



# ISLINGTON

Law and Public Services  
Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD

Report of : The Leader

Meeting of	Date	Agenda Item	Ward(s)
Executive	31 October 2002	C2	All

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**Subject: THREE YEAR SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLAN  
*ONE ISLINGTON***

## Introduction

- 1 This report sets the scene for the work of the council over the next three years. The Audit Commission in their recent corporate assessment of the council was very positive about the sense of ambition and the sense of direction shown by the council. This three year service and financial plan gives reality to those ambitions and to that sense of direction. It builds on the foundations of the previous 3 year plan which achieved much in delivering financial stability
- 2 This administration is ambitious for the people of Islington. We want our community to be socially cohesive and prosperous. We want people to live safely in decent homes in stable communities with access to good quality public services. We want a vibrant local economy and we want people to have access to a full range of leisure, cultural and retail services. In order to make our aspirations a reality, we need to plan ahead to deliver the programme.
- 3 We cannot as a council do these things on our own. The future is increasingly about partnership. The council needs to build on the range of partnerships already in place to ensure much more coherent delivery of public sector services as well as engaging the private sector more deeply in the vision for the future of Islington.
- 4 In such a new world the council will be delivering fewer services directly but having a significantly wider role in influencing the decisions and services provided across the public sector in Islington.
- 5 The government's agenda is publicly to give better performing councils more freedoms and more resources. The practical reality is the opposite and only by taking a longer view of our forward plan can we retain control of our own direction.

- 6 We do have the chance now to plan over a longer time span than before. Many of our aspirations, and many of the improvements we want to see, cannot be achieved in a single year or even two. To achieve change in major services needs careful planning, consultation and implementation. That is why we believe this is the right time to set out our plans for the next three years. Service users can be given proper notice of changes, staff can plan the changes and partners can be properly involved in the discussions.
- 7 The purpose of this report is, therefore, to describe how we are instituting a three year budget process in such a way as to ensure that the council is fit to deliver its priorities. We are determined that the future budget of the council will be led by our ambition for service delivery, and that the way in which services are structured and organised will facilitate our ambitions.

## **Recommendations**

- 8 The Executive is recommended:-
  - (i) to endorse the report and the approach to delivering the council's priorities embodied in this report and the consequent development of a three year service and financial planning process
  - (ii) to consult as part of the service and financial planning process for 2003/04 and subsequently
  - (iii) to seek the views of members, the public and our partners on the shape of the services and budget set out in this report.

## **The vision**

- 9 Our vision of a council which gives reality to the priorities for the people of Islington which are reflected in the council's priorities of:
  - regeneration
  - sustainability
  - customer focus
  - performance improvement
- 10 These reflect our need not only to improve the quality of life for all who live and work and visit Islington, but to ensure that we have a council that is organised and focussed on serving the customers and on improving our performance.
- 11 Our ambitions are underpinned by a strong commitment to partnerships. We recognise that we are one of a number of public sector bodies in Islington and that increasingly success practically and in the eyes of our residents will depend on being able to resolve problems and work together seamlessly and in partnership. We also have a range of important partnerships with the private sector and we intend to continue that approach in areas where the right investment and expertise are available.
- 12 Although we have a clear vision of the way in which Islington should be working and delivering services the council's budget does not yet reflect these aspirations. The vision behind this report is that our three year look forward at our budget should facilitate and support the council's vision and priorities.
- 13 In the past, public services have been organised around the systems, structures and funding needed to manage and deliver those services. We now want to move to a situation where

the needs and convenience of service users are the determining factor. The fragmentation of the public sector, the growth of new institutions and the changing set of relationships between public sector bodies, all have made it more difficult to retain a coherent “One Islington” approach. “One Islington” means that all parts of the council, and eventually the Islington public sector, take responsibility for queries, complaints and questions raised by members of the public. This is something that this approach to planning our budget seeks to address.

