

## **LONDON BOROUGH OF ISLINGTON**

### **COUNCIL MEETING - 25 JUNE 2015**

#### **MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

At the meeting of the Council held at Council Chamber, Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD on 25 June 2015 at 7.30 pm.

#### **Councillors present:**

Greening	Klute	Gantly
Fletcher	Murray	Gill
Andrews	O'Sullivan	Heather
Burgess	A Perry	Ngongo
Caluori	R Perry	Nicholls
Chowdhury	Poole	O'Halloran
Convery	Smith	Parker
Debono	Spall	Picknell
Doolan	Watts	Poyser
Gallagher	Webbe	Russell
Hamitouche	Court	Ward
Hull	Diner	Ward
Kaseki	Donovan	Wayne
Khan	Erdogan	Williamson

#### **The Mayor (Councillor Richard Greening) in the Chair**

#### **46 MINUTES**

##### **RESOLVED:**

That the Minutes of the Annual Council meeting held on 14 May 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and the Mayor be authorised to sign them.

#### **47 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

None.

#### **48 MAYORAL ANNOUNCEMENTS**

##### **(i) Apologies for absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Comer-Schwartz and Councillor Turan. Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Jeapes.

**(ii) Order of business**

The Mayor amended the order of business to allow an urgent motion, under rule 10.2(n), and to bring together a number of related items on the same topic, including a petition and a number of questions. The items were to be taken after the Leader's Announcements.

**(iii) Declarations of discussion items**

None.

**(iv) Mayor's Announcements**

The Mayor congratulated a number of colleagues who had completed the borough boundary walk of 13.1 miles, in aid of Islington Giving and presented certificates to Councillors Gill, Heather, Poyser and O'Sullivan. Councillor Kay also completed the walk.

The Mayor reminded colleagues that the Armed Forces Day Parade was taking place on Islington Green on Saturday June 27 and hoped as many people would attend as possible.

Finally, the Mayor advised that he and Councillor Watts would be attending a memorial service on 7 July to mark the tenth anniversary of the London bombings.

A minutes silence was held in memory of the victims and their families.

**49 LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Councillor Watts thanked the Mayor and wished Ramadan Mubarak to everyone celebrating Ramadan. He also welcomed all the members of the public present at the meeting, especially the residents of Islington Park Street and advised that they have the respect and support of everyone on the Council. Councillor Watts thanked the Mayor for the minutes silence in memory of the victims of the bombings on 7 July 2005 and said it was also important to support the living, acknowledging the contributions made by the survivors of the bombings.

Councillor Watts spoke of the murder of Stefan Appleton earlier this month and advised that his thoughts are with Stefan's family and friends. There have been several speedy arrests and charges have been brought and Councillor Watts noted this thanks to colleagues in the Canonbury and Mildmay wards who worked very hard to ensure that tensions in the community have been diminished. Councillor Watts advised that the council is doing what it can, but we also need the community to come together to bring the random violence to an end.

Councillor Watts advised that we are waiting for the Emergency Budget on 8 July to find out what further budget cuts the Chancellor of the Exchequer has planned and noted that throughout the recent election there was no mention of a cut to the public health budget. Councillor Watts advised that the cuts make it even more important that decisions about services are made locally, so we can do more to protect residents, as they now can in Manchester, and called for London to have a similar devolution deal.

**50 URGENT ITEMS RELATING TO 38-44 ISLINGTON PARK STREET**

**Question from Albert McKeran and Ranjit Krishnamma of the Islington Park Street Community to Councillor Murray, Executive Member for Housing and Development:**

Will Islington Council recognise 38-44 Islington Park Street as an established sui generis shared home, which has been in continuous occupation as such since 1976 and confirm to the freeholder that they will require a change of use permission to turn our home into self-contained dwellings or similar and ask the freeholder to suspend all possession proceedings and will Islington Council do this before the Notice to Quit expires on Sunday 5 July?

**Reply:**

Thank you for your question. We feel very strongly that we should do what we can to fight One Housing about this. We need to work out every angle and use what powers we have and one of these is Planning. We don't have an application in at the moment, but if a developer were to come forward in the future they would have to apply for planning permission. Councillors Picknell, Poole and Turan are on the case and if One Housing think they can sell off and convert it to private housing they should think again.

**Question from Councillor Poole to Councillor Murray, Executive Member for Housing and Development:**

Will Councillor Murray commit to doing everything possible to prevent the eviction of the tenants of One Housing Group who live at 38-44 Islington Park Street?

Councillor Poole advised that he will waive the answer and await Councillor Murray's response to the urgent Motion.

