

**LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON**  
**COUNCIL MEETING - 10 DECEMBER 2020**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

At the virtual meeting of the Council held via Zoom on 10 December 2020 at 7.00 pm.

**Present:**

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

**The Mayor (Councillor Janet Burgess MBE) in the Chair**

**114 MINUTES**

**RESOLVED:**

That the minutes of the previous meeting held on 24 September 2020 be agreed as a correct record and the Chair be authorised to sign them.

**115 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

**116 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

(i) Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Hamitouche.

(ii) Order of Business

No changes were proposed to the order of business.

(iii) Declaration of Discussion Items

None.

(iv) Mayoral Announcements

The Mayor reflected on her first months as Mayor and how they had been impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. The Mayor was honoured to have taken part in Remembrance Day, albeit on a much smaller scale than normal and was pleased to have been able to attend a number of events, including judging the Clean Air competition with the Deputy Mayor, presenting the Caretaker Awards, visiting some community events, and to have virtually attended many others, including a number of events held as part of Black History Month.

The Mayor paid tribute to the community organisations supporting the local response to the pandemic and advised that she would be delivering Christmas hampers to some residents over the coming weeks.

(v) Length of Speeches

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

**117 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Leader was pleased to be able to join the Mayor at a number of events, including Remembrance Sunday and the incredible programme of events to mark Black History Month. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, the Leader was delighted that as a borough we had been able to mark those important occasions.

The Leader commented on the state of the pandemic, noting that London was at a critical moment. Infections were rising across the city and there Leader called on everyone to take the steps needed to protect themselves and to keep their friends, family and community safe. In particular, the Leader commented on the importance of the 'Hands Face Space' message, avoiding crowded areas, respecting the rules, and exercising common sense to prevent the spread of coronavirus.

The Leader welcomed that a vaccine would soon be available and said that Islington Council would support the NHS in the roll out of the vaccine. However, the vaccine was not an instant solution and we all must continue to stay safe over the Christmas

period. The Leader was concerned by confused messaging from national government was worried that relaxation of the rules over Christmas would contribute to the spread of the virus.

The Council's top priority was keeping residents safe and the Council was working with the borough's diverse communities to make sure that messages are spread and understood. The Council was supporting residents through the We Are Islington service, the Resident Support Scheme, and supporting businesses to keep trading safely. The Council was also working with schools to make sure they could open safely, operating the local contact tracing system, and supporting the provision of test centres in the borough. However, the Leader commented that local authorities needed more local control and less national top-down imposition, proper resourcing, and less confused messaging from the government to help keep people safe.

The Leader paid tribute to everyone who had lost loved ones to the virus and thanked everyone in Islington for their overwhelming community spirit over the past nine months. The Leader thanked the faith and community groups, local volunteers, local businesses, council staff and NHS heroes for everything they had done. The borough had united to keep everyone safe and supported.

The Council would continue to work in the new year to make sure that communities were supported and safe through the next wave of the pandemic. The festive period would be different this year, but the Leader hoped that everyone would have an opportunity for a break over the coming weeks.

#### **118 PETITIONS**

A petition objecting to the council's People Friendly Streets programme was presented by Zak Vora. As the petition had received over 2,000 signatures, the council would debate the petition at the next meeting.

#### **119 QUESTIONS FROM THE YOUTH COUNCIL**

Question (a) from Youth Councillor Rosie to Councillor Comer-Schwartz, Executive Member for Children, Schools and Families

We hosted a community engagement event with the Somali Community following the tragic death of 2 young Somali adult men. The event was attended by over 50 people including many young people and Council Leaders and the Borough Commander. What else can be done to reassure all young people in the borough who may be feeling unsafe that their safety is a priority?

Response:

Thank you for asking that important question. We were devastated to learn of the tragic deaths earlier this year. My heart goes out to their families, friends and the wider Somali community. I want to reassure young people that keeping them safe is a priority for me and for the Council. We have made significant steps forward in our

Youth Safety work over recent years, and the number of knife crime injuries for victims under 25 have fallen by more than 46% from 2017. However, one young person affected by knife crime is one too many, and we know we have more work to do. Prevention and early intervention is key. We are one of the first councils in the country to approach youth safety from a safeguarding perspective, recognising that many offenders have experienced childhood trauma, discrimination and exploitation. We see young people involved in crime as children first. Exploitation and county lines are all child protection issues and we know that family circumstances and school exclusion can often lead to contact with the youth justice system. We know there are viable routes out of crime and we must do more to make sure of that young people can access them. This is why we have our Youth Offending service, our Integrated Gangs Team, our Targeted Youth Service and Post-16 Progression Service, as well as third sector agencies such as Arsenal in the Community and Abianda to support vulnerable young people and wrap-around them to reduce the risk of school exclusion and to create opportunities for them. The Youth Strategy is the next step in the Council's work to keep young people safe. The strategy will help us to identify the young people who need more support, we are working with the violence reduction unit to help parents and carers to keep their children safe and to reduce inequality and disproportionality as part of this.

Supplementary Question:

You talked about trying to find the root of the problem and the amazing resources that are available to support young people. How would you make sure that you are getting to the right group of young people, or finding them at the right time? Could you please talk more about how you are going to engage with them?

Response:

You are correct, we need to do all we can to make contact with the right groups of young people as early as possible, as the consequences can be fatal as we know. We need everyone in the borough to do this work, which is why we need to work with schools, youth centres, and young people themselves so they can refer their friends and other young people they are worried about. It's why we need to work with parents and families to build their confidence in raising issues. We need a whole borough approach to keeping young people safe.

