



ISLINGTON

www.islington.gov.uk

Issue 1, 2001

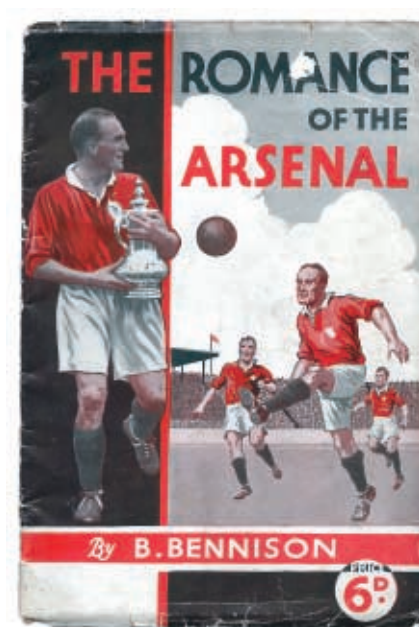
Council tax DOWN again!

COUNCIL TAX is down by £10 this year. It is the second year running Islington residents have had their tax cut. Last year we cut the tax by £25 and this year Islington looks set to be the only London borough in which the council tax has gone down.

Two years ago, Islington had the highest council tax in London – now it could be the 15th lowest in the capital, despite a big increase in the amount residents have to pay for London-wide services such as the police and fire brigade.

We have pledged to reduce the council tax every year for three years, so Islington residents have another reduction to look forward to.

ARSENAL What's the latest score?



see page 4



We mean streets to stay clean

PEOPLE DUMPING rubbish on Islington's streets will end up in court. That's our message, loud and clear to residents and traders alike. We have been praised recently by the government for having the cleanest streets in London and we want it to stay that way.

Parts of Islington, notorious for being regular dumping grounds or streets which have a constant rubbish problem, are being patrolled

regularly by our Streetscene officers who will not hesitate to prosecute anyone they catch littering.

And we mean business. A Finsbury Park supermarket was fined £685 in December for creating a huge illegal rubbish dump in Seven Sisters Road. After a tip off, our astonished officers found an employee piling the 116th bag of rubbish onto a narrow footpath.

continued on page 3

Keeping Islington's streets clean. An 800-gallon whale tanker washes the dirt and grime off Islington's streets.

Look inside for more about what's happening in and around Islington



new park



democracy



green space



keeping fit



playcentres

Welcome

From Leisha Fullick, Chief Executive of Islington Council



Welcome to the first issue of the council's newsletter. Our aim is to report back to you on what the council is doing and on other things happening in Islington.

The council is here to work for you, the residents – and we need to know what you want for Islington. In this issue we are asking for your views on the council's future democratic structure – see page 9 for details. And we also want to know how well you think we're doing – more information on page 5.

Please remember – it's your council. Please let us know what you think and we will do our best to help.

You can find our contact details on page 3.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Clean bowl

Islington's only cricket pitch, the Wray Crescent open space, is to get a £100,000 makeover. The money will be used to restore the dilapidated pavilion, upgrade the pitch, install new play equipment – a 'trim trail' for toddlers – and repair paths.

Last quack for duckweed

The battle against duckweed in New River has finally been won – we hope! The northern stretch of the river has been drained and silt removed. With the old pumps restored, we're hoping that the duckweed will stay away for good. We've also improved security to neighbouring properties by planting 200 extra-prickly shrubs.

Xmas trees meet their chips

Free Christmas tree recycling was a hit for over 400 residents this year. More than twice as many of you than last year. There were seven drop-off points around the borough where residents could leave their trees for collection and in return get a bag of chips for mulching. Anyone who dropped off their tree but hasn't yet picked up their free bag of bark chippings should contact the Ecology Centre in Gillespie Road on 020 7354 5162.



The new park on the site of the Royal Northern Hospital will be a welcome addition to Islington's relatively few open green spaces such as Highbury Fields (above).

New park in the north

A new park will emerge from the site of the old Royal Northern Hospital, which has been pulled down to make way for new homes. The park will be managed by local people and will be the first in the borough to be designed with a wildflower field.

It is the biggest project in the Manor Gardens area and local residents were very keen to have some input. They set up their own development committee three years ago and it has steered the project.