**Petition: A petition was presented by Councillor Caroline Russell on behalf of the residents of 38-44 Islington Park Street.**

**Urgent Motion: Islington Park Street Community**

Councillor Poole proposed the Motion, seconded by Councillor Picknell. Councillor Russell moved an amendment. Councillors O'Sullivan and Murray contributed to the debate.

Councillor Murray advised that sui generis status is granted by the Planning Committee and although it looks like it may apply, it is a decision that the Planning Committee would have to make and we cannot pre-determine their decision. Councillor Murray also advised that DM Policy 3.9 allows us to resist the loss of good quality Houses of Multiple Occupation and he hopes that the Planning Committee will also take that into consideration should a planning application be received. Councillor Murray advised that it was vital the council supported the motion to send a clear message to One Housing and make sure a unique way of life is preserved.

The recommendations in the amended motion were put to the vote and LOST.

The substantive motion was put to the vote and CARRIED.

**RESOLVED:**

- To call on One Housing Group to immediately suspend their Notices to Quit.
- To ask the One Housing Group to engage in dialogue with the Council about their intentions with regard to 38-44 Islington Park Street.

- To encourage One Housing Group to work with residents to formalise the tenancy agreements, management arrangements, and allocations policy at 38-44 Islington Park Street, so that this unique community can continue their way of life.

## **51 PETITIONS**

The following further petitions were presented:

Lisa Burnett presented a petition regarding road safety at Tufnell Park Primary School.

Ursula Yates, representing Living Streets, presented a petition calling for a zebra crossing in Leigh Road.

Bridget Stark presented a further petition regarding the proposed new visitor centre in Caledonian Park.

## **52 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE YOUTH COUNCIL**

1. Young Mayor Taiga to Councillor Richard Watts, Leader of the Council

### **Voting and Democracy**

How does Cllr Watts think the results from the recent general election will impact on the lives of Islington's young people?

Reply:

Thank you for your question. The general election result will be very significant for young people in Islington. It will be harder for young people to access housing benefit and other benefits as well, such as out of work benefits. Many will face housing benefit being taken away; the £12 billion welfare cuts will have a staggering impact. Tuition fees have already been introduced, the Education Maintenance Allowance has gone. The loss of tax credits will affect families and other cuts will be targeted at vulnerable people; young people and disabled people will be the hardest hit. I am very worried about employment prospects for young people. We need to keep supporting young people into housing and providing them with cash to study.

2. Youth Councillor Hiba to Councillor Paul Convery, Executive Member for Community Safety

### **Community Safety**

YCllrs are interested in how the Safe Haven scheme is contributing to young people feeling safe in Islington. How is this going and are there any statistics on how many YP have used it since it started?

Reply:

Thank you very much for your question. It goes to the heart of the problem here and in many other boroughs. The safety of young people is at the forefront of our minds. We are all concerned and troubled about violence against young people on our streets. Lorraine Dinnegan was instrumental in setting up the Safe Haven scheme in Islington; after her son Martin was killed, she campaigned tirelessly and selflessly. There are approximately 50 safe havens in the borough, including many business and retail premises. The council supports the scheme; all 10 libraries and the principal public buildings in the borough are safe havens.

I am afraid we don't know how many incidents have been prevented, or young people protected, but I am convinced it is an important part of protecting young people on our streets.

3. Deputy Young Mayor Abu to Councillor Paul Convery, Executive Member for Community Safety

**Community Safety- Reducing Extremism**

How can young people in the borough be safe from radicalisation and extremism particularly online?

Reply:

Many people across the country are struggling with how to prevent the violent radicalisation of residents and how to prevent terrorist attacks. The tragedy is young people are being drawn into a different world, recruited and groomed by people seeking to exercise control of their hearts and minds. Those Islington residents who have gone abroad sadly will not be coming back. We want all schools to assess risks and provide training to help keep people safe on line. We need to give people critical skills and schools have to be safe places to discuss ideas, to understand why some people feel a deep sense of grievance and provide space to express that. We need to promote shared values, a sense of belonging and challenge the discrimination some people experience. Schools and libraries monitor website content, but it is not possible to completely protect people from propaganda. We need to ensure that teachers and parents are aware of what is on line; some of it is very slick and persuasive and we need a narrative against it. Parents have to be the first line of defence and they need to prepare young people to approach the internet in the same way they would teach them about sexual predators. There is a new duty on councils to prevent extremist radicalisation and we are preparing a plan and will consult widely. As part of that we will welcome the views of the Youth Council and young people across the borough.

4. Youth Councillor Anastasia to Councillor Joe Caluori, Executive Member for Children and Families

**Youth Provision**

As Cllrs are aware the summer term will be ending in the next couple of weeks. Please can Cllr Caluori tell us what's on offer for Islington's young people? How is it being promoted across the borough?