- 14 Our vision is to bring coherence back to the public service to the people of Islington through partnership in service delivery. We are working more closely than ever before with the health service through the Primary Care Trust and through the joint Mental Health and Social Care Trust. The impact of *inter alia* the new Director of Public Health means that policy and programmes are being developed jointly and we are working increasingly to joint objectives and targets. It is also the case that council services are increasingly being delivered in partnerships with other bodies:-
  - the health service partnerships mentioned above
  - the Islington Crime Reduction Partnership involving the police and other players in the criminal justice system
  - working with partners at City and Islington College, and with some schools on joint service provision
  - proposals for an Arms Length Management Organisation (ALMO) to manage the council’s housing stock.
- 15 Our partnership work is drawn together in the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP). This body brings together representation of all of the statutory bodies and of the voluntary and community sectors in taking a strategic overview of development across the borough.
- 16 As we work more closely alongside the voluntary sector in the LSP we are changing and developing our relationship with the voluntary sector.
- 17 Looking forward, our vision of seamless service delivery is supported by the power of information technology and telecommunications. Our community should be able to access services, pay their bills, book appointments, and report problems and concerns across the public sector in the easiest ways possible. To do that we need to invest in modern technology, develop our staff to respond even more positively to customers and to build stronger partnerships with the police, the health service and educational institutions in the borough so that we can join things up for local people.
- 18 We want to involve people more in their local areas. The development of Area Committees will spearhead our efforts to engage with local people and groups and to make decisions at the closest possible level to the local community. The Area Committees have been in existence only since May. They are currently forums for consultation and involvement. It is intended that they should grow and develop into decision taking bodies of the council.

## **Getting focussed**

- 19 The council is very clear about its priorities and determined to meet these aspirations, to create the local authority of the future, which is fully accessible, electronically enabled and responsive. In order to do this, we are going to have to cut back on things that are not essential and be very focussed on priorities. We must make better use of the resources we have. We have to decide whether the council is the best organisation to continue do some of the things we do now or are there some areas of activity we ought to cease.

20 In creating this three year service and financial plan we will have to focus on priorities and take tough decisions when necessary and to be clear about what is of most importance in supporting the people of Islington.

### **Finance background**

21 Over the three years of the plan the council faces very significant and recurring spending pressures. The broad order of magnitude could be in excess of £10-15m per annum. In addition there are issues arising from government policy initiatives, demographic change and the clear desire of the council to set its own agenda. All of this is against the backdrop of the uncertainty created by the government's review of the method of allocating funding to local authorities.

22 Two aspects of this review which are of serious concern to the borough are first, the government's apparent intention to transfer grant away from London and the South East, and, second, a continuation of the government policy of transferring an increasing share of the cost of local council services to the council taxpayer.

23 The overall effect of this is to place enormous upward pressure on Council Tax levels in London, even if councils are successful in absorbing a significant amount of increased spending. In Islington this pressure will be more acute because we want significantly to reallocate budgets to local priorities as well.

### **The context in which we operate**

24 The overriding context in which this is being proposed is the determination of this council to carry forward the increasing financial discipline of the last two years. We have overcome the obstacles of the last few years, including the stabilisation of debt, less than rigorous financial management and an absence of political leadership and direction with members failing to identify their priorities and make them happen. We are determined, therefore, that henceforward this council will not only take a prudent and service-driven approach to the budget, but that this approach will be clearly positioned within a three year context.

25 Our approach to the three year plan is professionally endorsed as being appropriate and prudent; it is also being embraced by government and is now being recommended by government to local authorities. Whilst, however, the government commends a medium term approach, it does not facilitate planning. At the time of writing, we have no certainty (and merely some very wide potential parameters) about the settlement for the financial year 2003/04 and very little in relation to the subsequent two years. We expect to receive an announcement from the government in December but it seems unlikely that it will contain good news.

26 As stated earlier, the government is also reviewing how it funds local government services. This review will be critical to all councils and especially to Islington as over 70% of the funding for local services comes from Whitehall. Local authorities always have to make difficult decisions about the prioritisation and allocation of resources, and are stretched to find sufficient funds to discharge fully all the responsibilities and duties placed upon them. In the case of this council, over the three year time period, a number of factors are likely to increase the pressures on the council's resources:-

- the continuing problem with the council's staff pension fund deficit, rooted in the government decisions over the last ten years
- the financial burden of the central overheads as more and more direct services are externalised

