

LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON

COUNCIL MEETING - 9 JULY 2020

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

At the virtual meeting of the Council held via Zoom on 9 July 2020 at 7.00 pm.

Councillors present:

Ismail (Mayor)	Heather	Poole
Bell-Bradford	Hull	Poyser
Burgess	Hyde	Russell
Caluori	Jeapes	Shaikh
Chapman	Kay	Smith
Clarke	Khondoker	Spall
Clarke-Perry	Khurana	Turan
Convery	Lukes	Ward
Cutler	Mackmurdie	Watts
Debono	Nathan	Webbe
Gallagher	Ngongo	Williamson
Gantly	O'Halloran	Woolf
Gill	O'Sullivan	
Graham	Picknell	

The Mayor (Councillor Rakhia Ismail) in the Chair

102 MINUTES

RESOLVED:

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 27 February 2020 and the Awards Council meeting held on 12 March 2020 be agreed as a correct record and the Mayor be authorised to sign them.

103 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

104 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

(i) Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received on behalf of Councillors Hamitouche, Klute, Comer-Schwartz, Wayne, Champion and Chowdhury.

(ii) Order of Business

No changes were proposed to the order of business.

(iii) Declaration of Discussion Items

None.

(iv) Mayor's Announcements

The Mayor led the Council in a minute's silence as a mark of respect for former councillor Wally Burgess, former Mayor Anna Berent, and former Mayoress Jean Trotter who had all recently passed away.

The Mayor also expressed her shock at the shooting of a young man on Roman Way the previous week and said her thoughts were with the family of the victim.

The Mayor paid tribute to all of the Council and NHS staff who were working hard to support local people during this pandemic. Their efforts to keep us safe were heroic and the Mayor was proud of the local response to coronavirus. The Mayor also thanked the community and voluntary sector, who worked tirelessly to support the most vulnerable people in our borough.

The Mayor said that Covid-19 had affected all aspects of our lives, and the mayoralty was no different. Since March almost all mayoral engagements had been cancelled, and the Mayor had to adapt to working virtually. The Mayor had taken part in a number of virtual events, including events to mark V.E. Day, Refugee Week and Windrush Day.

Thankfully, some important events had been held recently, albeit in a socially distanced way, as some of the lockdown restrictions had eased. The Mayor said it was an honour to attend the Armed Forces Day flag raising at the Town Hall last month. The Mayor was proud to be able to show support to our veterans, who are such an important part of the local community.

The Mayor also attended a small gathering outside the Town Hall to take a knee for the Black Lives Matter movement. This movement highlighted the racial inequalities and injustices in our society and the Mayor welcomed that Motions on these issues would be discussed at this evening's meeting.

Finally, the Mayor noted the third anniversary of the Finsbury Park Terror Attack. The Mayor would never forget how our communities came together after the awful attack; we must never allow those who want to spread hate to divide us.

(v) Length of speeches

The Mayor reminded all councillors to keep within the permitted length of speeches.

105 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Cllr Watts thanked the Mayor and thanked the many members of the public who were in attendance at the first virtual Full Council meeting.

Cllr Watts said his thoughts were with the many people across the borough who had been affected by the pandemic, especially those who had lost loved ones in such horrible circumstances.

Cllr Watts passed on his condolences to the families of former Mayor Anna Berent and former Mayor Consort Jean Trotter, who both gave so much to the communities of Islington. Cllr Watts also paid special tribute to former councillor Wally Burgess, a friend and respected colleague, and husband of Cllr Janet Burgess, who sadly passed away in early April.

Cllr Watts also commented on the awful shooting of a young man on Roman Way the previous week and said his thoughts were with the family of the victim.

Cllr Watts said the current crisis was extremely challenging, but he had never been prouder to represent such a fantastic community. Mutual aid organisations had formed across the borough and the borough's community centres had been transformed into food distribution hubs. Community organisations, faith groups, Arsenal FC and others had all worked to make sure that everyone in the borough was supported. Cllr Watts also thanked the public service staff and key workers who had sacrificed so much to keep us safe, keep vital services running, and care for those who need it.

Cllr Watts said that the crisis was far from over and the top priority of the council was keeping everyone safe. However, Cllr Watts said that the government continued to let local people down by failing our care homes and frontline staff, failing to take meaningful action to tackle systemic racism, and failing to support local councils.

106 PETITIONS

Cllr Gary Heather presented a petition in objection to the planning proposals submitted in relation to Nag's Head Covered Market.

Pamela Jouven presented a petition calling for the implementation of a low traffic neighbourhood in the Highbury area.

Helena Farstad presented a petition calling on the council not to remove planters installed by residents in a parking space in Mayton Street.

107 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

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

The Mayon street traffic improvement project - as documented in the Finsbury Park community plan - was consulted on through autumn last year and finally approved by the residents in early December 2019. Since then, a senior officer from the Traffic & Engineering team at Islington Council, confirmed that the scheme, that will stop motor vehicles, vans, and lorries using Mayton street as a rat run, leading to illegal levels of pollution in this residential street, was expected to be implemented by the end of that financial year (April 5th 2020).

On the 20th March there was still no date communicated for the scheme and a string of correspondence commenced raising concerns that due to the developments of the Covid-19 pandemic we might experience delays in the implementation. A response from the senior traffic officer was received on the 24th March that confirmed this concern, and we are now, albeit several written requests, repeatedly told that we need to wait for further information.