Question (b) from Youth Councillor Rosie to Councillor Comer-Schwartz, Executive Member for Children, Schools and Families

We have been working with Commissioning Managers from the Play and Youth service, regarding the future of universal youth work in Islington. This has included taking part in consultations and providing 2 researchers with a guided tour of the borough to show Islington through the eyes of you people. Will the council continue to invest in youth spaces and places which support young people's personal development and provision which helps young people to thrive?

Response:

Thank you for your question and your brilliant work on leading and supporting the review of our universal youth work. Over the last 8 weeks we have engaged with over 250 residents and held in-depth conversations with 65 young people, held a series of focus groups with 12 young people, both those engaged currently and those not engaged in our youth offer. This has helped to shape our plans for youth work going forward. We will be holding an event in January where we will share feedback from this work and I hope that the Youth Council will be able to attend. In the meantime, despite central government cuts, I want to assure you that we will continue to invest in spaces and services for our young people. As we learn from the review, I am confident that we will see even more young people benefitting from youth work in our borough. This is important as we continue to work to our aspiration to make Islington the best place to grow up.

Supplementary Question:

Youth clubs have been running activities around the Black Lives Matter movement and educating young people about black culture. What steps are being taken to incorporate that into schools in Islington?

Response:

I was really glad to join you and other young people to discuss the Black Lives Matter movement recently. This year has been a crucial year for our race equality work following the tragic deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in America. We have been working on race equality action plans across the council and reviewing our work, and this is also the case in Children's Services, from social care to education, and our youth justice system, reviewing if we can do more to support young people from Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups. We are looking to develop a strategy and action plans, which will include doing more in the education system. Our key concern in that area is the difference in attainment rates, disproportionate rates of exclusions, and the importance of having resilient and confident young people. We are also looking to develop a cultural curriculum so we can support all of our schools. Lots of schools have already done amazing work in this space, but we want to make sure that all schools are fully supporting all pupils, especially ethnic minorities in Islington.

Question (c) from Youth Councillor Rosie to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Care

It has been widely reported in the media that the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns have had an adverse impact on the emotional wellbeing of young people. We have been using our social media tools to promote mental health apps, and created videos to support young people. What plans does the council have in place to support young people's emotional and mental health both now and in the future?

This is particularly important as we could see mental health needs spike in the next 12 months and beyond.

Response:

Thank you for your question. This issue is very close to my heart, having worked in the NHS and mental health services for almost 22 years. As part of our commitment to make Islington the best possible place to grow up, we must do everything we can to support the wellbeing and mental health of young people in our borough. The Council works closely with health colleagues in the CCG and in CAMHS as well as with the voluntary sector to ensure there is good support for young people's emotional and mental health and to plan for future needs, both to maintain wellbeing and to ensure more help is available to those that need it.

Building awareness and understanding of mental health, and tackling the stigma around mental illness are vital to ensure that young people access support early and without embarrassment. Islington provides free mental health awareness training to anyone working with young people, including youth workers and school staff, to ensure that they can spot emerging problems and signpost to support.

Our work during the pandemic, as well as before and after it, includes working together with schools to meet the needs of young people at this time, the Social, Emotional and Mental Health central point of access continues to act as a first port of call, with referrals being passed on to the most appropriate service for support, and CAMHS continues to be funded to work in schools.

We have also established a new School Wellbeing Service which will provide additional capacity and be rolled out to work with all mainstream schools in early 2021. The Service provides early access to support for children and families experiencing mild to moderate mental health difficulties and offers CBT-based 1:1 and group work around anxiety and low mood, as well as psychoeducation for children, young people and parents.

Question (d) from Youth Councillor Kacper to Cllr Shaikh, Executive Member for Inclusive Economy and Jobs

The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns have resulted in the employment opportunities for young people being reduced, particularly within the retail and hospitality sectors which offer part time work to young people. What plans does the council have to help young people find employment during this time?

Response:

Thank you for your question and for highlighting this important issue. Supporting young people into decent jobs and training opportunities is a top priority for Islington Council, and is more important than ever, as the impact of the pandemic on local job opportunities, and how young people are disproportionately affected, means we are

facing a scale of youth unemployment that is unprecedented in recent years. Young people claiming unemployment benefits has more than doubled since lockdown started.

The Council is responding to this situation by providing direct support to young people in a number of ways. Firstly, the council is providing support through the new youth employability and skills programme. This is a new programme of work that aims to support young people aged 18 to 25 who are either care leavers, have experience of the youth justice system, or who have been identified by our partners as being vulnerable to unemployment. It's going to provide 1:1 coaching, skills tuition and work experience. Secondly, our Progress Team are expert career advisers who can provide 1:1 support for young people who aren't in education or employment. Another way is through our iWork employment support service. This offers coaching for any resident who is over 18, as well as general advice on how to find work and make a job application. The iWork team has strong links with health and social care and construction employers and over the past couple of years has strengthened our relationships with tech, digital, fashion and garment making sectors. Those sectors have been less impacted by Covid, are still recruiting, and really want to work with young people to make those sectors more attractive for them. The iWork team also runs virtual job fairs, we also have an online jobs portal where we connect with employers and direct young people to those vacancies.

We are also using the government's Kickstart programme. The Council is creating twenty 6 month paid work placements for 16-24 year olds on Universal Credit. We are going to strengthen our apprenticeship programme for young people. We also convene borough-wide to engage with our partners that provide employment support for young people. It's a team Islington holistic approach. I'd offer to meet with the youth councillors, I'd welcome the opportunity to give you a far more detailed update and I think we'd really appreciate some feedback on what we may be missing out on and how we can improve our service. Thank you again for this important question.