- possible government directives on the size of balances which will mean an increase in the balances we have to hold
  - the new system of finance is likely to mean very small increases in our grants each year
  - the growth in our other costs will increase faster than our grant.
- 27 Additionally, the government has over a number of years put local authorities under pressure to increase spend to a pre-determined level on schools. The Government is now applying increasing political pressure to do the same for several aspects of our social service portfolio, and will implement financial penalties if some targets are not met. The way in which the government allocates funding means that whilst we are set (increasing) targets for expenditure, new money is not always provided to meet the spending pressures. We are in a situation in which the resources available to Islington seem likely to remain relatively static, whereas the demands on these resources are increasing considerably for reasons outside our control. The pressures upon us are likely to be further increased by activities of the Mayor of London. The London Plan, on which he is currently consulting, is likely to result in an increase in the total number of residents making use of the facilities provided by the council.
- 28 There are other pressures from government too which impact on us but not necessarily specifically because of our role as a local authority. The increase of 1% in National Insurance contributions applies to public sector employers – and Islington Council is a major employer. The council is required, as are others, to re-value the pension fund to which staff contribute, and which provides retirement benefits for former council workers. This money will have to be found from either the council's capital or revenue resources and to compete with such schemes as renovating and repairing schools, maintaining our other capital assets and investing in front line services.
- 29 If we do all the things that the government wants us to, and the predictions about the grant settlement are realised, the council could be facing a gap between £10m and £15m this year between what it ought to spend and its income. The challenge we face is fourfold:-
- to move money into more important areas from those of lower priority
  - to reduce spending on overheads, eliminate inefficiencies and increase spending on front line services
  - to reduce overall spending to keep council tax as pledged to below the London average.
  - to review our long term spending plans to manage the gap in our finances for each of the next three years
- 30 This report balances our priorities as a council with the requirements of government and in that light to review the use of the resources available to Islington, as far as we can foresee the situation, over the next three years. This puts the council as far as it is now possible in charge of its own destiny. The council's strategic direction will be enabled by sound financial management and not determined by it.

## **Planning and priorities by service theme**

- 31 Below, taking the themes of the council,
- regeneration
  - sustainability
  - customer focus
  - performance,

we seek to explore the way in which services will be prioritised in order to deliver a greater focus on priorities and plan and manage our budget accordingly.

## **Regeneration**

32 Regeneration is about improving the life chances of everyone in Islington. Our effort and spending to do this is necessarily focussed upon redressing the balance in favour of the least well off in our borough. We are identifying some key priorities in relation to:-

- specific regeneration projects
- relationships
- education
- housing services

These are explained below in more detail.

33 These are a number a specific regeneration projects in the borough, which typically attract a considerable amount of government or GLA related funding. Examples of these projects include:-

- the work of the Kings Cross Partnership
- the regeneration around the Arsenal stadium relocation
- the work of the Finsbury Park Partnership
- the EC1 New Deal Partnership in the South of the borough
- the work of City Fringe Partnership in areas adjacent to the City of London.

### **Specific regeneration projects**

34 These schemes are very important to the council. We participate as a partner and as the responsible body for the public money spent. Bringing this money into the borough is of benefit to all our residents and this will continue to be a priority for us. We will continue to put effort and resources into supporting these schemes.

35 In addition to that, we have been working hard to make partnership a reality by involving the LSP in wider discussion and in developing a neighbourhood renewal fund financial allocation to meet the deprivation indicators set out by government. The LSP is already taking a strategic interest in schemes in the borough and a practical interest in the way in which we spend resources. We are currently engaged in spending some £14m on projects that will deliver our jointly approved neighbourhood renewal strategy and help meet the government's neighbourhood renewal targets.

### **Relationship with voluntary sector**

36 The voluntary and community sector is a strong and important contributor to Islington society. In many respects it represents one of the best examples of the sort of empowered community the Council wishes to promote. Voluntary and community organisations work tirelessly to provide assistance and support to members of our community many of whom are not in touch with other council services. The sector is also a key council partner in

another way because we rely on a number of voluntary organisations to deliver services for us, many on a contractual basis.

- 37 Two years ago an extensive review was undertaken of the council's relationship with the voluntary sector. This was based around a report by the New Policy Institute, which brought the funding process in line with the council's strategic aims. We are now much clearer about the rationale for funding voluntary organisations than we have been for many years. The outcome was that the days in which local authorities gave grant funding to voluntary bodies on a discretionary basis have come to an end across most of the country. There are other sources of funding available, including funding from an increasing range of central government and other public sector sources, from the national lottery in its various guises and from trusts and other charitable organisations and the voluntary sector. Meanwhile, the council is increasingly using the voluntary sector as a service provider and working with voluntary organisations on a contractual basis. The voluntary sector is no longer the 'dependent' sector in Islington.
- 38 The council has also transformed its relationship with the voluntary sector where it is an individual organisation's landlord. Fair rents and long leases are being negotiated with community centres, and other organisations have worked closely with the council to relocate to more appropriate accommodation.
- 39 The community network and the voluntary sector compact, which is currently being negotiated, will further improve the relationship between the council and the voluntary sector. Meanwhile, there is also a substantial unpaid voluntary sector that is not enabled to participate in this activity through lack of staff time and on which we need to focus our programme of community outreach. We are engaged in an important programme of community outreach that will involve the community groups and give a key profile to the informal voluntary sector in our borough.