Lockdown is now easing, meaning traffic is increasing, and our street is rapidly returning to the unsafe, polluted, and noisy cut through that we so intently campaigned for with invaluable support from our local ward councillor, Cllr Heather. In a public health crisis, that is Air Pollution, augmented by the Covid-19 pandemic, we do not have the luxury of time and our patience has run out.

I therefore found it very difficult to celebrate the recent announcement of the conversion of St Peter's Ward, becoming a Low Traffic Neighbourhood during the first weeks of July, when 'our scheme', signed off last year, is still without a date.

Please can the Councillor explain how she thinks this is acceptable, why the Mayton street traffic improvement project and our health & safety is not seen as priority and confirm when we will receive a date for implementation of the scheme?

As Cllr Champion was not present the question was answered by Cllr Watts:

Thank you Helena for your question and I am pleased to hear about the strong support for the planned improvements for Mayton Street. This reflects the feedback from the public consultation that we carried out in the area late last year. I'd also like to thank the Finsbury Park councillors for driving forward these plans, and their commitment to improving the area for everyone, in the local community.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 public health emergency all engineering schemes were suspended at the end of March 2020 when we had intended to implement the

changes at Mayton Street. In line with guidance on social distancing, it was unsafe to continue to implement schemes where social distancing could not be adhered to.

As you have hopefully been made aware, the works to deliver the changes at Mayton Street will now be carried out next month, between 10 August and 15 August 2020.

Together with other initiatives being delivered across the borough as part of our people-friendly streets programme, the changes at Mayton Street will improve local streets and make it easier and safer for people to walk, cycle and use wheelchairs, buggies and scooters.

Supplementary question:

Thank you. Could you please tell us more about the People Friendly Streets proposals for the Nag's Head area?

Response:

Thank you. Design work is being carried out and we will share details with councillors and other key stakeholders in due course.

Question (b) from Roderik Gonggrijp to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development:

At the Community Plan for Holloway public meeting in the St George's church on March 7, you promised a genuine co-production consultation process for the Holloway Prison redevelopment. Given the disruption of the coronavirus crisis and the lockdown do you believe that the three week Peabody consultation, closing 3rd July, has been a genuine co-production' process with all the communities affected?

Response:

Thank you for your question. As you know, Islington Council is committed to ensuring everyone has a genuinely affordable, decent place to call home.

Holloway Prison site is a major step towards realising our ambition. That is why the Council adopted a supplementary planning document, to ensure the delivery of the maximum amount of high-quality, genuinely affordable homes, for local people.

Peabody has publicly committed to delivering 60% affordable housing. The council will seek to hold Peabody to account to ensure that this housing is genuinely affordable.

Whilst supporting a high density scheme, the council also wants to ensure that the scheme provides high quality homes for future residents with access to high quality outdoor space. The scheme must also be considerate of its impact on the surrounding area and be properly integrated into the local community so that it feels and operates as a natural extension of the area.

To do this, Peabody must undertake genuine and meaningful consultation with local people.

You are aware that, unfortunately, it is not up to me or Islington Council to carry out this consultation, however I have repeatedly called on Peabody to honour their promises of a co-production approach that fully engages local residents in drawing up and developing plans for the site. I have also stressed the importance of consulting with groups that are often under-represented in the planning process.

As you are aware, the scheme is currently at the pre-application stage, and we are expecting a planning application in autumn 2020.

Unfortunately the Covid-19 crisis has had a big impact on how local people have been able to have their say on the scheme, which is why I requested Peabody to extend the deadline of the current consultation, which you mentioned. I am pleased that on the back of my request, Peabody have confirmed that the consultation did not close on the 3rd July and will remain open. I also welcome their promise of at least one further round of public consultation before the planning application is submitted.

We will continue to promote the consultation to ensure all local people to have a chance to have their say on the site, and will continue to press for meaningful consultation from Peabody and look forward to the delivery of many desperately needed genuinely affordable homes for local people.

Supplementary Question:

The scheme is intended to include a dedicated Women's Building however I understand that this may now be incorporated into another building. Do you genuinely believe that that key stakeholders, including women's groups, are being fully consulted on proposals for the building, including if the Women's Building is freestanding, or an allocation of space within another building?

Response:

In short, yes. The scheme is subject to extensive consultation and very comprehensive engagement is being carried out. I encourage all groups with an interest in the scheme to take part in the consultation.

There are several examples in the borough of fantastic community facilities with council flats above and, once the rules are relaxed, I'd encourage you to visit those to see how it works.

Question (c) from Ernestas Jegorovas to Cllr Comer-Schwartz, Executive Member for Children, Schools and Families:

This year's Children's Services Scrutiny Committee reported that BAME (Black Caribbean) students were significantly underachieving compared to their fellow students at the end of KS4. What are your plans to academically support BAME students going forward?

As Cllr Comer-Schwartz was not present the question was answered by Cllr Watts:

Thank you for your question. I also want to thank the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee for carrying out proper scrutiny, to help us tackle the current underachieving of Black Caribbean students at Key Stage 4 when compared to their peers.

We know that too many people of colour, specifically Black people, suffer from racial injustice and deep inequality in all parts of society, including in the education system.

In Islington, we are committed to delivering the best possible start in life for every child in the borough. This means that no matter what race, class or background a child comes from, they should have access to a world-class education and support network.

We have begun to implement many of the recommendations from the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee, including specific work undertaken by the Equalities group. We have developed a dedicated action plan to improve achievement among children from BAME communities. This will be used as a basis for schools to make decisive changes and ensure that BAME children, specifically Black Caribbean children aren't left behind.