Reply:

I am proud that we are boosting our investment in summer activities for young people. Summerversity is back for another year and is bigger and better with a range of courses and activities in technology and computing. Young people will be able to programme their first game, build their own computer (and keep it), be the next Candy Crush developers and build their own app or be one of the first to use one of the world's limited number of 3D printers.

They can also test their wit with stand-up comedy, learn how to run a farm, learn how to fly with aerial theatre or try their hand at being a chef. All activities are free but spaces are limited and will be allocated on a first come first served basis for young people who live or go to school in Islington. There will be an Instagram campaign to reach young people across the borough and share information about the courses and activities on offer and a hashtag campaign, #summerversity so young people can create their own content and upload photos which will be part of a weekly competition on Instagram. We'll be communicating with young

people and families through the Youth Council and Council Twitter feeds and approximately 7,000 Summerversity brochures will be distributed.

The National Citizenship Service Challenge is also back in the borough offering all 15-17 year olds a once-in-a-lifetime experience, which includes a residential outside the borough. The programme helps young people build skills for work and life while taking on exciting challenges. It includes a Dragons' Den event at which I'm a Dragon, so I'm looking forward to being mean!

Younger people can also take the Summer5Challenge. This involves completing five separate activities for a chance to win prizes. Every time a challenge is completed, staff at the relevant venue provide a sticker to be stuck in the young person's personal challenge card. The challenges include completing a quiz about Islington which will be available at all of Islington's libraries and the Islington Museum; borrowing and reviewing a library book; getting active at a pool or leisure centre; joining an activity at one of Islington's youth hubs or clubs and taking a challenge in an open space at one Islington's green spaces. Our 12 adventure playgrounds will also be open all summer long, providing fun and safe play for children.

As you can see there is loads of stuff going on. Information about all the activities is on Izzi and I hope you'll work with me to promote it all.

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

Question 1: Mr Danny Simani to Councillor James Murray, Executive Member Housing and Development

Most disabled people live alone. According to police records, there were over three hundred disabled hate attacks reported to police in London in 2012. A member of my family and I were victims of such an incident in 1991 whilst living in a Council flat in the Andover estate. Several youth addicts kicked down the front door and jumped on my relative's bed, cutting their forehead. Their life was saved by swift police action, as they took my relative to Whittington Hospital in their car. The Council discrimination officer ordered our transfer to lower Hilldrop estate. In fear of a repetition of another discriminatory or disability hatred attack, I added front door and window security in 1995 without any Council objection and on three occasions since this has saved me from being attacked.

I would like to know why Islington Mayor is taking me to the Clerkenwell County Court in order to obtain injunction forcing me to dismantle my present safety security so that the Council contractors can install double glazing while knowing that remaining alive with the aid of security features is surely more important and beneficial to me than being dead in a flat with double glazing?

Reply:

Thank you for your question. I am sorry to hear about the incident and I understand your concerns about extra security. We are currently installing new double-glazed uPVC windows to Coombe House as part of the Cyclical Improvement Programme works. The new windows are secure by design and are vastly superior in terms of security than the existing ill-fitting Crittall units. The works to replace the windows will only last for a single day, when there will always be operatives present. Officers have spoken to the contractor, Mears, and asked them if possible to reinstate the security grilles, but if this proves impossible, the new windows not only reduce heat loss, they are also more secure; we have looked into it and I think we are doing the right thing, but I am sorry it got to the stage it did with the legal case.

Supplementary question:

Thank you. I made it clear that my question concerns all disabled people who live on their own. We want two doors, but the council said we must have a single entry door. This is an issue for all disabled people who face a lot of harassment. The Housing Department doesn't look into it. You need to consult us about this type of change. A disability officer would, but I presume you haven't got one as you are forcing something on us that is not suitable for physically disabled people who can't defend themselves. I hope that the council will look into the issue and come up with some solution.

Reply:

Ensuring that people feel safe in their homes and that their homes are decent and affordable is a priority. I will make sure that your case is being followed up. With regard to the general issue, many people have different requirements and if anyone is concerned they should talk to their councillors.

Question 2: John Ackers to Councillor Claudia Webbe, Executive Member for Environment and Transport

Waltham Forest council should be congratulated on their Mini Holland project and in particular the introduction of filtered permeability and public realm improvements into Walthamstow Village, which the council says will reduce traffic flow on residential streets. Can comparisons be made between Walthamstow Village and Highbury West – is their Orford Road, which is being closed to motorised traffic, the equivalent of our Gillespie Road?