### **Schools and pre-school services**

- 40 Schools in Islington are now performing better than ever – more and more children are achieving academic standards to match their peers in other communities. The council has moved to correct the under-investment of the past but there is still much to do. We have worked hard to make sure that schools have received all the extra money the government has allocated and has to date been able to fund increases in teachers pay in full. There remain a significant number of surplus places in our primary schools. One of our priorities is to improve the quality of our primary schools provision in the round and we need to consider how we tackle this situation. Tackling spare capacity in schools and surplus places in the primary sector by a programme of school reconfiguration and amalgamation would offer a number of opportunities, including releasing capital to maintain the improvement trend already underway.
- 41 The trend for numbers attending our secondary schools is the opposite and as numbers increase the delivery of the pledge to establish a new secondary school is imperative. Discussion with partners and funders continues.
- 42 The recent best value review of services to children in the early years, play and youth services drew attention to some lack of coherence between what was happening in schools and these services. Our services to children in the early years have a national reputation for excellence and we want to build on that by creating closer links between schools and early years services so we will be exploring locating early years services on school sites. We need also to better target our services so that they really do improve the quality of life of those most in need. This will enable us not just to make better use of facilities and buildings but to enable people to address transition issues better and to work more closely together.

## **Young people**

43 The best value review also drew attention to a number of issues concerning the play and youth service. While Islington's service is among the most expensive, if not the most expensive in the country, the service needs to have better outcome measures, clearer planning and commissioning strategies, as well as consistent quality assurance mechanisms. We wish to focus the service around the administration's priorities of raising attainment and reducing youth disorder. As a result youth services will be aligned closer to Connexions, and play services to schools. There is substantial scope for rationalising management within the service as well as reviewing the effectiveness of the service, including the balance between the Council's roles as provider and commissioner of services in this area. This will support us in our partnership with connexions and other bodies which provide young people with access to training and support. It is important that we co-ordinate and target the support we provide to vulnerable young people and help them to become responsible citizens in our community.

## **Libraries.**

44 Library access has long been an important contribution to learning and education. Traditional use of libraries is diminishing in Islington as it is across the country. We will need carefully to monitor the effects of the substantial investment this administration has made in buying books, installing more computers, renovating library buildings and increasing opening hours. We need to explore how to sustain and increase the number of adults and young people who access our libraries, including seeing whether a partnership approach is more welcoming and more sustainable, and whether technology enabled library services is the way forward.

## **Housing Services**

45 We have an aspiration that everyone in Islington should live in a decent home with modern facilities. The government claims to share our aspiration, but it does not make it easy to deliver that aspiration. We also have an aspiration that tenants should take greater control over their own homes. Progress has already been made with the development of tenant management organisations (TMOs) in the borough. The government does not wish councils to continue as landlords and much government investment in housing is aimed at encouraging us to find other ways to manage the stock. We are exploring ways of maintaining tenant involvement and public ownership of the stock whilst accessing the £180m we need to ensure that the interiors of all our houses and flats meet the decent homes standard by 2010. It is for that reason that we are currently pursuing consideration of the option of an ALMO. We recognise that this is a top priority issue for our tenants, but there is a long way to go. 61% of our homes are currently below the decent homes standard – one of the worst positions in the country; a legacy of past neglect. To turn that round will take time. We further wish the ALMO to become the appropriate vehicle to deliver more control for tenants over their own lives possibly through a Community Housing Association.

46 More people want to live in Islington than are able to do so. There is not only a high level of demand from external sources, but many people who have been born and brought up in the borough cannot find any affordable way in which to continue to live close to their roots, and to friends and family. There is also a large amount of "hidden homelessness" in Islington, where people are living in overcrowded households, sleeping on floors, or moving between friends and relatives homes. Waiting lists are long, demand is high and even though we are bringing empty homes back into use faster than ever before, demand continues to increase. We currently provide a number of advisory services to people who want to come and live here. Some of those services duplicate services already provided nationally or locally by

other agencies or by the voluntary sector. We want to review those services, as there is a risk that they help create an expectation that homes might be available to people here. There are already a number of voluntary organisations that provide good quality advice and we need to maximise our partnerships with those organisations.

47 We face pressures for more social housing and to support key workers in our public services. We will develop our planning policies to facilitate this, and we are working in collaboration with other councils on these issues.