Over the previous academic year, focused work by schools narrowed the gap between Black Caribbean boys and the average attainment considerably but there is still more to do - we must eliminate any gap entirely.

We also know that this is about wider diversity and representation in the education system.

I fully support the calls to Government from the National Education Union for increased diversity in the teaching profession, changes to the curriculum and a proper commitment to equip all trainee teachers with anti-racist strategies, across the UK. Locally, we are already supporting schools to carry out a range of continuing Professional Development activities for teachers, leaders and governors, including unconscious bias training.

Whilst the government don't see this as an issue, we know it affects too many children in our borough. Sadly, if the last few months have taught us anything, it's that we can't wait for the Government to take any meaningful action, which is why

we will press on with implementing the remaining recommendations from Children's Scrutiny.

Supplementary Question:

Supplementary schools have a key role to play. What support is being provided to them?

Response:

I would like to pay tribute to our supplementary schools and I am proud of our borough's supplementary schools provision. I am proud of the support provided through our budget in February and I have asked officers in Children's Services to work with supplementary school to see if we can identify further support for them.

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

In light of the Secretary of State for Transport's statutory guidance to local authorities of 9 May 2020 to "make significant changes to their road layouts to give more space to cyclists and pedestrians", please would the Executive Member provide the following information: (a) the changes to road layouts in Islington already implemented as a response to this guidance; (b) details of further planned changes to road layouts (and the expected dates of implementation); (c) a timetable for the response to the Islington Commonplace consultation on People Friendly Streets.

As Cllr Champion was not present the question was answered by Cllr Watts:

Thank you for your question. At the Council, we are proud of the work we are already undertaking to make our streets friendlier and make walking, cycling and using a buggy or wheelchair safer and easier.

The Council's top priority throughout this crisis is keeping everyone in our borough safe and that is why we have already taken a number of steps and actions to introduce temporary measures to aid social distancing around shops and schools. This includes widening footways with temporary barriers at locations outside shops across the borough including on Liverpool Road, Highbury Barn, Green Lanes, Camden Passage, Chapel Market and on Stroud Green Road and supporting changes to Transport for London's roads. Temporary barriers have also been introduced to aid social distancing at 11 schools so far with more to follow soon.

The council has an ambitious people-friendly streets programme to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and ensure we make positive, permanent changes that will see our streets become friendlier, safer and healthier. Islington's people-friendly streets will create more space to make it easier to walk safely, cycle as part of everyday life, use buggies or wheelchairs, and crossroads. I am pleased to say that works on the first Low Traffic Neighbourhood in St Peter's are soon to be completed, an important milestone in our people-friendly streets programme.

The St Peter's scheme has been installed on a trial basis until next summer, when residents will be consulted on keeping the changes. More people-friendly streets neighbourhoods are set to be introduced in the Canonbury, Highbury, Clerkenwell, Nags Head, and St Mary's areas by the autumn.

Today we have made a bold announcement that we will be accelerating the delivery of our school streets programme. This means that the number of School Streets in the borough will triple by the end of the year to 39.

In response to Covid-19 crisis and the reduced capacity and demand for public transport, we recognise the urgent need to create safe cycling routes across the borough. Therefore, we will also be introducing new segregated cycleways on main roads in the coming weeks and months.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you, that is good to hear. One silver lining of the current situation is the improvements to the natural environment. We cannot afford to return to the levels of pollution we had before. Can you commit that we will not return to the pre-crisis levels of traffic and pollution?

Response:

The current situation has limited the capacity of London's public transport network and without action we are at risk of traffic being worse than pre-crisis levels. I'd like to pay tribute to Cllr Champion for her work on the People Friendly Streets scheme. TFL are responsible for public transport and the major roads in the borough, but we are doing our bit to make sure that our streets are friendlier for pedestrians and cyclists.

Question (e) from Talia Hussain to Cllr Shaikh, Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs:

As a student, I'm very fortunate to have library access through my university and, crucially, internet and a computer that I can use at home. However, councillors will know that many less fortunate residents in the borough rely on local libraries for internet access, printing, book lending and other services. Wisely, the council chose to close libraries at the beginning of the Covid-19 outbreak. However, I wonder what plans the council is now considering for partial re-opening so that residents who rely on libraries can access their vital services?

Response:

Thank you for your question, Talia. I'd also like to thank you for highlighting that Libraries are a key resource and community hub for so many Islington residents, and for given me the opportunity to say on record, how incredibly proud that, despite a decade of Tory Austerity, our Labour-run council has protected all of them.

Many local people, including myself, have missed Islington's fantastic libraries and we look forward to re-opening them as soon as it is safe to do so, for the sake of our staff and our library users. Our safety first approach will involve very gradually re-introducing services, in a limited number of locations over a period of several weeks.

We have 10 library buildings, all of which present different challenges and which may require adaptations to operate safely. Detailed planning is now underway to prepare our buildings and our staff. A safe, phased approach will commence by inviting library users to return their books. There are over 11,000 items out on loan, all of which when returned, will be quarantined for 72 hours. We will then commence a click and collect service, again from a limited number of locations, to enable residents to take out new titles. Once we have click and collect safely underway, we will re-commence some public PC access, again from a limited number of locations and for limited periods of time.

I know how important access to free study space is, this is going to be limited because of the requirement for social distancing. However we are planning to make available study space at some of our largest libraries after we have safely restored public access to PCs.

I know our library service will be different as a result of our efforts to keep everyone safe. At the same time, we will continue with online books, newspapers and magazines which have proved very popular during lockdown, and I'm delighted to say we are re-commencing the Home Library Service.