Reply:

Thank you for your question. I am aware of this project; it highlights an issue with funding for cycling improvements and whether or not you are an inner or outer London borough. The Mayor of London has over £900 million available to support cycling improvements. I am delighted for colleagues in Waltham Forest, Enfield and Kingston, they are all outer London boroughs, who all got £30M each for their Mini Holland projects. It was the outer London boroughs who were able to apply for investment. We have lobbied hard to ensure that we got a share of the £900M to enable cycling improvements and I am delighted that Transport for London (TfL) will fund the council to deliver the quietway cycle route connecting Finsbury Park to Kings Cross, but compared to the £30M we got a small allocation of £2M. I appreciate that there have been calls for road closures and we will look at these in the design, but we will also continue to campaign at TfL.

Supplementary question:

Waltham Forest's approach was about achieving modal shift to help fight obesity and reduce air pollution; they had a clear vision. Will you look at how they did it and sold the scheme and bought residents round?

Reply:

All the successful boroughs who had funding to do studies and ask residents about road closures were able to do modelling, to work out where traffic would go and how modal shift could be achieved. Eight boroughs applied and only three were successful. Whilst I welcome their success and applaud it, I'm dismayed that inner London boroughs are not getting their share of resources. Look at what they can do; a cycle super highway, a new style roundabout and a whole programme of activity, which they are able to do because of

the investment. We are of course concerned about pedestrian and cyclists' safety. We already have up to thirty roads closed to motorised traffic, but the reality is the borough is a motorway; traffic comes through. We can't close major roads without thinking about where that traffic goes and we need funding and resources to be able to do it. I urge you and your colleagues to campaign government for us to receive our fair share.

Question 3: Claire Poyner to Councillor Watts, Leader of the Council.

With regard to the Islington Armed Forces Community Covenant has the council taken into consideration that the UK is the only country in Europe and the only permanent member of the UN Security Council that recruits 16-18 year olds into the Armed Forces and allows 15 year olds to sign up?

Reply:

I wasn't aware, but I am not sure we are in a position to do anything about that. I suggest that you write to your MP.

Question 4: Barry Edwards to Councillor Webbe, Executive Member for Environment and Transport.

Does the council recognise the importance of our green and open spaces such as school wildlife gardens and parks and support the proposal to protect and link together all of London's parks and open spaces?

Reply:

I think that you are referring to the concept of a London National Park. I think we can broadly support the principles; we recognise the value of green spaces to our urban environment, cultural heritage and wildlife. We can all be proud of that. We will happily look into supporting the idea, although unfortunately that will not protect us from the huge ideologically driven cuts in this borough and this city. We need to elect a labour Mayor who will truly stand up for this city.

Supplementary question:

I support your comments in terms of the London Mayor, but this campaign is being led by a small and strategic organisation. Will you contact them and be represented at the event in July?

Reply:

Yes.

Question 5: Ian Hunt to Councillor Claudia Webbe, Executive Member for Environment and Transport.

Spraying with glyphosate has been a 'business as usual' approach to weed control in Islington. Can Greenspace and Islington Council consider a more pro-active approach to weeding on its streets, as a way of reducing glyphosate use, in line with EU and state policy?



Reply:

Councillor Russell has a motion on glyphosate use later this evening. In reality we use glyphosate and didn't know very much about it until the motion. We are not going to be supporting the motion so I can't support this question or request either, but there will be further discussions about this when we reach the motion.

Question 6: Jo White to Councillor James Murray, Executive Member for Housing and Development.

The residents of Kings Square Estate have recently been given a refund as we were overcharged for the heating. Why could the refund not have been used to leave the heating on yearly which is what we want to happen?

Reply:

There was a refund for residents with communal heating and we have had discussions about how the refund system works in this chamber. We refunded payments excess built up because we smooth out costs for residents across the year. With regard to the heating, some people do want it on for longer than others and we recently consulted residents regarding June and September. Broadly speaking, residents don't want the heating on for the extra months because of the extra cost. The building fabric is poor at retaining heat which does make it difficult. We will be talking to ward councillors and residents in certain blocks that are poorly insulated and very hard to improve and details are still being worked out at the moment.

The Mayor advised that the time set aside for questions from members of the public had expired and moved to:

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

Question (a) Councillor O'Halloran to Councillor Murray, Executive Member for Housing and Development

This Council has a proud record of building new homes at affordable social rents. That's why I know many members will be extremely concerned about the policy of the Government to force councils, like Islington, to sell off valuable homes. Could Cllr Murray comment on the likely impact this policy will have in Islington?