Recycling

Bellway Homes have provided an acre of land for the park and £140,000 for landscaping. Indeed they went one further, they have saved a lot of material from the old building, like stone

ornaments which we'll recycle in the park. The casualty department was a World War One memorial and they also saved the old plaques.

The new park is to be split into three sections. The memorial area will include a special wall using the plaques. The 'active' zone will have a children's play area and ball court. And then there's the wildflower field.

Local involvement

A park users committee will help manage the new park once it is complete and will be the first point of contact for local people. We will do the work but we'll liaise with local residents over what needs doing.

Summer study

Last year, around 2,000 Islington young people took part in our extremely successful Summer University. They learned a whole range of new and useful skills from maths to marketing and computers to canoeing. Now a video – made by the young people themselves – is hitting secondary schools and community groups. The Summer University is run by the Play & Youth Service, in partnership with the University of North London, City & Islington College, the Metropolitan Police, the Enterprise Careers Service, and the Islington Education Business Partnership. For information about Summer 2001, contact Carol Mackinnon on 020 7527 5558.



Learning new skills at Islington Summer University.

Crackdown

continued from page 1



One of the 235 abandoned cars Islington's contractors pick up monthly.

Three other firms have also been recently convicted of dumping rubbish. A restaurant in Upper Street found itself on the end of a £787 fine. A gym was fined £100 plus £300 costs, whilst another Finsbury Park supermarket found the cost of putting rubbish bags on the pavement was £325.

This is not to mention the successful prosecution of five Cally Road traders since last March. But businesses aren't the only culprits, some residents clearly need reminding that littering is a criminal offence. The courts can impose a fine of up to £2,500 and we won't hesitate to prosecute.

How can you help keep our streets clean?

Please put your rubbish out on collection days only. Traders should put it in the proper bags provided by Islington Cleansing Services Department (ICSL). If you see rubbish dumped on public paths or roads, please call 020 7527 4692 and we will remove it.

You can take your domestic waste to the Ashburton Grove depot (off Benwell Road) for free, Monday to Saturday from 2pm-8pm or Sunday from 8.30am-4pm. Their number is 020 7607 1040.

Abandoned cars

Abandoned cars are a problem for all London boroughs. Islington removes around 235 dumped vehicles from the streets every month. Vehicles that are reported to us have to be checked out with the DVLA and their owners searched for before we can remove them, which can take weeks. Often, someone will come forward and claim the car – even if it hasn't been moved for weeks and looks abandoned.

Dangerous or burnt out cars can be removed immediately. You can e-mail: abandoned.vehicles@islington.gov.uk

The council offers a free removal service for Islington residents who no longer want their old car. You have to show documents proving you own the car.

For your information

About rubbish collection, illegally dumped rubbish or litter, dangerous signs or street repairs please call:

Streetscene hotline 020 7527 4814

Streetscene fax 020 7527 4577

Streetscene are the team who look after Islington's streets.

To report faulty street lighting call 020 7527 2674.

To have bulky rubbish removed, like furniture or fridges but not building materials or rubble, call ICSL on 020 7527 4692.

To hire weekend skips call 020 7527 4692.

For recycling facilities for newspapers and magazines, glass, aluminium, textiles and even sump oil. Please call 020 7527 2674

If you have bulk refuse and you want us to collect it please call 020 7527 4692.

E-mail: residents.news@islington.gov.uk



Your views . . .



We want to know what you think about how the council is doing. Why not have your say.

Do you think we are doing the right things?

Is there anything you think we have done well?

How could we improve our service to you?

How do you think the council should be run in the future?

What do you want to see in this newsletter?

We want to hear what you have to say. So, if you want to make a comment about any aspect of the council or the service you get from us, please:

Phone: 020 7527 3416

E-mail: residents.news@islington.gov.uk

Write to: Leisha Fullick, Chief Executive
Islington Council
Town Hall, Upper Street, N1 2UD.

Tell us what you think. After all, if you don't tell us something's wrong we can't do anything about it...

We look forward to your feedback.

Thumbs up for green crew



Residents are very happy with our maintenance of the borough's green space.

"Very good and getting better." That's the verdict on Islington's Greenspace team. It's not just what local people think, the Government's own watchdog, the Audit Commission, says so.