I would also like to personally thank our libraries staff who were re-deployed during lockdown to staff the We Are Islington help desk, those that undertook wellbeing calls to our vulnerable residents, and for the rapid shift to online ways of operating, to stay engaged with our residents.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you for your detailed response. A lot of people rely on libraries for internet access and other computer services. Can you tell me more about the plans to restore public access to PCs?

Response:

We are planning to restore access to some PCs in August. Those wishing to use them will need to book a time and they will be cleaned after use. As things improve, we hope to make more available. Further detail will be available soon.

The Mayor advised that the 30 minutes allocated for question from the public had expired and that all remaining questions would receive a written response.

Question (f) from Lucy Facer to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport

Islington Clean Air Parents are impressed with the leadership and speed Islington Council are showing in their implementation of People Friendly Streets that will create low traffic neighbourhoods across half of Islington within a year. Please could the council comment on how they will communicate the positive effects of people friendly streets to the wider community?

Response:

Thank you for your question. I am pleased to hear that Islington Clean Air Parents are supporting the council's people-friendly streets programme and our commitment to deliver them in a third of the borough by the end of the year, with other neighbourhoods set to benefit soon after.

Implementing people friendly streets will have benefits for everyone including making the air we breathe cleaner, increasing road safety and reducing noise caused by motor traffic. Friendlier local streets are more enjoyable to spend time in and make it easier for people to walk and cycle to work, school, local businesses and to other places, with considerable health and environmental benefits as a result.

These benefits will also be communicated to residents in a variety of ways. We will write to all residents, as we did in St Peter's recently, prior to the implementation of each people-friendly streets neighbourhood. The council's people-friendly streets web page will be regularly updated with new information and we will continue to use social media, local press and council publications to communicate with residents.

Making our streets more people-friendly is a huge step towards achieving our ambition to make our borough a fairer place for all. That is why our hardworking councillors will continue to communicate with all of our residents and local community groups about how we are tackling the issues the matter most to them.

We'll continue to use all the communication channels available to us to showcase the positive case studies and stories in local press and to show the positive impact of these changes. We will also continue to work with local community groups, to help deliver this message to everyone in our borough.

Question (g) from Kate Pothalingam to Cllr Gill, Executive Member for Finance and Performance

In light of the articles in the Islington Gazette of 10 June and 15 June, please would the Executive Member provide the following information:

- (a) the number of agency workers employed by Islington Borough Council in 2019 and 2020;
- (b) the daily rates paid to agency workers during this period;
- (c) the total cost to the Council of employing agency workers in 2019 and 2020;

(d) the steps being taken to reduce the costs of agency workers.

Response:

Islington Council is committed to recruiting permanent staff at all levels, wherever possible. We sometimes use agency and interim workers during periods of recruitment to ensure we can continue to provide the same excellent service local people deserve while vacancies are filled. All agency workers we employ contribute a valuable service throughout their time at the Council and we are grateful to them.

To answer your questions in full, in the financial year 2018/19, the Council employed an average of 505 agency workers per month and in 2019/20, employed an average of 504 agency workers per month. The average daily pay rate for agency workers during the period was £142.73 and the total cost to the Council was £20.95m in 2018/19 and £23.8m in 2019/20.

Despite, ten years of austerity - the council has been committed to protecting vital services local people need and managing our budgets to allow us to invest in the issues that matter most to local people.

We remain committed to further reduce the cost of agency workers to the Council and are already taking a number of steps to achieve this, including supporting departments to convert temporary staff into permanent employees with our 'temp to perm' guidance. We recruited a new Corporate Director for Resources earlier this year and we are now recruiting for a new Head of HR to improve our recruitment processes.

Question (h) from Devon Osborne to Cllr Watts, Leader of the Council

The Prime Minister has said that part of tackling a second wave of corona virus infections would be handled on a council level. Public health officials for other councils have begun to make suggestions and plans on how this could be done effectively. What plans has Islington Borough Council in place for a second wave?

Response:

As Leader of Islington Council, my top priority is keeping local people safe during this crisis. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council has and will continue to do everything it can to control the spread of the virus in Islington, providing support to those who need it and keeping vital services running safely. Supporting our communities, local businesses and organisations to put in place measures to prevent infection, reduce the risk of transmission and follow public health guidance, has been a core principle guiding and underpinning our response to date.

As restrictions on daily life are eased, it is critical that we have robust local systems and arrangements in place for preventing, rapidly responding to and controlling COVID-19 outbreaks. Timely testing and effective contact tracing will be key to reducing transmission of the virus and protecting lives during this next phase.

Demonstrating the critical role of Local Government in the response to COVID-19, Islington Council has developed a COVID-19 Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan, which sets out the systems we have established, in collaboration with our partners, to enable us to prevent and contain the spread of the virus in our borough and to investigate, manage and control local outbreaks, with a focus on our part in the testing and tracing system.

The plan outlines how the Council will continue to play a key role, working in partnership with health protection colleagues at Public Health England (PHE) London, in providing advice and support to a range of settings and communities, helping them to put in place measures to prevent infection, and investigating and managing outbreaks whilst remaining connected to key partners to ensure we deploy the necessary resources and interventions needed to contain any outbreaks that occur.

As we move forward, we will continue to deliver a 'whole area' response to COVID-19 in Islington, working closely with our partners and local organisations to ensure we all play our part in preventing the spread of COVID-19, and mitigating wider community impacts. This includes supporting local organisations and businesses to become 'COVID secure' and operate safely in accordance with Government guidance.