Reply:

Thank you for your question. Forcing councils to sell high value properties will be a battle for the soul of Islington. Some independent research has been carried out which suggests that 1800 council homes in Islington could be forcibly sold in the first five years of the policy. It would reduce our ability to support people by providing affordable housing and force people to move to outer London where rents will then go up. It is difficult to believe what this policy will mean; we are currently building 20 new council homes on the Bemerton Estate which are ringfenced for local people. With property prices out of control, these properties will be worth a lot of money; a nearby estate leaseholder property is on the market for £435K. If the government does set the figure at £400K and we assume any property we build will have a similar value, all the new properties we build, we will be forced to sell by the government. There will be no incentive for people to downsize and there will be families stuck in

overcrowding for many more years. It is no exaggeration to say this is about the social cleansing of central London and we need to come together to oppose this.

Supplementary question:

Can you explain how we can fight this disastrous policy?

Reply:

The government has promised that all homes sold will be replaced, but they said the same with right to buy and barely one in ten was and they weren't like for like; they were different size homes in different areas. If they force us to sell it will be impossible for us to replace the properties; anything new we build we will be forced to sell again. We need to make sure that all the evidence is publicised to stop people being hoodwinked by this policy and we need to campaign on the street to get the public to oppose it too.

**Note: The time for questions from members of the Council having expired, written replies to the remaining questions were sent as detailed below.**

Question (b) Councillor Gantly to Councillor Watts, Leader of the Council

Cllr Watts will have seen the announcement by the Chancellor that, despite delivering the largest cuts to local government in our history, the Chancellor wants to wield the axe again and the LGA has warned that this could mean in-year budget cuts. What does this mean for Islington?

Reply:

Thank you for your question, Cllr Gantly. You are of course correct to say that since 2010, the Tory-led Government has imposed the largest peacetime cuts to local authorities. In Islington, we have already been forced to take around £150million out of our budgets, and the election of a majority Tory Government will mean the scale of the cuts will continue. We anticipate that the Chancellor's plans will mean a further £90million of cuts to the council over the next 3 or 4 years. This will mean that the council will have around a third of the funding we had in 2010.

Recent announcements by the Chancellor have suggested that non-protected departments will face cuts of up to 40% in departmental spending - this includes the Department for Communities and Local Government. We must be honest with the people of our borough that the scale of these cuts will mean that services will change. We have already done the simple things and save money where we could, so we must now carry on with our radical agenda to reform services so that we save money by tackling issues earlier. However, even with this pioneering work, the cuts from Government are disproportionate and will hit Islington hard.

Question (c) Councillor Heather to Councillor Shaikh, Executive Member for Economic and Community Development

I have concerns about the Community Warden scheme being run by the Finsbury Park Business Forum who are based in my Ward. I note that Islington Council is opposed to workfare, and my concern is that this scheme appears to be a workfare scheme. Can the Executive member for Economic and Community Development please assure me that the Council will investigate the scheme with both the Department of Work and Pensions and

FPBF to establish whether this is a workfare scheme, and also establish who benefits financially from the scheme?

Reply:

Islington Council, as demonstrated by our recent Employment Commission, is committed to supporting local residents into work as the best route out of poverty. There are many different employment schemes operating in the marketplace, some good, and some not so good. The Community Wardens Scheme operating around Finsbury Park station is run by the Finsbury Park Business Forum. After you and others understandably raised issues with the scheme, council officers contacted Job Centre Plus for more information and I called the Director of Finsbury Park Business Forum to ask him some questions too.

The scheme runs for 30 hours per week for 4 – 6 weeks and is meant to provide work experience. Islington JCP first set up the scheme with FPBF in December 2011 and so far a total of 57 participants have been referred by JCP to attend the scheme, with the last referral from Islington JCP being in October 2014. Islington JCP is not currently referring people to the scheme. Other participants have volunteered off the street or been referred by local voluntary and community sector organisations.

FPBF have informed us that there are currently about 35 people involved in the scheme. It has plans to expand the scheme beyond the area around Finsbury Park station. FPBF have asserted that 80% of all past participants in the scheme have enjoyed positive outcomes in terms of future employment, but no formal evaluation of the scheme has taken place, so we are not at all clear about how many people have got a job as a result of the scheme.

According to JCP, the scheme is not mandatory up until the time a participant agrees to take part. Once participants have agreed to participate, it becomes mandatory and sanctions may apply for non-attendance. Otherwise, the DWP continues to pay benefits and will pay travel fares too, if needed. FPBF do not receive any money from the DWP for the scheme and the council has no involvement with the scheme or with FPBF in general. FPBF have informed us that the scheme is funded by donations and by the dues paid by businesses which are members of the FPBF.

My view, having established all this, is the same as yours, Gary: this is Workfare in all but name and I condemn it. Once a Community Warden has embarked upon the scheme, they are then part of a programme of compulsory, unpaid work experience and if they drop out they can be sanctioned.