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

Question (a) from Nick Clarke to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

As we welcome the Council's carbon net zero 2030 and biodiversity plans we recognise that at this moment in history we truly must act locally and think globally. For example every minute an area the size of a football pitch is cleared in the Amazon - most of it to be used for cattle or crops to feed animals. 8% of global CO2 emissions come from the production of concrete.

We cannot achieve net zero if we do not change our diets and change our use of concrete.

Therefore, will the Council take account of the carbon emissions and biodiversity impacts of the food it serves in the schools it controls and the events it hosts, and of

the construction processes of the buildings being erected in the borough (e.g. including the CO2 used in the production of the cement and transport)?

In particular, will the Council follow Enfield and make all meals at Council events vegetarian or vegan and include school meals in its calculations of its CO2 emissions and biodiversity impacts, and measure the CO2 emissions involved in construction and require that they be offset by developers?

Response:

Thank you very much for your questions Nick. I think the point you are making is about behaviour change and how that affects the global impacts of climate change and in particular our food choices.

You ask if we would make meals vegetarian or vegan. I am very happy to confirm that, with the exception of meals at the Assembly Hall which you will appreciate is a very different section of the council, we will do that. We have to make the exception as the Assembly Hall is used by different people for different events, weddings parties and so on, and they provide their own refreshments.

You also ask the question about school meals. Schools decide what they wish to serve, but we do work with schools to reduce their carbon emissions and what we can say is that, for school meals prepared within Islington, we will be accounting for the emissions in the calculations we make about our targets.

You ask about sustainable development and building materials. We have an ambitious draft local plan that includes information on reducing emissions and encouraging more sustainable development. In addition to requiring all major new developments are net zero carbon, to fully capture a development's carbon impact we will also require such proposals to calculate and reduce whole life-cycle carbon emissions. This captures not only a building's operational emissions from energy consumption, but also captures its embodied emissions (such as those associated with raw material extraction, manufacture and transport of building materials, and construction) and emissions associated with maintenance and eventual material disposal.

We also have new policy developments to adopt a circular economy approach to design and construction to keep materials in use for as long as possible, minimise the environmental impact of the materials used, require a minimum amount of construction materials to be from recycled/re-used content and minimise construction waste.

Supplementary question:

Thank you that was very encouraging. One thing I'd want to check, is the draft local plan available to the public? And on construction emissions, accounting is one thing, but who will pay? Will the developer be required to offset their emissions? And who in the council at director level is responsible for reaching Net Zero by 2030? And will



the Council be providing training and information to staff so they can be partners on this journey?

Response:

The Draft Local Plan is out for consultation, I'm not sure if it's available in public at the moment, but I will check that. In terms of the offset, we have an offset fund and developers are required to pay a sum of money to offset carbon emissions that we use for environmentally sustainable projects. The Corporate Director of Environment and Regeneration is responsible at director level, however everyone throughout the Council is involved in this, including the Chief Executive.

Question (b) Talia Hussain to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment & Transport:

The pandemic has precipitated a significant increase in online shopping, with an attendant increase in the amount of packaging and waste for the council to handle. Before the pandemic, Islington's recycling rates were lower than the London average and going down. What steps is the council taking to improve recycling rates in the borough?

Response:

Thank you for your question. Islington has the second lowest rate of residual waste per household in London. This is incredibly important as we want to generate as little waste as possible in the first place.

Islington Council has continued to offer a full recycling collection service for all households throughout the pandemic period. The service has done a really good job despite some difficult circumstances. That includes a full range of materials including much of the packaging material mentioned in your question, but I agree it is very worrying the amount of waste still generated.

Our latest figure for our recycling rate is 31%, which is an increase from 29% last year. Islington approved its Waste Reduction and Recycling Plan this time last year which sets out a range of actions for increasing recycling, and this has been incorporated into our Vision 2030 Net Zero Carbon strategy. There are a number of initiatives that are either new or we are continuing to do, including improvements in communal recycling, as we know that's really important. We are also going to expand food waste services to all of our main estates. We do a lot of communication with residents particularly around food waste and the use of single-use plastics. I would say, in terms of packaging, there is an awful lot the government should be doing with industry to make sure that packaging is reduced and is recyclable.

Supplementary question:

My question notes that Islington has some of the lowest recycling rates. I appreciate they have gone up. I wonder how you feel about how we are doing. Do you think we are doing well enough?

Response:

I think we all need to do better. There are certain challenges we have in the borough, but absolutely we need to do better. It isn't easy though. It's not that we have a bad service, but we have a lot of challenges that we are trying to work through and address.

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

The recently agreed Transport Strategy has the objective of limiting car journeys to essential ones. Does the council have a view on what types of car journeys are essential?

Response:

Thank you for your question Jeremy. On the issue of if we define essential journeys by car, no we don't. It will very much depend on individual circumstances, and I think it's very much self-defining. Some people will always need to use vehicles, if you have a particular disability that requires that, or if you are moving around for work, or another reason. But we can also change people's perception of what is essential. We know that people feel they have to use cars because they feel it is unsafe to cycle or walk. What we have to do is make our streets safer, healthier, more attractive, and that will change what people feel they can do. That may help to redefine what people see as essential.

In a way, we are very lucky in Islington, as we are well suited to changing to more sustainable ways of travelling. The borough is largely flat, and very dense, so we have amenities very close to people. In many cases people only need to make short journeys. So if we can make those journeys attractive, encourage people to use local shops perhaps, then we can help people to reassess their journeys, rather than us as a council defining it for them.

Supplementary question:

Thank you. The Transport Strategy has a target of reducing vehicle kilometres by 15.7% by 2041. Does this reflect on what different types of journeys are essential? This seems like a very modest reduction. It would seem that you need to be more ambitious to reduce the number of vehicle kilometres on the road.