Connecting and engaging with our diverse communities and providing practical support to those who need it is a key part of our plan. The Council has an important role to play in ensuring that local communities have the knowledge and awareness of what to do if they develop symptoms of COVID-19, or are informed that they have been in close contact with someone who has tested positive. We will use a wide range of communication methods including social media and newsletters, amongst others, to ensure that all our residents have equal access to public health information and advice.

Nationally and locally, COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted certain population groups, in particular older people and people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds. We are committed to doing all we can to protect these individuals and groups and prevent and mitigate against any further disproportionate impacts of COVID-19 itself and the measures necessary to control its spread.

Further detail on the Council's response is set out in the Outbreak Prevention and Control Plan, which can be accessed in full on our website.

Question (i) from Miriam Ashwell to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport

Parks and greenspaces have been absolutely vital to Islington residents during the Coronavirus lockdown. We would like to thank the Council and Greenspace for keeping Islington's parks open, and commend their staff for their hard work in difficult circumstances. However, there has been a significant problem with litter in recent weeks as lockdown eases, which has upset many residents, and action is needed against those who abuse our parks by leaving litter, dog-mess, and

damaged/burnt patches of grass. Local people have been litter-picking but our parks need your help.

Given the evidence that litter attracts more litter, antisocial behaviour, and crime, will Islington Borough Council increase anti-littering education and posters, and take action to address antisocial behaviours; and given the difficult financial situation, could the Council consider increasing fines and enforcement including patrols on sunny days and evenings?

Measures used in other cities include requiring repeat offenders to carry out litter-picking, and there have been good results from apps that share the fines with people who submit evidence of litterers via the app.

Response:

Thank you for your question and for recognising the incredible work our staff have done to keep our parks open and safe.

In Islington, 80% of our residents live in flats and outdoor areas are the only spaces our residents can meet others while social distancing, it has created levels of pressure on these spaces that we have never previously experienced. During this crisis, our parks and greenspaces have been absolutely vital to the health and well-being of the community, especially for the many residents who do not have access to private outdoor space. While it has been great to see so many people enjoying our parks, a small minority unfortunately have used them in an anti-social way.

We have modified our services to try to manage these challenges, including by putting on additional late evening litter collection services, had teams working overtime and diverted horticultural teams to clean litter first thing each morning so our parks are litter free again as early as possible each day. Despite this hard work, we accept that at times parks have had some significant short-term issues with litter. This is where we need the park users to do their part by not littering and taking their waste home with them if bins are full.

Our Parks Service is working with our Communications Team to improve the signage in our parks and doing a social media campaign to highlight the issue of litter and for users to do their bit. We do have staff that can enforce fines for littering and the current penalty is £100 which we feel is a significant penalty. However, as Council resources as stretched at present, many of our officers are tasked with enforcing social distancing across the borough.

I do however agree that the levels of irresponsible and anti-social behaviour cannot be condoned in the long term and I will be asking officers to look at this issue and take stronger action to deal with this challenges you have raised.

Question (j) from Chris Radway to Cllr Watts, Leader of the Council:

We can all be proud that Islington has the lowest cumulative rate of lab-confirmed Covid cases in London, and I would like to praise the Council for its role in this achievement. But now, as we come out of the Covid crisis, we need to consider the unique opportunity it gives us to “build back better” in implementing a green recovery.

So I would like to ask how, in tackling the climate emergency, the Council plans to learn from the Covid crisis and exploit the many behavioural, awareness and policy changes it has brought us - from community self-help and homeworking, to massive state intervention and support by government.

Response:

I agree that we can be very proud of our borough’s record during the Covid-19 pandemic but we can’t let our guard down now. It is through the dedication of local people, our key workers and health partners that we have been able to keep Covid-19 cases low. Islington residents have kept to the guidelines, keeping themselves and everyone else safe, despite conflicting and confusing guidance given out by the Government.

I completely agree that we must not return to the status quo and the society we had before the pandemic. We know that things will not return back to, so-called, ‘normal’ anytime soon, if ever, and we must make changes now to ensure our borough is in the best place possible to succeed going forward.

The Covid crisis has brought more public attention to what Islington Labour already knows: that our country has deep inequalities and unfairness hardwired into it. The recent PHE report on the structural inequalities in Covid impact – including the disproportionate impact on BAME communities – highlights this. Our mission since 2010 has been to make our borough a fairer place. The need for this has never been clearer.

A key part of our approach to building back better is taking forward our plans for a green, sustainable economy that both promotes jobs, skills and economic opportunity while taking us towards a net zero-carbon future.

The council’s initial response to the climate emergency is set out in our Net Zero strategy, which is currently out for consultation on the council’s website. The final version will take into account any comments received, and we will also use the consultation phase as an opportunity to review the strategy in light of the COVID crisis, which will include looking at how we can make permanent any temporary changes that have been beneficial from an environmental perspective.

A key element in terms of, as you say, “building back better in implementing a green recovery” is the Council’s people-friendly streets programme, aimed at creating more space to make it easier to walk safely, cycle as part of everyday life, use buggies or

wheelchairs, and crossroads. Our people-friendly streets programme will see measures to reduce through-traffic in residential areas, accelerate the delivery of School Streets and new cycleways we plan to implement will change the face of our borough for the better, making Islington a safer, friendlier and healthier place to live, work and travel.