Greenspace, who take care of Islington's parks, council estate gardens, playgrounds, trees and nature reserves, have been given a two-star rating. The Audit Commission believes their performance is not only good but getting better.

The commission found that public satisfaction with Greenspace services was very high, at

79% compared with the London average of 64%, and rising to 85% for play areas.

Singled out for praise were:

- the low cost of Greenspace's services
- the quality of Islington's parks
- the number of play areas – easily the highest number in London for under 12s, stocked with 'well-maintained' equipment and 'popular with users'

- evidence that Greenspace listened to their users and clients and used feedback to take positive action to improve the service
- a commitment to partnerships which has raised extra income for Islington's parks, public gardens and playing fields.

The commission also pointed to areas where the service needs to improve. These include: making it easier for residents to book sports facilities, computerising the tree maintenance service and reducing the cost of running an in-house nursery.

Should the Greenspace nursery stay?

Islington's parks and flower beds are stocked with plants grown in the council's own nursery in Barnet.

The nursery was one of the first in the country to adopt environmentally-friendly practices. It banned the use of peat for improving soil ten years ago and the nursery recently began using biodegradable pots for growing seedlings and cuttings.

But practices like these do not come cheap. The Audit Commission has challenged the service to find ways for the nursery to compete against the big commercial nurseries or they will close it down.

Greenspace are looking for ways to boost the nursery's income. One idea is to make the nursery available for educational use.

But there may be other ways of making the nursery more business-like.

If Greenspace opened a stall selling organic plants and seedlings at the Farmers' Market on Sunday mornings, would **you** be one of their customers?

Perhaps you have a better idea? Send in your ideas and suggestions to Bob Gilbert at Resident's Newsletter, Room G12, Town Hall, Upper Street, London N1 2UD. Or e-mail: residents.news@islington.gov.uk

Arsenal update

We are taking our role deciding on Arsenal's planning applications very seriously indeed. We have the job of balancing the needs of Arsenal FC, and of local residents.

45,000 leaflets outlining the proposals and some of their impact have been sent to households in Islington. There have also been several public meetings, as well as a public exhibition. We have now received more than 2,400 responses from the public, which can be viewed at the Planning Enquiries reception at the Municipal Offices, 222 Upper Street; Monday to Friday between 9.00am and 4.30pm.



For the latest press releases on Arsenal check out the council's website on www.islington.gov.uk. Remember you can get free Internet access in our libraries...

ISLINGTON

Performance Plan

summary 2001/02

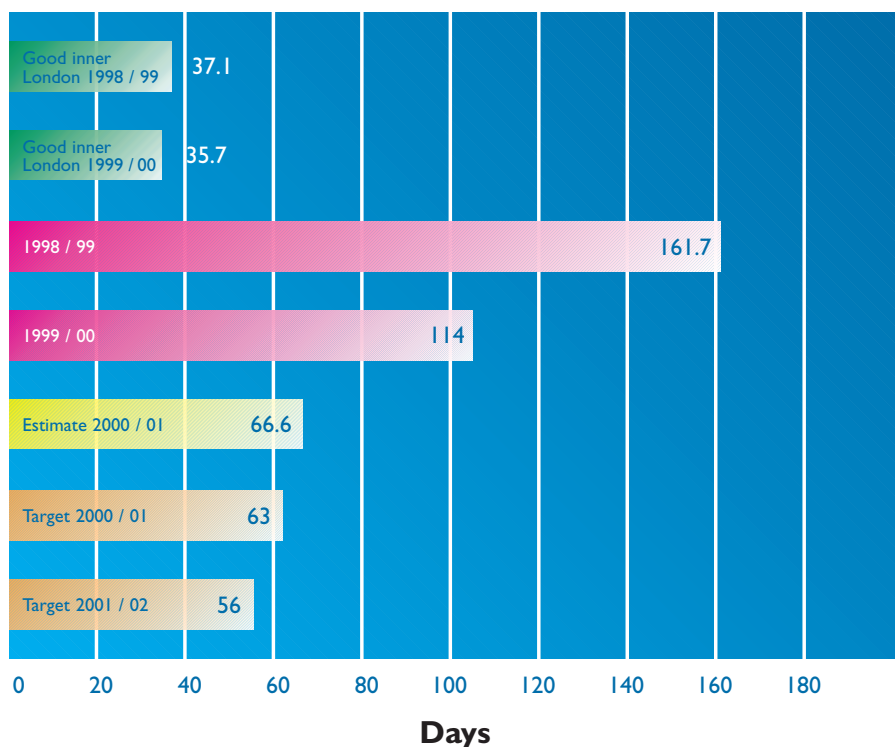
This is a summary of our second performance plan. It tells you how we have performed over the last year and our targets for the future.

