

COUNCIL MEETING – 28 SEPTEMBER 2023

QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL

a Cllr Convery to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

The Council has signed Memoranda of Agreement with 3 hire e-bike operators since October 2021. Please will you set out the safety and conduct requirements of e-bike operators; and in total say how much financial contribution has been received by the Council from the 3 operators over the 2 financial years 2021-22 and 2022-23; and say how that funding has been allocated by the Council.

b Cllr Convery to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

In the calendar years 2020, 2021 and 2022 (part year), an FOI released by the Council in November 2022 revealed that PCNs charges totalling £10,821,870 were triggered by vehicle infractions associated with Islington's Low Traffic Neighbourhoods. Please will you describe the projects, services and investments that have been funded using that additional income?

c Cllr Burgess to Cllr Turan, Executive Member for Health and Social Care:

Good social care depends on full staffing and continuity. Carers and service users often tell me about the importance of having the same carer or being able to speak to the same person. Could you tell me what Islington is doing about recruitment and retention in Social Care, and if you are concerned about staffing levels?

d Cllr Jeapes to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

Thames Water has been foisted with a £2bn debt burden since the private equity venture capitalists outfit Macquarie, with offices in Islington, acquired Thames Water in 2006.

In this acquisition, £2.8bn of the borrowed amount was used to fund the purchase of Thames Water so incurring the debt repayments.

Despite saddling Thames Water with this considerable debt, Macquarie bank have taken between 15.5% and 19% a year from Thames Water for the benefit of Macquarie and the shareholders.

From thisismoney.co.uk July 2023, "Macquarie did spend £11 billion, ladled on to customer bills, starting to modernise Victorian pipes. But under its ownership £2.7 billion was removed in dividends and a further £2 billion in loans. The pension fund deficit soared, and the debt pile swelled from £3.4 billion on acquisition to £10.8 billion when it sold its final stake a decade later."

Due to the perilous financial predicament that Thames Water now finds itself in, there are suggestions that we - Thames Water customers - will be expected to finance the shortfall with increased bills for our water use. This is a totally unacceptable suggestion particularly as the debts incurred were by this private equity outfit for their own and their shareholder's benefit.

Also, the scandalous activity of Macquarie should have been closely scrutinised by Ofwat, as this activity constitutes a transfer of undue risk to customers, as has now become apparent.

Macquarie have not performed according to their own corporate governance, they have not acted in the interests of London's community, "Macquarie's approach to corporate governance is to identify and realise opportunity for shareholders, clients, employees and communities." <https://www.macquarie.com/uk/en/about/company/corporate-governance.html>

Last year, this Council passed a motion calling for Thames Water to invest further in infrastructure to avoid disasters such as the flood that ruined the Sobell, and to call for the water industry to be brought back into public ownership.

Will Islington Council campaign along with other London Councils and the Mayor for London and call on the Government to thoroughly investigate the financial business activities of Macquarie and write to Ofwat and the Government asking that water bills will not be increased to pay for the £10 billion Thames Water black hole?

e Cllr Staff to Cllr Khondoker, Executive Member for Equalities, Culture and Inclusion:

Islington is proud to be a diverse and welcoming Borough especially for the most vulnerable and those in need of sanctuary. With this in mind can you provide an update on the progress we are making in becoming a fully accredited Borough of Sanctuary?

f Cllr Mackmurdie to Cllr Woolf, Executive Member for Community Safety:

Although knife crime and youth violence in Islington has decreased year on year since 2018, we have also had tragic murders of young people in our borough. These are a stain on our society and a blatant waste of life. In the last year, from the tragedy in Highbury to the recent murders in Elthorne and Tollington, I must say the Council response has been extremely focused on helping the victims' families and supporting the community. I would like to ask how we are supporting parents of such horrific crimes? Is there any knowledge that they can give us to prevent such tragedies happening again?

g Cllr Weekes to Cllr Woolf, Executive Member for Community Safety:

How is the Council working to ensure a safer night-time economy?

h Cllr Hamdache to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

Can the Council explain why it's become one of the very few authorities in the country to charge for electric powered two-wheelers parking?

i Cllr Zammit to Cllr Ward, Executive Member for Finance, Planning and Performance:

We all know that it is important that local people are able to easily contact the Council when they need to, especially if something has gone wrong and they need support. In the past, I have been contacted by residents who have found it difficult to contact the council, with sometimes long wait times on the phone and a sub-optimal online offer. Can you tell me what is being done to improve this and ensure when residents need to get in touch with the council, they can?

j Cllr North to Cllr Ngongo, Executive Member for Children, Young People and Families:

The Islington Boat Club is a unique and essential part of the St Peters and Canalside Community, especially for young people in the area, and has recently reopened thanks to funding secured from developers locally. This funding ensured that vital maintenance works could take place and that activities could begin happening again. Will the council commit to working with the new operators to ensure young people continue to enjoy what the Boat Club has to offer?

k Cllr Chowdhury to Cllr O'Halloran, Executive Members for Homes and Communities:

The Thriving Neighbourhoods programme is a great initiative that allows local residents to suggest improvements in our local areas. It'll be great if you can update us with the number of improvement works that have occurred to date and how were residents able to feed into the process?

l Cllr Russell to Cllr Champion, Executive Member for Environment, Air Quality and Transport:

In light of Islington's recycling rates falling to 27% is it time for our borough to consider rolling out fortnightly residual waste collection with recycling collected weekly?

m Cllr Jegorovas-Armstrong to Cllr Woolf, Executive Member for Community Safety:

How many Youth Engagement & Diversion Officers (YEDOs) work in Islington's local policing teams?