We will learn from this crisis, and continue to work to make Islington a fairer place for all, but this is made increasingly harder by this government's failure to support local councils like Islington. I couldn't agree more with you that to achieve a better Islington, we need massive state intervention and support from government, which is why I'm pleased to be bringing a motion later this evening, calling on the government to do just that.

Question (k) from Rachael Swynnerton to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport

Islington is a densely populated urban location with the least green space of any borough. At this time we are seeing huge pressure on those vitally important green spaces for the whole community. With playgrounds and many schools remaining closed until the end of term, followed by a long summer break, what measures are the council putting in place to allow for more playstreets across the borough to allow children access to car-free areas to play safely?

Response:

Thank you for your question. As you rightly point out, Islington is a densely populated borough, and many of children and their families living in the borough do not have access to private green space.

As a Council, we are committed to making Islington the best possible place for all young people to grow up, and that must include ensuring all children have the space to play.

That is why we fully support and welcome applications for Play Streets in the borough that allow communities to close roads to traffic and create a space for play and community interaction on a regular basis, whether that be on a weekly basis or monthly. There are currently 17 Play Streets in Islington and you can find more information about Play Streets and how to make an application through the Council website.

Unfortunately, in line with current COVID-19 guidance, Play Streets have been suspended on a temporary basis. However, we are processing applications for the future so that communities can hold Play Streets as soon as the restrictions are lifted.

As you will hopefully be aware, central government has issued revised guidance on the re-opening of playgrounds, including safety measures to minimise the risk of spreading the virus, which council staff are working hard to implement, to provide more space for all our children and young people to play.

108 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

Question (a) from Cllr Heather to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Housing and Development:

A maintenance problem has been ongoing concerning the security gates at Haden Court in Finsbury Park Ward for longer than I care to remember - but certainly since January 2017. I have raised this matter with council officers as a problem on many occasions previously - but it is still not resolved.

Not only must this problem be an enormous inconvenience to residents, and compromise their security and safety, but it must also be costing someone a fortune – and I sincerely hope that is not residents or the council. For these reasons we really need to get this problem fixed once and for all. Can you therefore please look into this matter and report back to me on your findings.

Response

Thank you Cllr Heather for your question, and for continuing to be a true community champion for the residents of Haden Court by bringing this matter to my attention. As part of our commitment to make sure everyone in our borough has a decent, safe and genuinely affordable home, when issues arise, we must respond in a timely way. As you know, whilst we have made good progress to improve the number of repairs completed first time, which now 87% - we are committed to increasing that rate, so that local people are not unnecessarily, inconvenienced by faults in their home or communal areas.

The security gate at Haden Court has unfortunately required considerably more repairs than would be expected given its age and it has also been upgraded following changes in the regulations governing automated gates. The amount of work needed has been compounded by repeated vandalism.

Council officers report that the gate is now working without issue. As we strive to do better, it's important that we learn from past mistakes. I have asked council officers to look at the specific issues on the Haden Court security gate, and learn the lessons so this does not happen again. We will continue to monitor its operation and if further issues arise we will consider putting it into a programme of planned works so it can be replaced with a stronger mechanism, with more security features.

Supplementary question

This issue has been ongoing since 2017 and the gate has needed to be fixed many times. Who is responsible for the cost of that, and how much money has been spent on this? The council should be a champion of efficiency and we need to learn from such issues.

Response

I agree that the situation has not been acceptable and we need to put it right. I'm had to say that the council is responsible for the cost of the works and I will get the exact figure for how much has been spent on this. There are lessons to be learnt.

Question (b) from Cllr Clarke-Perry to Cllr Burgess, Executive Member for Health and Social Care

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance and value of vaccinations. Pre-COVID-19, the MMR vaccine rate had fallen to dangerously low levels in Islington children. How is the Council addressing this?

Response

I couldn't agree more that this crisis has highlighted how important vaccines are which is why Islington Council is clear that immunisation is the safest way to protect children from serious diseases.

Unfortunately, we expect that rates of immunisation have fallen further during the pandemic but do not yet have local data for this period. London-wide data suggests that there has been a 25% drop in vaccinations to babies under age 1 across London. The latest published data showed that 86% of Islington children have had a single dose of MMR vaccine by age 5, and 68% of children have also had the recommended booster dose by age 5. The reasons for an expected reduction during the coronavirus period include parental fear at accessing healthcare, not wanting to burden the NHS, and a perception that services (including primary care) are not open for normal business.

As a council, we are committed to making our borough the best possible place for all children and young people to grow up, that must include doing everything we can to ensure children are vaccinated. We have already taken a number of measures to address the low levels of vaccinations in Islington, including encouraging parents and carers to continue to access healthcare, immunisations in particular, by using a number of communication channels including daily messaging to the 300 young families who receive the Bright Start, Bright Ideas e-newsletter, several adverts in the local press and Islington Life, and ensuring primary care providers are promoting routine vaccinations.

We are also working with the CCG quality improvement support (QIST) team to improve uptake by pro-active calling/reminders that vaccinations are due, creating guidance for practice staff in effective discussions with those who are "vaccine hesitant" and providing quicker, easier ways of administering vaccines to minimise close contact time. In the longer term, a local immunisation board is commencing in July, set up by the CCG to support delivery of all routine vaccinations. This will bring together local health partners to work collectively to improve uptake of early childhood vaccinations which will include greater access to reliable data, to help

understanding variation across local geographies and communities, and take meaningful action.

Supplementary question

Thank you. The 25% decrease is concerning. Vaccines can sometimes be the subject of “fake news”; how can our public health messaging counter fake news?