Response:

We are trying to give people the options of safer travel, so they reduce their car journeys and what they see as essential. We've looked at it and decided what we think is possible. If we can reduce it by more, then that would be an incredible achievement. I take your point though, we need to get as many people using sustainable transport as we possibly can. It's a really important thing to do.

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

I am pleased to learn that the Council is very keen to assist local residents in accessing the Green Homes Grant Scheme, and that the Council will develop and adopt a Supplementary Planning Document (or SPD) setting out detailed planning guidance on the installation of measures to reduce carbon emissions and promote energy efficiency. Will this cover retrofitting in conservation areas?

Response:

Thank you for your question Susan. We are very committed to doing what we can on sustainable development, the SPD will cover a range of topics, including guidance and examples of energy efficiency measures. Yes, we have conservation areas, but we must find a way to do both. We are subject to lots of legislation and case law, but the purpose of the SPD will look at how we can maximise energy efficiency.

Supplementary question:

Thank you. I'm wondering whether the council will help local contractors to get accredited under the Green Homes Grant Scheme, thereby actively supporting local environmentally positive jobs?

Response:

I know that Cllr Shaikh and her team are very keen on looking at green jobs. I will look into this further.

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

What support has Islington Council provided to students in Islington to overcome the digital divide?

Response:

Thank you for your question Ernestas. We are acutely aware of the impact that a lack of access to digital devices and the internet can have on some of our least well-off families. This has only been made worse during the pandemic and as a Council, we are determined that the pandemic must not lead to a widening of the achievement gap between those who have access to digital devices and those who do not.

Since lockdown in March we have been working on a rolling programme of issuing devices to children and young people through the Local Authority. This has been in addition to the provision some schools have also made for their pupils. By the end of the year, approximately 3000 devices will have been issued to children and young in the borough. These have been funded from a range of sources including grants from local charities, the Department for Education and the council itself. Devices have been targeted for disadvantaged pupils in priority year groups and vulnerable children.

The School Improvement team has been working very closely with schools and settings to develop remote learning provision this year. This has included the development of online resources to support those who can access it from home and learning packs for children who cannot access their work remotely but can't go to school for a variety of reasons. A series of meetings have been held for schools in the borough to share best practice. Tackling the digital divide and education priorities is a fundamental priority to minimise the inequalities compounded by the current pandemic and to make our borough the best place for our children to grow up.

Supplementary question:

Thank you. In 2016 the United Nations declared internet access to be a human right. In fact, in 2005 free Wi-Fi was provided on Upper Street. In the 2019 Labour Manifesto there was the promise of free internet. When can our students who need internet access expect to receive it?

Response:

Thank you. You make a really valid point, as well as devices, we have been looking to provide internet routers for those who need them. We have undertaken several surveys with the help of schools to understand what the picture looks like in the borough. We have had significant stumbling blocks, as we have tried to access the government Wi-Fi router scheme repeatedly, having been promised this would be provided London-wide, but this has not been delivered, so we are looking at a variety of different sources. Please be assured we are looking at the problem and we are committed to making sure our young people get access as soon as possible.

Question (f) from Emily Tims to Cllr Tuan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care

I understand that several UK councils (and countries) have paused the roll-out of 5G until the potential health implications are more clear. Under what circumstances, if any, would Islington Council pause the roll-out of this untested technology?

As Emily Tims was not present in the meeting, the following written response was sent:

The roll-out of 5G technology is covered by Central Government policy (National Planning Policy Framework, established by the Digital Economy Act 2017). As a Council, we can only make decisions on the rollout of 5G technology based on planning legislation and cannot make health-based decisions that are different to the international and national guidelines.

The Council has looked into this important issue and the following bullet points provide additional information and assurances:

- The masts on Braithwaite house and Michael Cliffe House are Wifi masts, not 5G
- The Council has approved permission for 5G masts on Widnes House. This was a planning decision but all public health advice shows that they are completely safe.
- Public Health England issued its most recent guidance specific to 5G in October 2019. As 5G is rolled-out, exposure to radio waves is expected to remain well below the safety limits set out in guidelines. As such, there should be no consequences for public health.
- Ofcom regularly monitor radio wave emissions near 5G base stations. In its most recent report on 5G-enabled mobile phone base stations, it found that the highest level of electro-magnetic fields from 5G recorded was approximately 1.5% of the relevant safety threshold, and 5G contributes a smaller amount of electro-magnetic emissions than previous generations of mobile technology 2G, 3G, and 4G.
- Be assured that we work with our local Public Health teams and Public Health England to monitor the effects of all new technologies.

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

Question (a) from Cllr Convery to Cllr Watts, Leader of the Council:

What is the purpose of the Council's Twitter account? Whilst it is self-evidently an "outbound" communication channel from the Council to the public, is it also an "inbound" channel for our residents to speak to the Council?

Response:

Thank you for your question. It is both, inbound and outbound. The outbound speaks for itself, sending key messages, promoting events, promoting services and relaying important information on behalf of others such as the emergency services. As an inbound service, we answer questions, take complaints about services, and those elements of the service are handled by Contact Islington. We try as far as possible to refer people back to the relevant service. I can talk to you offline if there are elements of this you'd like to see changed. I think two-way communication is really important and even on this pandemic we've carried that on through virtual Leader's Question Time sessions on Facebook Live, many wards have had online Ward Partnership meetings, virtual council meetings like this too. It is important that we carry that on at all times.

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

I would like to thank the Heritage Team for finding the 'Upon Reflection' sculpture, thought to be lost, in the basement of the Town Hall, and Cllr Shaikh, for organising meetings, despite lockdown, of all the many interested parties, including our local MP, to get the sculpture 'resurrected' in our local Peace Park, part of Elthorne Park, N19. I would also like thank Parks and Heritage for getting a quote to resurrect the statue in a way that makes it less likely to be stolen for a third time.