The council does not support Workfare in general or this scheme in particular and we have no involvement with it or with the Finsbury Park Business Forum. Indeed, we have insisted that FPBP remove the Council's logo from its website. As for your request that we seek to ascertain if anybody benefits financially from the scheme, and, if so, who, we will try to do just that and we will let you know what we uncover...

In terms of moving forward it is suggested that we could do the following:

- 1) Write to JCP / DWP urging them not to refer anyone to the scheme henceforth (although they don't currently anyway)
- 2) Write to Courtney Bailey asking him if anyone makes any money from the scheme (although he's probably not obligated to tell us)
- 3) Write to the local police to ask if they support the scheme in any way (and urging them not to)
- 4) Potentially share any of these letters with the local press

Question (d) was taken under the urgent items relating to 38-44 Islington Park Street above.

Question (e) Councillor Diarmaid Ward to Councillor Hull, Executive Member for Finance and Performance

This Tory Government's plans to reduce the benefit cap to £23,000 per household will have a huge impact in Islington because the cost of housing is so high. How can the council help families who are struggling to cope as a result, in the short term and the long term?

Reply:

Thank you for your question, Diarmaid. It's timely because we expect the Chancellor's budget statement on 8<sup>th</sup> July to include a commitment by the government to reduce the existing overall Benefit Cap by £3,000 per household.

Our modelling suggests that this will hit about 575 more Islington households, on top of the 250 Islington households already affected by the current cap, who will all get hit again as well. Up to 1,000 more Islington children are likely to be impoverished as a result, in a borough which already has the fourth highest child poverty in England. The move will result in an additional £1.6m in lost benefits in the borough. If the government cutting the cap leads to private landlords evicting large families, which it probably will, then, given the cost of temporary accommodation in local properties with more than one bedroom is also likely to be above the cap, this threatens to increase homelessness in the borough as well.

According to the government, the benefit cap is meant to reflect the average income. But average earnings haven't dropped by £3,000, so why are they cutting this support from families who need it? It is a national, one-size-fits-all policy that takes no account of local realities. Rents in London are much higher than elsewhere, and yet the same caps and cuts apply. With such a shortage of affordable housing in the capital, cutting the benefit cap won't drive down rents, it will just drive people into poverty.

I am seriously concerned about the council's capacity to support more households who may struggle to cope. The Government is currently cutting Islington Council's budget for Discretionary Housing Payments – short term grants designed to help people who are struggling to meet their housing costs – from £1.35m in 2014/15 to £989,000 in 2015/16. But reducing the benefit cap will mean more demand for Discretionary Housing Payments, not less. In addition, the Council estimates it would have to increase the number of IMAX welfare advisors and iWork employment coaches working closely to support those affected by the benefit cap by 50%, at a further cost of £110,000 a year.

For Islington, the government cutting the benefit cap will mean huge losses of around £1.6 million in Housing Benefit, likely to translate into a big rise in tenants' arrears. At a time when the council's budget is stretched to breaking point, we can't guarantee to cover the loss. We will do our best to support struggling families in our community but there's a limit to our ability to shoulder the burden of government cuts and shield residents from their impact.

We are committed to maintaining our specialist teams that work with these households and which have helped hundreds of capped families secure exemptions or employment since 2013. So, far, this work has meant the council has not evicted anyone as a result of arrears caused by the Benefit Cap.

We will campaign hard to ensure that the level of Discretionary Housing Payments allocated by government to mitigate such cuts is increased, not cut further as it is being at present. But there will inevitably be people who will be worse off and who will struggle to pay their rent.

Many more nationally will be forced into homelessness by this government policy as the lowering of the cap will mean that it is no longer a problem only for London.

We will work hard to ensure that we are ahead of the game in our preparations for this and the other benefit cuts that will inevitably follow. But, sadly, these cuts are coming, and the reduction in the Benefit Cap may not be the worst of them. We shall have to wait until the 8<sup>th</sup> July budget statement to hear just how bad the government's £12bn of welfare cuts are going to be. We will be leading London's resistance.

Question (f) Councillor Diarmaid Ward to Councillor Shaikh, Executive Member for Economic and Community Development

Public libraries can provide community space, skilled staff and assisted online access, and reach out to vulnerable people. Do you have any plans to try and encourage more Islington residents to use the library service?

Reply:

Anyone who lives, works or studies in Islington can use our library services and we will continue to encourage as many people as possible to become library members. We ran a membership campaign from February – April this year which attracted 2,000 new members. We will continue to promote our services over the summer through events and activities. Our annual Word Festival finishes this week and has had an exciting programme of events for adults and children to promote reading and writing, including a focus on supporting people with mental health issues – many of these events are aimed at encouraging people who wouldn't traditionally use libraries to get involved.

