construction projects. We also monitor non council works through building control and environmental services.

In so far as asbestos management is concerned, we have appropriate surveys across our assets which are accessible and recorded electronically. The council employees an asbestos team to oversee compliance, management, training and recording, they also oversee a programme of re-inspections.

Finally, we support culture to ensure all places of work are safe which includes relevant support through e-learning, our occupational health and safety team, training, and adjustments to ensure the safe and appropriate working conditions whatever and wherever your service or area of operation is within the council.

Thanks again for your question.

Question (l) Cllr Ilkay Cinko-Oner to Cllr Sheila Chapman, Executive Member for Equalities, Communities and Inclusion:

What has been the impact of Fairer Together for the public, including the newly set up Access Islington hubs?

Written Response:

For me, one of the key benefits of Fairer Together has been to support a new inclusive and joined up approach to how we view and deal with residents, with services and external partners encouraged to work in collaboration to understand and meet the needs of residents. We could talk about We Are Islington and how we took the time to get to know our residents and presenting underlying needs. This then led to the implementation of the triage model in the hubs, supported by the new community connectors, providing holistic wrap around support and early intervention, as well as working closely with internal and external partners such as public health and our VCS community.

In addition to the core telephony services, we currently have three main 'Fairer Together' workstreams – the Here to Help telephony and email service and the Access Islington Hubs. All 3 services are based on the learning from the We Are Islington service, which was set up to support some of the borough's most vulnerable residents. The basic premise of the services and support is to build trusting relationships with residents that allow us to better understand both their presenting and underlying needs.

Since the launch of the hubs, we have seen almost 50,000 residents and our Community Connectors have supported circa 1,500 people. The areas of greatest demand include support with money, housing, food and overall well-being. We have also provided digital support to almost 1000 residents. With the opening of the North Hub and planned communication, we expect demand for these important services to increase.

It's been a year since the first two of the Access Islington Hubs were launched, and we have already been able to reach out to a vast number of residents to give them the support they need. We will continue to ensure that residents receive first point resolution and support and guidance to help themselves where possible alongside a safe and welcoming space.

Thanks again for your questions.

292 INTERVAL

The Council adjourned for approximately ten minutes.

293 RESOLUTION TO EXTEND 6-MONTH RULE - SECTION 85 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Cllr Craig moved the recommendations in the report. The recommendations were put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

To agree that, in accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, Council approves Councillors Michelline Safi-Ngongo and Troy Gallagher's non-attendance at meetings until the end of the calendar year on the grounds of continued ill health and following a bereavement and that the Council's best wishes be conveyed to them.

294 CONSTITUTION UPDATE

Cllr Craig moved the recommendations in the report. The recommendations were put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

To approve the amendments to the Constitution as set out in the appendix to the report.

295 **APPOINTMENTS REPORT**

Cllr Craig moved the recommendations in the report. The recommendations were put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Councillors Craig, Hyde and Weekes be appointed as a substitute member of the Children and Young People Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, or until a successor is appointed;
- (ii) That Councillors McHugh, Staff and Weekes be appointed as substitute members of the Standards Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, or until successors are appointed;
- (iii) That Councillor Staff be appointed as substitute members of the Planning Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, or until a successor is appointed;
- (iv) That Councillors Staff and Weekes be appointed as substitute members of the Licensing Regulatory Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, or until successors are appointed;
- (v) That Councillor Hyde be appointed as substitute members of the Pensions Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, or until a successor is appointed;
- (vi) That Councillor Hyde be appointed as substitute members of the Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, or until a successor is appointed.
- (vii) That Councillors Craig and Jeapes be appointed to the Planning Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, or until successors are appointed.
- (viii) That Councillor Gill be appointed to the Environment, Climate Change and Transport Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, or until a successor is appointed.
- (ix) That Councillor Staff be appointed to the Health, Wellbeing and Social Care Scrutiny Committee for the remainder of the municipal year, or until a successor is appointed.

296 **NOTICES OF MOTION**

Motion 1: A New Deal for Workers

Councillor Heather moved the motion. Councillor Hyde seconded.

Councillor Jegorovas-Armstrong and Gilgunn contributed to the debate. Councillor Heather exercised their right of reply.