48 The council has an in house service providing architectural and surveying services. The need for such a unit will need to be reviewed in the light of continuing demands and in the light of the future with other professional service organisations in the borough.

## **Sustainability**

49 Developing a sustainable community is a key commitment for the council. This is concerned with the twin themes of:-

- Creating a cleaner, greener environment, and encouraging sustainable lifestyles
- Supporting a sustainable community, including appropriate social care for the most vulnerable

These are dealt with below in more detail.

## **Environment and Leisure Services**

50 The quality of our environment is key to the quality of life of all of us, and supporting a sustainable lifestyle is essential for our future. We are committed to having a 'Greener Islington'. We need to make substantial progress in improving recycling and reducing waste. We also need to continue to combat excessive volume and speed of traffic and to continue the roll out of Controlled Parking Zones, especially in the light of the Mayor of London's proposals for congestion charging which will start in February 2003.

51 As part of our push for a healthier Islington we need to ensure that our leisure centres provide appropriate programmes in modernised facilities. Our resources should be used to complement alternative provision and to widen accessibility of these facilities rather than merely to widen the choice available to the more privileged members of our community. We face strong competition for leisure services from the private sector and from new facilities in neighbouring boroughs. We need to review whether there might be advantage in reconfiguring our centres but operating to higher standards of quality and improving still further the access we offer to disadvantaged groups of our community.

52 Making our streets even more people friendly is a major objective. We endeavour to ensure that the environment is attractive, safe and healthy, and that every effort is made to reduce crime and vandalism. There are several opportunities to provide services more effectively. Many of the problems that disfigure our streets could be dealt with by more effective enforcement of regulations, and by the collection of fines. This is not just about abandoned cars and fly tipping – dealing with traders who invade the pavement is just as important. Islington is an attractive location for shopping and there are many potential partners if we were to make street advertising space available.

53 Sustainability is about more than individual services. The Council must put its own house in order, making best use of all its resources, including land and property, and by increasing the use of e-government to reduce the use of paper and fuel.

## **Social Services**

- 54 The social services department now has an improving reputation for being well managed and well focussed on the needs of local people – our most recent inspection had much praise for what has been achieved. Our children are safer and our older people better cared for than ever before. To achieve those standards is expensive and we need to prioritise our efforts so that the resources that we are putting in are seen to give rise to real benefits for our most vulnerable citizens. We already spend more than our government allocation on social services and we intend to continue to increase the resources we give to social services. Nonetheless, the government has made ambitious predictions for the future and is requiring us to spend well above our current allocation in this area of activity. In addition, it is a key government target to reduce “bed blocking” as part of which the council will be fined for every day that we miss the target for assessing needs and delivering services to vulnerable people who need to be discharged from hospital and return to their homes or to other provision. We will need to make some considerable effort to ensure that we meet those targets and make provision to ensure that we discharge all of our obligations.
- 55 As a result, our spending on the care of elderly people, especially on those emerging from hospital will need to increase. As staff training and the costs of proper facilities in homes for the elderly continue to rise, our costs have risen disproportionately as the costs for all providers in this sector are high and have, for the last few years, risen at a faster rate than inflation. Along with every council in London, we find it difficult to recruit social workers and care staff and we will have to continue to invest in programmes to recruit and retain staff.
- 56 We are committed to playing our part in improving the health of the people of our community in partnership with the Primary Care Trust. That involves developing joint programmes to tackle health problems, the social causes of poor health and health inequalities, but these projects need funding and while improvements in health have huge long term benefits for the individuals and the community, up front investment is needed. We are looking at how to do that in the most cost-effective way and to see where we can collaborate with the PCT to provide services. Where this can be done more effectively and at less cost than providing directly we will pursue this. We are already seeking to co-locate the Council’s social services with the new PCT headquarters as an example of the way in which we intend to work in partnership to deliver services in future.
- 57 It is important that we modernise the way we deliver services. As part of the relationship with the rest of the public sector and especially the PCT we will be looking to enable clients to access our services alongside the other services they are using. Increasingly our clients are contacting us by phone and we want that to increase as well as looking at more contact by e-mail. We will as part of this exercise review whether all the office bases we have are needed into the future – any money saved can then be put into front line services.
- 58 Despite the pressure from government to provide the national framework of services there are a number of services we provide that help local people – day centres and other enabling services. We recognise the immense value of those services to local people and we intend to sustain them and ensure that we continue to support vulnerable people and offer them access and opportunities to make a contribution to our communities.
- 59 But services to adults are not the only area where expectations and demands are rising. Our services to children, those children in our community most at risk and in need of attention and stability in their lives, are under pressure too. Good quality placements cost more every year, and we want to make sure that the education and care these children

receive does as much as possible to ensure that they are able to overcome their difficulties and become good citizens with stable lives and good jobs.