We have a full programme of summer holiday activities for children in our libraries and will also be encouraging all primary age children to join in the Summer Reading Challenge to read 6 books during the school holidays.

We are taking the library out into the community to advertise our work, including attendance at the Cally Festival and 'BookSwaps' in leisure centres, adventure playgrounds and other community venues. Our library staff are being trained to provide support to people who need to access on-line services such as help with benefits applications and Freedom pass renewals.

We will use printed publicity, our web pages and social media to promote all our services, including our on-line information and e-books.

Question (g) Councillor Russell to Councillor Shaikh, Executive Member for Economic and Community Development

Finsbury Park business forum is running a workfare scheme with A4E in which unemployed people are working 30 hours per week unpaid and risk their benefits being sanctioned if they do not turn up. Will the council join me in condemning this practice as exploitative and will you use your influence as a partner organisation of Finsbury Park Business Forum to bring this practice to an end and ensure that any station wardens are paid the London living wage in future?"

Reply:

Thank you for your question, Caroline, which is very similar to one asked by Cllr Heather, so please forgive me for using much of the detail from my response to him in my reply to you.

Islington Council is committed to supporting local residents into work as the best route out of poverty. Our pioneering Employment Commission looked at the many barriers facing local people from getting and keeping good and flexible jobs, and I'm proud of the work this council has done to tackle youth unemployment.

The Community Wardens Scheme operating around Finsbury Park station is run by the Finsbury Park Business Forum.

Council officers have contacted Job Centre Plus for more information and I called the Director of Finsbury Park Business Forum to ask him some questions too.

The scheme runs for 30 hours per week for 4 – 6 weeks and is meant to provide work experience.

Islington JCP first set up the scheme with FPBF in December 2011 and so far a total of 57 participants have been referred by JCP to attend the scheme, with the last referral from Islington JCP being in October 2014. Islington JCP is not currently referring people to the scheme. Other participants have volunteered off the street or been referred by local voluntary and community sector organisations.

FPBF have informed us that there are currently about 35 people involved in the scheme. It has plans to expand the scheme beyond the area around Finsbury Park station.

FPBF have asserted that 80% of all past participants in the scheme have enjoyed positive outcomes in terms of future employment, but no formal evaluation of the scheme has taken place, so we are not at all clear about how many people have got a job as a result of the scheme.

According to JCP, the scheme is not mandatory up until the time a participant agrees to take part. Once participants have agreed to participate, it becomes mandatory and sanctions may apply for non-attendance. Otherwise, the DWP continues to pay benefits and will pay travel fares too, if needed.

FPBF do not receive any money from the DWP for the scheme and the council has no involvement with the scheme or with FPBF in general. FPBF have informed us that the scheme is funded by donations and by the dues paid by businesses which are members of the FPBF.

My view is that this scheme is Workfare in all but name and I condemn it. Once a Community Warden has embarked upon the scheme, they are then part of a programme of compulsory, unpaid work experience and if they drop out they can be sanctioned.

The council does not support Workfare in general or this scheme in particular and we have no involvement with it or with the Finsbury Park Business Forum. Indeed, we have insisted that FPBF remove the Council's logo from its website.

Thank you for your question.

Question (h) Councillor Russell to Councillor Webbe, Executive Member for Environment and Transport

There are five things a council can do to reduce road casualties: Lower speed limits, re-configure roads, enforce speed limits, use new technology such as intelligent speed adaptation and invest in behaviour change and education.

In light of the 35% increase in serious collisions in Islington in 2014 compared to 2013. Will the council underpin the 20mph speed limit by

- reconfiguring streets to reduce traffic flow with filtered permeability,
- working with the police on enforcement via community speedwatch
- calling on TfL to bring in an Independent Speed Adaptation bus trial in Islington and
- promote behaviour change to encourage compliance with speed limits, drink/drug driving laws and mobile at the wheel bans?

Reply:

Thank you for your question, Caroline, and for your support for our pioneering 20mph speed limit – another example of Islington leading the way on road safety and lowering emissions.

Turning to your question, you are well aware of the various policies the Council has implemented to support its Sustainable Transport Policy, which are aimed at encouraging alternatives to car use. This includes cycle schemes and promoting cycle use, speed and accident reduction projects to improve safety and also lorry ban schemes to enforce our lorry ban areas.

Filtered permeability, or road closures as others refer to it, is something that is considered where appropriate. However, we have been successful in making roads and junctions safer by securing support from residents for our plans. An important part of this has been undertaking detailed studies to evaluate the impact such measures would have through traffic displacement to other roads. Carrying out careful research and being sympathetic to the views of local people is how we will continue to approach such matters.