Hillrise has far, far lower S106 funds than most Wards but, for our part, the local councillors are happy to put money aside for 'resurrecting' this sculpture as it helps our Philip Noel-Baker Peace Park maintain its atmosphere as a place for meditation and reflection - particularly on Peace.

When can we expect the sculpture back in its rightful place, at the end of the fountains, rather than lurking, unloved, in the basement of Town Hall? Thanks to all concerned, particularly our MP Jeremy Corbyn who was present when the statue was unveiled in the 1980s.

Response:

Thank you. I'd like to commend you for your excellent work on the missing Peace Statute and for your tenacity and perseverance in making sure we move forward positively to return the statute to its rightful place in the Peace Garden.

The garden was opened in 1984 and is dedicated to peace in the memory of Philip Noel-Baker who was a British politician, a campaigner for nuclear disarmament, and Nobel Peace Prize winner. Five cherry trees were planted in the garden in memory of the 1945 atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The endeavour to replace the statute has been a whole council and community effort and I want to thank our Heritage Team for tracking down the statute in the basement of the Town Hall. Once this was done, it's been a concerted effort between Heritage and Parks departments, the whole community, local councillors, and our local MP Jeremy Corbyn, whose strong connection to the history of the statue, together with his long and well documented record of working for peace, social justice and nuclear disarmament, has meant that he has been a strong supporter of our efforts to restore the statue to its rightful place. In fact as Cllr Poyser mentions, Jeremy Corbyn was present at the unveiling, along with Bruce Kent, who is another resident of the borough. The Heritage Team have tracked down a wonderful photograph showing the unveiling as well. I am delighted to report that the Parks Department are ready to start work in January to return the statue to its rightful place by the pond in the garden. We hope it will be ready for a spring unveiling, bringing together the local community, councillors, Jeremy Corbyn, Bruce Kent and artist Kevin Atherton so again we can

celebrate the council and community coming together to reiterate our commitment to supporting peace in the world.

Question (c) from Cllr Heather to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Housing:

At a Council Housing Scrutiny Committee meeting, Partners for Improvement indicated that the Council could propose changes to them regarding their housing services performance reporting system and its measures, including their Key Performance Indicators.

In my view the current system of KPIs used by Partners does not allow for adequate scrutiny of their housing services performance, and consequently this detracts from achieving service improvement for tenants; and this is especially the case in relation to their housing repairs service.

Therefore, do you agree with me that the Council needs to approach Partners to adopt a revised performance measurement system whereby they learn from job failures in order to improve the housing repairs service that they provide to tenants? This would include deeper qualitative analysis of the population of repair jobs that they fail to fix first time, so as to identify the causes of failure and solutions, in order to improve their housing repairs service to tenants.

Response:

Thank you for your question, Gary. I share your frustration with the current KPI's provided by Partners and the need to ensure that their performance can be fully scrutinised by the council, so local people can see repairs fixed first time.

It would be possible to change the KPIs in the contract by agreement with Partners, but any change could lead to increased financial penalties for the company if the KPIs are not met, which means they are less likely to agree. Staff from the housing needs service are now speaking to Partners about performance measures and how they may be reported to the council in future and, in particular, they are looking at measures which give greater understanding of how many repairs were able to be fixed the first time. There is an opportunity with the contract to negotiate the provision of non-contractual performance data.

The recent social housing White Paper suggests 'first time fix' as a new measure of tenant satisfaction and this may be a requirement for all landlords in future. We can use this as an opportunity in our discussions with Partners as we prepare with them for the forthcoming changes. I have also raised the issue of a more qualitative approach with the Partners Chief Executive several times and have asked that in future reports to Housing Scrutiny explain how difficult repairs are dealt with, showing communication with residents and satisfaction. We want more on first time fix, but also a more qualitative approach on the most difficult cases, and how residents are informed throughout. I will report back on progress at a future meeting.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you. I anticipated the answer on financial penalties, and I would hope that they wouldn't issue penalties. At the last Housing Scrutiny meeting they seemed to be willing to engage on this, I know I can rely on you to progress this with them, and it would be to their advantage. It would lead to an increase in satisfaction from residents and everyone would benefit. The question is, if we do get to that stage, would you be able to argue that a qualitative approach would include involvement from councillors and from Partners residents?

Response:

I think that's a really good idea. I've been working with Partners on how they present to Housing Scrutiny, you may remember that the last time they attended the Town Hall we had partners staff in the room next door who would be able to deal with individual longstanding casework. I want to see more creative approaches like that in all future engagement. I think that's a good idea.

Question (d) from Cllr Ismail to Cllr Lukes, Executive Member for Community Safety:

Metropolitan Police figures from 2019 showed that half of all knife crime offenders in London are teenagers or even younger children. As knife crime continues to rise consistently, the number of young people directly or indirectly involved in violent knife crime will only continue to grow sadly. Islington is not immune to this trend, as we have lost far too many young people, there has been tragic example in September in my ward Holloway.

My question is, as a newly appointed Community Safety Executive member, what are your priorities and how are you going to engage young black and brown boys, who are often marginalised, misunderstood and far too often this Council ignored parents crying out for support?

Response:

Thank you for your question. I wanted to correct one thing in your question, you say that Islington is not immune from the trend of increasing knife crime across London. In fact, the figures show the opposite. We have made substantial improvements in youth safety in recent years. Since 2017 the number of knife crime injuries of those under 25 have fallen by 46%. The number of first time entrants into the youth justice system has reduced by 24%. We are very proud of the improvements we have made, but we have made them in spite of the government making it far more difficult for us. They have made cuts to local government, cuts to community safety, cuts to police budgets over the last decade, and despite that we have made those improvements.