The motion was put to a vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED::

- (i) To welcome and support the Labour Party's Green Paper on Employment Rights, and the party's pledge to enshrine it in law within the first 100 days of the next Labour government.
- (ii) To write to the newly elected government to amend the immigration rules for domestic migrant workers and reinstate the rights provided under the pre-2012 visa regime.
- (iii) To call on the newly elected government to make issues around work, jobs, pay and rights for domestic migrant workers a core part of their narrative and vision.
- (iv) To continue to work collaboratively with our Trade Unions who represent our Council workers and encourage union membership to Islington residents.

Motion 2: Unlocking the potential of local high streets

An alteration to the motion was formally noted.

Councillor Bossman-Quarshie moved the motion. Councillor Klute seconded.

Councillor Hamdache contributed to the debate. Councillor Bossman-Quarshie exercised their right of reply.

The motion was put to a vote and CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To write to the Government to urge it to scrap business rates and replace them with a system which is fit for purpose and which levels the playing field between bricks and mortar businesses and online retail giants.
- (ii) To note that the council is planning to adopt a comprehensive package of Article 4 Directions to protect local shops and small businesses across the borough.
- (iii) To write to the Government to set out our case for Article 4 Directions in Islington and set out our broader concerns about Class MA rights and ask for them to be abolished.
- (iv) To campaign to devolve funds like the Towns Fund, Levelling Up Fund, UK Shared Prosperity Fund and other national funding pots, to give local communities, councils and regions the ultimate say in how it is spent in their area.
- (v) To explore what further local action can be taken to revive our high streets.
- (vi) To make full use of s215 planning enforcement powers where empty units are attracting antisocial behaviour or creating an eyesore on the high street – and name and shame those premises which don't do their bit and are regularly subject to enforcement.

Motion 3: No to live facial recognition in Islington

Councillor Kay moved the motion. Councillor Jackson seconded.

Councillor Russell contributed to the debate. Councillor Kay exercised their right of reply.

The motion was put to a vote and CARRIED.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To call for an immediate stop to the use of LFR surveillance in Islington.
- (ii) To take no steps to acquire LFR technology anywhere in Islington.
- (iii) To not allow LFR systems to be applied to any personal data for which Islington Council is the data controller.
- (iv) To ask the Executive Member for Community Safety to write to the Mayor of London to ask that the Metropolitan Police, Transport for London and the other agencies he is responsible for to refrain from using LFR technology within Islington.

Motion 4: Retrofit over demolitions

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

Councillor Champion moved an amendment to the motion.

Councillor Klute and O'Sullivan contributed to the debate. Councillor Champion exercised their right of reply on the amendment. Councillor Hamdache exercised their right of reply on the substantive motion.

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

RESOLVED:

- (i) To continue to require developers to undertake a retrofit first approach as set out in our planning policies and the London Plan;
- (ii) To work with the Mayor of London for stronger benchmarks on Whole Life Carbon in the London Plan;
- (iii) To work with the Mayor and government for third party audits of Whole Life Carbon Assessments to be mandatory;
- (iv) To continue the council's carbon literacy training for relevant staff and councillors;
- (v) To work with the government for national standards on whole life carbon and a removal of VAT for the retrofit of buildings.

Motion 5: Addressing the Housing Crisis

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

Councillor Ward moved an amendment to the motion.

Councillor O'Halloran and Hayes contributed to the debate. Councillor Ward exercised their right of reply on the amendment. Councillor Russell exercised their right of reply on the substantive motion.

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

REOLVED:

- (i) To call on the new Labour government to:
 - Give powers to the Mayor of London to work with councils, renters and landlords on a rent commission to address escalating rents and to work up a plan for rent controls in London.
 - Grant the Mayor of London the powers to scrap or suspend Right to Buy
 - Initiate a new renter's reform bill that scraps no fault evictions and gives tenants more rights in their homes.
 - Create a new funding formula for new homes.
 - Get the 28 empties 3 and 4 bedroom homes at Wellington Mews back into use as genuinely affordable homes for local families.

The meeting closed at 9.00 pm

MAYOR