Response

Fake news about medical issues is shocking and concerning. We need to continue to publicise the facts the importance of vaccinations. We will be writing to the government about this issue.

Question (c) from Cllr Russell to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment and Transport:

The ongoing need for physical distancing due to the coronavirus crisis has reduced public transport capacity to just a sixth of capacity before lockdown. This means our streets are having to work harder than ever to provide space for walking and cycling as we live our increasingly local lives. Can you provide an update on your plans for low traffic neighbourhoods and the timetable for implementation?

As Cllr Champion was not present the question was answered by Cllr Watts:

Thank you for your question. We are making massive progress on this issue. The Council is listening to local people and working hard to make streets across the borough friendlier for everyone, particularly children, young people and those who are vulnerable. Islington’s people-friendly streets will create more space to make it easier to walk safely, cycle as part of everyday life, use buggies or wheelchairs, and cross roads. The measures already being introduced will create more space for pedestrians and cyclists and allow people to travel safely around their local neighbourhood. The council will create Low Traffic Neighbourhoods by installing simple and cost-effective measures such as bollards, planters and smart cameras.

Our people-friendly streets won’t just make walking and cycling easier, help to eliminate road danger and create more space for social distancing, they will also help us to improve air quality, reduce emissions and make progress towards our ambitious goal of achieving a net-zero carbon borough by 2030.

Work on the people-friendly streets neighbourhood in St Peter’s started on Friday 3 July and was completed today. The people-friendly streets neighbourhood in St Peter’s is the first of its kind in Islington, and more people-friendly streets neighbourhoods are set to be introduced in the Canonbury, Highbury, Clerkenwell, Nags Head, and St Mary’s areas by the autumn.

People-friendly streets is a borough-wide programme and we intend to make interventions in every neighbourhood in the borough. I’d like to thank residents

across Islington who have already had their say using the council's common place map, and encourage everyone to tell us how we can make their streets more people-friendly.

Supplementary question

The council is working at astonishing pace to introduce these and they will bring real benefits, please pass on my thanks to Cllr Champion.

Islington has very little green space and this could be addressed by introducing parklets across the borough. Unfortunately the process for introducing parklets is not straightforward, particularly in terms of public liability insurance and so on. Can we work together to make the parklet process as simple and easy as possible?

Response

Thank you. I will pass this back to Cllr Champion to look into further.

Question (d) from Cllr Russell to Cllr Shaikh, Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs:

The coronavirus crisis has created a huge disruption to economic activity across London. It is becoming clear that many workers are going to be expected to continue mainly working from home if they can, due to the impact of the requirement for physical distancing on both public transport capacity and in workspaces. What are your plans to provide support for these new islington-based home workers?

Response

Thank you for your question. As a council, our top priority is keeping people safe during the pandemic. That's why we'll continue to encourage the mass continuation of home-working until it is safe for the majority of workers to return to offices and use public transport.

At the start of this crisis the government told us the virus did not discriminate. This could not be further from the truth. Unfortunately, while many of our residents have been able to work from home comfortably, at the same time protecting themselves from the virus, many of our less well-off residents in lower paid jobs have been unable to work from home, facing an impossible choice and having to choose between protecting their and their family's health or having enough money to eat. Even for people who have been able to work from home, we know this has been more challenging for some than for others, particularly those without access to Wi-Fi, living in overcrowded accommodation and with caring responsibilities in the home. At the point of lockdown, the Conservative Government and employers assumed that all workers would have home Wi-Fi.

For many local people, this was simply not the case - there are an estimated 1.9 million households across the UK with no internet access and rely on pay-as-you-go

data. This crisis has clearly shown just how out of touch with ordinary people the Tory government are. However, whilst the Tories may only recognise the needs of the privileged few, Islington Council is here to help and support every residents that needs it.

That's why we have targeted use of the Government's discretionary fund to ensure the survival of our network of independent co-working spaces in the borough. As these spaces begin to open up safely, they will provide alternative local venues for workers to use space out of the home and access good Wi-Fi, without having to travel on public transport. As I outlined earlier, we are also working to re-open our local libraries, as venues where people can safely and affordably access good connectivity; however public safety in libraries is our primary concern and there remain logistical issues to be resolved. We have worked closely with Mutual Aid groups to promote local businesses who have provided services throughout this crisis, including introducing home workers to a range of services that they may require, such as printing services, which are provided locally.

Finally, we are actively investigating funding opportunities to improve broadband and fibre connectivity across the borough. As part of the Council's new Local Plan, we are planning for world class connectivity in new developments to help local people and businesses take advantage of digital opportunities. As government announces funding for infrastructure programmes, we will ensure that the Council makes a compelling bid for support, working closely with the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan.

Supplementary question

Thank you, that is good to hear. As well as access to Wi-Fi, I am also concerned about the number of people living in cramped or overcrowded accommodation, having to work from their bedroom, when it really isn't a suitable working environment. Will you consider a scheme where local people can apply to work in a council building where there is access to a desk and Wi-Fi?

Response

That's a good question. As you know, we have worked to develop co-working spaces over recent years, but that is an interesting suggestion. I think the first thing we would need to do would be to look at affordable workspace providers and if they can offer new spaces in the borough if people need that sort of facility.

109 ISLINGTON ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT: ANNUAL UPDATE

Cllr Poole moved the recommendation in the report. Cllr Watts seconded.

The recommendation in the report was put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

That activity over the past year to celebrate and support Armed Forces personnel, veterans, and their families be noted.