I am proud that we have made those improvements, but every time I receive a message about an incident in our borough, I worry that it will be another young person who is injured or has lost their life. One victim of knife crime is one too many,



and we have to engage with what is causing knife crime and how we can change that. It's a complicated problem. It's a systemic problem and it also involves racism. We know you are 10 times more likely to be stopped and searched if you are black. We know that 40% of young people in custody are black. A quarter of adult prisoners are black, but only 12% of the population. There is clearly a massive disproportionality and we want to work with the Mayor of London to resolve the lack of confidence and trust in the police by many of our black populations. I am engaging as you know with those communities. We have both been in meetings with the Somali community, and this is resulting in an action plan we are discussing with community groups. I hope you will join me and other councillors will also work with us to keep our communities safe.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you. I would be very interested to see those figures as the figures I have are slightly different. However, I'd like to ask a further question. Islington Council has made a £2million commitment to tackling the root causes of serious youth violence in the borough and has commissioned two charities to work on this. With such a huge amount spent over the last four years, and with youth violence being such a significant ongoing issue, what has been achieved with the £2million and why has the council not worked with local organisations that know Islington and young people on this?

Response:

As I explained earlier, we have succeeded in reducing knife crime incidents and the number of entrants into the youth justice system. We have done that by diverting them away from the sorts of activities that get them involved in crime. We have invested and we have seen results. In terms of who we work with, we are working with many locally based organisations, some of them funded by the council, some funded elsewhere, some not funded at all. As executive member, I will always start with our local communities, look to define what community safety is, and we start from the assumption that no-one is safe unless everyone is safe. Knife crime affects us all, it doesn't just affect the friends and family of the victims. It affects everyone and I hope that by working with our communities we get to a place where none of us have to worry about knife crime and we will not see any more victims of this sort of crime. It is a huge ambition but is one shared by all of our communities and I hope we get there.

Question (e) from Cllr Ismail to Cllr O'Halloran, Executive Member for Community Development:

Since 2010 this Council has been supporting and funding our voluntary organisations who do some excellent work in Islington. Has the Council made a proper review of tangible outcomes holistically to see what has been achieved and the gaps to improve future Council services and Voluntary Community sector delivery for Islington residents?

Response:

Thank you for your question Cllr Ismail. I am immensely proud of our ongoing commitment to Islington's voluntary sector through our VCS Partnership Grants Programme, our Local Initiatives Fund and Community Chest. The response of Islington's VCS to the current crisis has been incredible and indicative of the value of the sector to life in the borough. I'd like to thank all partners, their work is incredible.

We have recently agreed £2.7 million per-annum of core grant funding for Islington's voluntary sector through our VCS Partnership Grants Programme 2021 to 2024. We have continued providing this funding, despite being forced to make significant cuts to our budget each year since 2010 as a result of Government austerity. Throughout the assessment, recommendations, and decision-making process, an ongoing assessment of all funding applications is made considering equalities impacts and the even spread of initiatives across the borough. Details of this are included in the Equalities Impact Assessment of the report to Islington's VCS Committee in September 2020.

Through this grants programme we undertake detailed and in-depth monitoring visits, which assess the tangible impact of each organisation as well as taking an overview of each organisation's contribution to the Council's priorities. This work includes a holistic assessment of each funded organisation, including the services delivered, governance, financial viability, safeguarding, communications and staff and volunteer development. This approach has helped develop a strong and vibrant voluntary sector that responds flexibly to resident need. We are always keen to work with our increasingly diverse voluntary sector to ensure funding is evenly distributed across the borough and encourage all organisations to apply for funding and support.

But, after a decade of government cuts to local services, this is becoming ever more challenging. I'm sure you will join me Cllr Ismail in calling for more funding from central government to ensure we can better support our wonderful VCS organisations across Islington.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you. Part of my question was if there has been a review done in the last ten years, and I don't think that has been answered. Of course I support the voluntary sector and I have been working for a long time in the field. In the last ten years has there been a review, and in the last four years of funding to make organisations sustainable, has any organisation become sustainable? What have we achieved as a council in those four years? The council must be accountable. Have you done that review in terms of accountability, are they sustainable or are they dependent on the council?

Response:

Thank you. We have done a review, we have lots of organisations that bring money into the borough and stand on their own. I am proud of our voluntary sector. I'd be

happy to meet you and discuss this. We are aware of the gaps that we are still working on, but I assure you, every single voluntary organisation is assessed and we are very proud of the sector. We have strict monitoring procedures. I visit every organisation and meet and understand their problems. But we have been cut year on year by the government, I would welcome your support to get more government funding so we can do more.

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

The newly adopted transport strategy policy 1C committing "to provide alternatives to car ownership" is welcome. The policy commits to reduce the number of privately owned cars in the borough by 6.9% from a baseline of 37,372 cars by 2041. That is a reduction of just 2,578 cars over twenty years to 2041 leaving 34,794 cars still being parked in Islington in 20 years time. The policy states you expect car ownership to be down by 3.7% by next year, that's 1,382 fewer cars parked in Islington compared to the baseline. Do you expect to meet this target?

Response:

Thank you. The answer is yes, we do.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you. My supplementary question is that, why is the 2041 target only for a 6.9% reduction when we can achieve 3.7% by next year. Especially when reducing car ownership is so vital to achieving the other targets in the transport strategy. Will you review that target?

Response:

My understanding is that the targets in the strategy are in line with the Mayor of London's strategy, but I agree we can do better than that. I think we will be standing by our figures, but that doesn't mean we can't do better.