## **Customer focus**

- 60 This administration was elected with the slogan “putting people first”. This has been translated into our commitment to customer focus. We have a clear commitment to deliver services in the way in which most suits residents and in which they can best access them. This gives rise to a programme of transforming the council, introducing e-government and providing access to services through the web, via email, and the telephone as appropriate. We are also piloting the delivery of services and information through local digital TV.
- 61 This programme of transformation will require a careful look at every service provided by the council. Services will be transformed and enhanced. Experience in other sectors and other organisations indicate that this review and reconfiguration may allow us to move staff from some of the duties and procedures that we are currently required to do. We could, as a result, put more effort into front line service delivery. Initially, however, there will be a need for investment and for commitment to that over the three years.
- 62 The investment that we need to make in our technical infrastructure will need to be matched by investment in the skills of our staff and by provision of information to the public about the ways in which they will be able to access and to avail themselves of our services.
- 63 Currently our customer focus function encompasses our work to support and promote equality of opportunity in respect of the community at large and in respect of our staff. Equalities will continue to be a priority for the council and we will build on the work of our Advisory Group and Race Diversity Forum to ensure that our partnership activities continue to have a strong equal opportunities dimension.
- 64 Our vision of customer focus and e-government centres on access to services, information and other agencies. E-government does not mean that all residents will necessarily need computers, email and Internet access in their own homes. For many it means the one-stop shop, the call centre, the IT kiosks as well as online services. They are the flexible and highly accessible “front office”, where residents and businesses will make their contact with the council and resolve their issues and concerns in one visit. The “back offices” will be electronically linked, delivering highly effective services provided by a number of contractors and agencies.

## **Performance improvement**

- 65 This administration is committed to improving performance across the council. We have already made significant improvements in our performance and on the indicators by which the government judges us. In several areas our performance is among the best in inner London. But in too many areas performance improvement is too slow. We are pledged to having no indicators in the bottom 25% and 40% of our indicators to match the best in inner London by 2005. To achieve that we have a new strategy for performance improvement that will develop action plans for each department.
- 66 We also want to engage the public much more in judging both our performance and the public sector’s collective work to improve the quality of life. We are working on developing indicators that reflect the improvements that our services make to the quality of life of people in the borough. We also want to get much more feedback from our customers about how well we are doing in meeting their needs and aspirations. This is a key factor in our

accountability to local people through the Area Committees and through the process of scrutiny.

67 The council buys an increasing amount of supplies and services from the private sector. We continue to seek out the best possible deals to give the most cost efficient service to local people. Better procurement will allow us to get better value for money and will mean that resources are channelled into front line services rather than into the processes of procurement and monitoring. Better use of our capital assets will generate benefits all round for us as a Council and for all of the services that we provide, in partnership or as an organisation. One of our current initiatives is to look at how we purchase temporary staff and agency staff – this will release significant funds for frontline services.

## **Conclusion**

68 The council has ambitious plans to improve public services in Islington. We know those ambitions are shared by local people, by our partners, and by the people who work for the council. The financial climate we face will be tough, and we will not be able to do all the things we want as quickly as we want. But we are committed to sharing the choices with local people; our partners and our staff so that we can take the decisions based on the best guidance we can get on local needs and priorities.

69 By 2006 it will be difficult to relate the shape of the council, its services and the whole of the borough to that of 1998. We are already midway through a period of enormous change and the council is determined to be in control of its destiny throughout this process.

70 The physical changes of the regeneration schemes, especially with the Arsenal and Kings Cross will happen alongside the regeneration of our deprived communities who will be enabled and empowered to take an increasing level of control over their lives. The sustainability of the borough will depend on others following the council's lead on the green agenda not least on waste management and probably further limitations on the use of the motor car. The impact of information technology should greatly assist and develop these agendas. The council's performance must continue to improve in part to meet the expectations and demands of the residents but also to secure the level of funding that government is promising.

71 It is the council's democratic responsibility to set out for the people of Islington a vision that they can be consulted on, comprehend and sign up for. Working in partnership not least with our residents the council can and will deliver this vision.

Final Report Clearance

Signed by .....  
Leader of the Council ..... Date .....

Received by .....  
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