110 RESOLUTION TO EXTEND SIX MONTH RULE

Cllr Turan moved the recommendation in the report. Cllr Burgess seconded.

The recommendation in the report was put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

In accordance with Section 85 of the Local Government Act 1972, Councillor Mouna Hamitouche MBE's non-attendance at meetings be agreed until the end of the 2020/21 municipal year on the grounds of continued ill health and that the Council's best wishes be conveyed to her.

111 CONSTITUTION UPDATE

Cllr Turan moved the recommendations in the report. Cllr Burgess seconded.

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

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the amendments to the Constitution set out in the appendix to the report be approved;
- (ii) That the Director of Law and Governance be authorised to make any consequential amendments to the Constitution considered necessary.

112 CHIEF WHIP'S REPORT

Cllr Turan moved the recommendations in the report. Cllr Burgess seconded.

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

RESOLVED:

- (i) That Laura Eden be appointed as the substitute member for Carmel Littleton on the Health and Wellbeing Board for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed.
- (ii) That an Independent Panel be established by the Council be agreed.
- (iii) That the Terms of Reference of the Independent Panel, as detailed in the report, be agreed.

- (iv) That Rosalind Stevens, Margaret Redfern and Ashuk Hussain JP MBE be appointed as members of the Independent Panel until the conclusion of the process.

113 NOTICES OF MOTION

MOTION 1: ATONEMENT AND REPARATIONS FOR THE UNITED KINGDOM'S TRANSATLANTIC TRAFFIC IN ENSLAVED AFRICANS

Councillor Russell moved the motion. Councillor Ozdemir moved the amendment. Cllr Russell exercised her right of reply.

The amendment was put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

The motion as amended was put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To support the innovative work which has been carried out by the Runnymede Trust, the Black Curriculum and others to engage young people and teachers with more expansive, representative and inclusive histories of Britain, to overhaul the curriculum to better educate about the United Kingdom's role in slavery, and to support calls from the National Education Union to 'review the curriculum to ensure it embraces the fact that Britain is rooted in Black and global history, achievement and culture and includes the achievements of Black Britons; as recommended by the Stephen Lawrence Inquiry.'
- (ii) To continue to use the Council's fantastic libraries and heritage services to further educate local people on key issues of Black history, slavery and systemic racial injustice;
- (iii) To call on the UK government to urgently establish a commission to study the impact of the United Kingdom's Transatlantic Traffic in Enslaved Africans on social, political and economic life within the UK and the rest of the world in order to begin understanding the legacy of slavery on the society we live in and to start conversations on how to address it, and within twelve months enact changes to learn the lessons of the commission and combat the impact of slavery on our society, including committing to holistic reparations taking into consideration various proposals in accordance with the United Nations Framework on Reparations;
- (iv) To support City University's review of ties to figures in the slave trade and to support a change to the name of Cass Business School.

MOTION 2: MOTION ON CEASING SPRAYING GLYPHOSATE IN ISLINGTON

Councillor Russell moved the motion. The amendment was moved by Councillor Watts in the absence of Councillor Champion. Councillor Clarke contributed to the debate.

The amendment was put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

The motion as amended was put to the vote and **CARRIED**.

RESOLVED:

- (i) To bring forward an action plan and timetable for an integrated approach to phase out the spraying of herbicides such as glyphosate, wherever possible, in the borough;
- (ii) To learn from London boroughs conducting trials and, look to implement alternative treatments if results prove cost effective, efficient at removing weeds, and offer increased environmental benefits;
- (iii) To encourage more residents in Islington streets to take control of weed management and opt their street out of being sprayed, to help further reduce the use of glyphosate or other herbicides in the borough;
- (iv) To continue to use glyphosate to tackle invasive species such as Japanese Knotweed and Giant Hogweed, where there is a duty to eradicate, and no acceptable non-chemical alternative is available and seek to use stem injection rather than spraying where possible and practical.

MOTION 3: BLACK LIVES MATTER

Councillor Ngongo moved the motion. Councillor O'Halloran seconded. Councillor Russell contributed to the debate. Councillor Ngongo exercised her right of reply.

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

RESOLVED:

- (i) To stand in complete solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, and commits to fighting against all form of racism and injustice;
- (ii) To call on the Government to make urgent policy changes to protect Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community through the pandemic and implement the recommendations from the review of Public Health England into the disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic communities;

- (iii) To call on the Government to take urgent meaningful action to address racial discrimination and injustices in the United Kingdom and implement the recommendations from the:
- Lammy report
 - Angiolini review
 - Home Office Windrush review
 - McGregor-Smith review;
- (iv) To work with all communities in Islington, Islington Council staff and partners to educate each other on systemic racism and take real action to address the inequalities and racism experienced by communities in Islington;
- (v) To support calls on the Government to make Black history a mandatory part of the national curriculum in all schools in England.

MOTION 4: CENTRAL GOVERNMENT MUST DO WHATEVER IT TAKES

Councillor Watts moved the motion. Councillor Gill seconded. Councillors Lukes and Russell contributed to the debate. Councillor Watts exercised his right of reply.

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

RESOLVED:

- (i) To continue to call on central government to keep its promise to fully fund the costs of responding to Covid-19, by urgently providing the £6bn to local authorities needed to close the funding gap for this year;
- (ii) To call on the central government to provide sustained, adequate and fairly distributed funding to public services, including councils, and not impose further austerity;
- (iii) To prioritise the safety of local people and continue to support those who need it.

The meeting closed at 9.40pm

MAYOR