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

Over recent years council tax arrears have increased year on year for the cohort of residents eligible for council tax relief. The number of cases of arrears has increased, the amount these households owe has increased and the council's overall net liability has increased. How many open cases are there for council tax relief arrears for the year 2019/20 and what is the value of the open cases?

Response:

Thank you. The total value of 2019/20 arrears in relation to households in receipt of Council Tax Relief is £900,264 consisting of 3,162 open cases as at the 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020.

Supplementary Question:

Thank you. I've been speaking to officers today about these figures and I realise that the numbers of the year we are different to what they would be, as the government has been providing support as part of the Covid response. What I'm worried about is these arrears growing year on year amongst a cohort of people who are eligible for working age benefits and we know that as we come out of the pandemic we will be in a very different and difficult economic situation. Will the council have a good look to see if it is possible to find a way to relieve this cohort of residents of the burden of paying that 8.5% council tax they are expected to pay, when in a normal year those arrears would have grown year on year?

Response:

Thank you. I think the real problem is not that we are not prepared to look at ways to alleviate the difficulties our residents face, we are happy to look at it and try to help them in any way we can. The difficulty is the government will not provide us with the money required to fully fund council tax support and they have refused to provide it for seven years now. Every year we have to increase the amount we put into the resident support scheme. What we need to do is support the most vulnerable, those who are in the most difficulty, and that's what we will do. Even if the government were to come up with a 2% increase I would happily allocate it to providing additional support. If there is any way of finding the extra money I'd be happy to look at it.

Question (h) from Cllr Smith to Cllr Gill, Executive Member for Finance and Performance

This year, more than any other, public sector workers have been the everyday heroes keeping our borough running. From carers looking after those in need, to paramedics keeping people safe and refuse collectors keeping our street clean, they have all played their part throughout the pandemic.

In light of this, will the Council condemn the Government's shameful public sector pay freeze, putting the burden of paying for the pandemic on those everyday heroes?

Response:

Thank you for your question Paul and I completely agree that the Government's decision to freeze public sector pay next year is utterly shameful. Throughout this pandemic, the Government has handed out public money to their mates in the

private sector. In September, it was estimated that the UK had spent £2.5bn on procurement contracts related to Covid-19, with at least £1bn of Covid-19 contracts awarded without a competitive process. That figure is only likely to have increased in the months since.

During this time, as you say, it has been the public sector workers keeping our borough safe, healthy and clean. It is simply wrong that refuse collectors and carers will be left with less money next year than this year. Rather than clapping for them each Thursday and then announcing a real-terms pay cut, they should be receiving a pay rise, fully funded by government, to reflect the hard work and dedication they have undertaken this year. This just goes to show how useless this government is and that austerity is still very much alive for our public sector workers. We will do everything we can to fight this government and stand up for our public service heroes in Islington.

Question (i) Cllr Ozdemir to Cllr O'Halloran, Executive Member for Community Development

The Windrush scandal was a racially-motivated Government-led disaster on our Black community. People who had lived their whole lives here were put through misery and some deported to places they had never lived in their lives. That was bad enough but the fact that the Government's supposed compensation scheme is delaying payments and then offering derisory amounts of money rubs salt in the wounds for those who suffered so much.

Will the Council agree to write to the Home Office, expressing its dismay with this process and calling on the Government to immediately provide adequate funding for those who have been wronged?

Response:

Thank you for this important question Gulcin and for the work you do as Migrants Champion. I completely agree with you regarding the tragedy of the Windrush scandal and the impact it has had on the lives of many local people. When the Government consulted on the Windrush Compensation Scheme, the Council responded expressing our view that the proposed eligibility criteria did not stretch far enough and the compensation would not cover all of the losses felt by the victims. Since then, this has been proven to be the case. These are people who have every right to be here, some who have lived in the UK their whole lives – they are part of our wonderful community and it is completely unacceptable that they have been put through misery by the Government in recent years. This is shameful.

I agree to write to the Home Office to express the Council's opposition to the process and restate our recommendations for improving the scheme that we included in our consultation response. This whole scandal has made people a misery and we need to do all we can to support people. It's a disgrace.

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

Question (j) from Cllr Graham to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Housing

As the Government's policy which requires leaseholders to get an EWS1 form is clearly not fit for purpose, what is the Council doing to support leaseholders in this?

Written Response:

Resident safety is our top priority. All Islington homes meet current fire safety regulations and up to date assessments are available on our website.

The EWS1 form, which is used by mortgage lenders to assess their preparedness to lend on buildings with external wall systems, such as cladding, has caused a range of issues for leaseholders. Despite being created in an attempt to simplify the system, it has caused problems for many leaseholders who have been unable to secure a mortgage.

There are a number of fundamental issues with the form and its application, including clarity on the size of building which needs the form, a national shortage of independent professionals that are both suitably technically qualified and have a suitable level of professional indemnity insurance, and issues with the costs associated with the form and who should pay them.

The council is not planning to complete any EWS1 forms until further guidance is received from central government. In the meantime we will assist leaseholders where possible by providing fire risk assessments, providing information relating to completed and planned fire safety works, advocating for leaseholders with their lender and campaigning through local members to petition parliament to make the system work.

**122 COUNCIL TAX SUPPORT SCHEME FOR 2021/22**

Councillor Gill moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Watts seconded. Councillor Russell contributed to the debate. Councillor Gill exercised his right of reply.