We have an excellent relationship with the Police and have worked with them on a number of stop and advise sessions over the last 18 months. As a result the Police felt confident enough to initiate speed enforcement and we continue to lobby them to ensure regular active enforcement of the speed limit in the borough, as this is a priority and is something that residents have clearly asked us to do. We will have discussions about Community Speedwatch with the Police as this is something we would clearly need to work together on.

The Transport Research Laboratory, a body who works on behalf of the Department of Transport, are undertaking some work for TfL to understand the impact on surrounding traffic of buses which will have a control device fitted to limit their speed to the speed limit. One of the routes being looked at is the number 19 which runs through the borough. Islington have been working with the Transport Research Laboratory to enable the study to take place and the research from this study will be available later in the year.

Finally, it is of course right that we encourage drivers to change behaviour around responsible driving, and press the Police to enforce the law. We promote Department for Transport campaigns such as drink driving and speed compliance. However, we do engage in further work with the Police to undertake advice sessions, which has seen over 1,000 motorists stopped and advised of the 20mph limit in the borough.

**55**     **ISLINGTON CARERS' HUB - PRESENTATION**

Councillor Burgess introduced this item and advised that there are over 16,000 unpaid carers in Islington and the Islington Carers' Hub delivers a lot of services for us; it has a strategic role working with partners and among other services, providing training and respite for carers. Councillor Burgess introduced Liz Mercer from the Islington Carers' Hub.

Liz Mercer advised that the Islington Carers' Hub (ICH) is based in Finsbury Park, but does outreach at a number of venues across the borough. The service is available to anyone over 18 who cares for someone, although there are many carers, for example those who care for people with substance misuse problems, who do not come forward to seek help. The ICH only has six full time equivalent staff and can therefore only support a fraction of the carers personally, so although the ICH provides some direct support, such as a casework service for those who might otherwise struggle to access support and support groups, they also act as a gateway to services and work strategically, helping other organisations, such as GP practices, identify and support carers.

Eddy Graham, Head of Advice, Carers UK advised that it is estimated that unpaid carers save the state approximately £190M and advised that over three quarters of carers are worried about the impacts on their own health, nearly half struggle to make ends meet and over half of working carers are worried about their ability to remain in work. He advised that there was considerable concern that the expected £12 billion cut to welfare spending will have a number of very detrimental impacts on carers.

Councillor Burgess and Councillor Watts thanked Liz Mercer and Eddy Graham and Councillor Burgess advised that we will fight the government over any proposed cuts affecting carers.

**56**     **CORPORATE PLAN**

Councillor Watts, seconded by Councillor Burgess, moved the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Watts highlighted the importance of the document, which sets out the Council's strategy and priorities for the future.

The recommendations were put to the vote and carried.

**57**     **ISLINGTON ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT ANNUAL UPDATE**

Councillor Poole, seconded by Councillor Hamitouche, moved the recommendations in the report.

Councillor Poole particularly noted The Streets They Left Behind Project which is erecting plaques remembering Islington residents who were killed in WWI in the street where they lived or grew up and thanked the officers involved.

The recommendations were put to the vote and carried.



**58     CONSTITUTION UPDATE**

Councillor Alice Perry, seconded by Councillor Poyser, moved the recommendations in the report.

The recommendations were put to the vote and carried.

**59     CHIEF WHIP'S REPORT**

Councillor Alice Perry, seconded by Councillor Poyser, moved the recommendations in the report.

The recommendations were put to the vote and carried.

**60     NOTICES OF MOTION**

**Motion1: Support the Human Rights Act**

Councillor Russell moved the motion. Councillor Nick Ward moved an amendment to the motion. Councillor Kaseki contributed to the debate.

The recommendations in the amended motion were put to the vote and CARRIED.

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

**RESOLVED:**

- To support the council's Equalities Champion in working with residents and organisations within the borough to co-ordinate activity to ensure their views on the importance of the Human Rights Act are brought to the attention of the Government when it is considering repealing the Act.
- To mark the United Nations 'Human Rights Day' on 10th December to emphasise the importance of human rights.

**Motion 2: Ban on Glyphosate**

Councillor Russell moved the motion. Councillors Webbe, Poyser, Heather, Parker and Andrews contributed to the debate.

The recommendations in the motion were put to the vote and LOST.

**61     EMERGENCY MOTION - ISLINGTON PARK STREET COMMUNITY**

This item was taken under Minute 50 'Urgent items relating to 38-44 Islington Park Street' above.

The meeting closed at 10.25 pm

**MAYOR**