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

**RESOLVED:**

- (i) That the Council Tax Support Scheme for 2021/22, as contained in Appendix A to the report, be adopted.
- (ii) That the Council is retaining a cap of 8.5% for council tax support – despite unprecedented central government funding cuts both for this scheme and for the council generally – as part of our ongoing commitment to provide support throughout the different stages of residents’ lives, where it is needed (paragraphs 5.8 to 5.12 of the report), be noted.
- (iii) That the amendments to council tax agreed at full Council on 5 December 2019 be retained. To be clear, this means that, from 1 April 2021, the following will continue to apply:
  - 1) council tax exemption classes A (unoccupied and unfurnished property that requires or is undergoing major repairs) and C (unoccupied and unfurnished property) will have a discount of 0% for all cases;
  - 2) council tax discount for second homes will be 0% in all cases;
  - 3) council tax discount for empty furnished lets will be 0% in all cases; and
  - 4) a premium will be charged at the maximum percentage allowed of 100% on the council tax of all properties that have remained empty for over 2 years in all cases.

## **123 CHIEF WHIP'S REPORT**

The Mayor advised that the Chief Whip’s Report had been circulated in the second despatch of papers.

Councillor Hyde moved the recommendations in the report. Councillor Khurana seconded.

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

### **RESOLVED:**

- (i) That Jim Beale be appointed to the Health and Wellbeing Board for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed.
- (ii) That Jonathan O’Sullivan be appointed to the Health and Wellbeing Board for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed.
- (iii) That Cllr Williamson be appointed to the Grievance Committee for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed.
- (iv) That Cllr Ngongo be appointed as Equalities Champion for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed.
- (v) That Cllr Poyser be appointed as Arts Champion for the remainder of the municipal year or until a successor is appointed.

**124 NOTICES OF MOTION**

Motion 1: Universal Basic Income

The Mayor advised that a proposed amendment had been circulated in the second despatch of papers.

Councillor Russell moved the motion. Councillor Watts moved the amendment. Councillor 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 write to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions and the Chancellor of the Exchequer calling for a fully evaluated and fully-funded trial of basic income in our borough, as a result of the effects of the Covid pandemic
- ii. To lobby Government for research and possible investment into a programme of Universal Basic Services for local people, including housing, transport, childcare and adult social care;
- iii. To continue rolling out the Council's joint campaign with the TUC encouraging local people to join a union, as to increase their bargaining power at work and secure better pay and conditions;
- iv. To call for increased research and analysis of the effects of UBI on wages, union membership and bargaining power, and protected characteristics;
- v. To work with other local authorities to help test UBI in London;
- vi. To lobby Central Government to maintain the £20 per week uplift in Universal Credit that many local people rely on.

Motion 2: Making misogyny a hate crime

Councillor Clarke-Perry moved the motion. Councillor Williamson seconded. Councillors Russell and Woodbyrne contributed to the debate.

The motion was put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED:**



- i. To make a submission to the Law Commission's Consultation at the earliest opportunity in favour of strengthening hate crime legislation and making misogyny a hate crime;
- ii. To call on the Government to listen to the lived experience of women and girls across our country and to urgently act on any recommendations the commission makes to strengthen the law on hate crime, and to reform legislation around harassment to recognise as hate crime that which targets women and girls in their community;
- iii. To call on the Government to provide the resource and funding for police forces across the UK to effectively tackle harassment, misogyny and domestic abuse;
- iv. To call on the police force in Islington to record harassment of women as a hate crime, following successful trials in Nottingham and elsewhere.

### Motion 3: Reducing School Exclusions

Councillor Comer-Schwartz moved the motion. Councillor Cutler seconded. Councillors Russell and Hull contributed to the debate.

The motions was put to the vote and CARRIED.

### **RESOLVED:**

- i. To campaign for education policy development in support of:
  - o More funding for schools, to adequately address the needs of all children;
  - o The promotion of approaches to behaviour management that are trauma informed, humane and respect the rights of the child;
  - o The overhaul of official exclusion practice and outlaw unofficial practice (known as Off Rolling);
  - o Exclusion being used only as a very last resort, if all else fails;
- ii. To work with local schools on approaches to behaviour management that are trauma informed, humane and respect the rights of the child;
- iii. To work with schools, voluntary sector, health practitioners and police to provide long-term diversionary pathways away from exclusions;
- iv. To continue the work initiated by the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee to implement recommendations to help our schools to prevent exclusions and support young people at risk of exclusion;

- v. To lobby for national policy changes that would support children to remain in mainstream education.

Motion 4: Opposing the Government's planning reforms

Councillor Klute moved the motion. Councillor Khondoker seconded. Councillors Russell and Graham contributed to the debate. Councillor Klute exercised his right of reply.

The motions was put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED:**

- i. To write to the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government expressing our significant and valid objections to the Government's proposals as set out in the Council's comprehensive formal response to the proposals, and seeking a meeting to discuss this as a matter of urgency.
- ii. To work with local developers to maintain the current supply of genuinely affordable and Council Rent homes built in Islington
- iii. To continue building much needed, Council-led genuinely affordable and council homes for local people.

Motion 5: Motion in support of Islington's Council's Low Traffic Neighbourhoods

The Mayor advised that a proposed amendment had been circulated in the second despatch of papers.

Councillor Russell moved the motion. Councillor Champion moved the amendment.

The amendment was put to the vote and CARRIED.

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

**RESOLVED:**

- i. To seek opportunities to make streets as accessible as possible with well-maintained pavements, dropped kerbs and tactile paving in the right places;
- ii. To seek funding from TfL for main road mitigation measures like new pedestrian crossings, pavement widening, greening, new seating and protected cycle routes;

- iii. To work with local people to amend and improve the People-Friendly Streets measures where appropriate;
- iv. To continue to create people friendly streets across the borough.

The meeting closed at 9.45 pm

**MAYOR**