We are making solid improvements but we accept there are many areas where more progress is needed. For example our efforts to tackle a poor housing benefits service have resulted in improvements to date and a new approach for the future.

We would welcome your feedback, so please complete the comments section at the end of this summary. If you want a copy of the full performance plan please contact Chris Lynch, at chris.lynch@islington.gov.uk or on 020 7527 3116.

Improving performance

How long council homes are empty



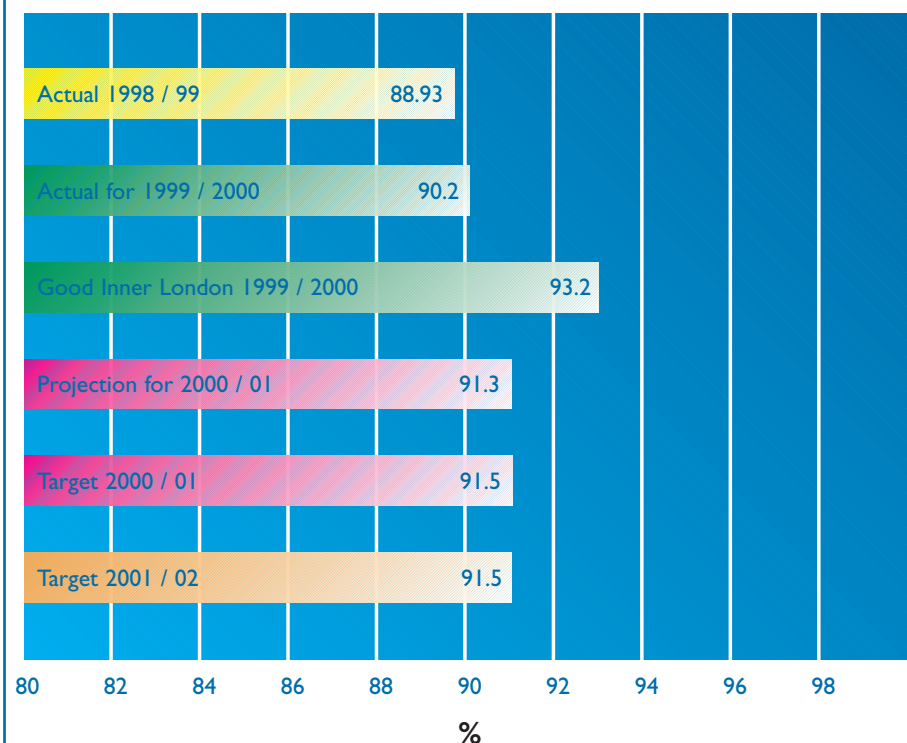
We are making rapid improvements in this area, catching up with the best councils in inner London. We have reduced the average time it takes us to re-let council property by over thirteen weeks in only two years. However, we realise that there is still a lot to do in this area.

We are working to make sure our services give value for money and are of a high quality.

For example:

- we have reduced council tax for two consecutive years (2000, 2001) and have pledged to do so again in 2002
- we are working with our partner CEA@Islington, to drive up standards in our schools and we have exceeded targets in our primary schools. The rate of improvement in secondary schools is slower than we want it to be. So we have set ambitious targets for CEA@Islington to meet in the borough's nine secondary schools
- we have improved our repairs service so that tenants have more control over getting their repairs carried out
- we are making it easier to contact council staff in all departments to improve customer care.

% of council tax collected



We are seeking to continuously improve our performance.

ISLINGTON

Performance Plan summary 2001/02

- we came top of a Government watchdog's performance tables for having one of the best refuse collection services and the cleanest streets in London
- we are improving the recycling service. We now have boroughwide door to door recycling in all streets and this is being extended to housing estates
- we have been successful in winning government funding:
 - over £2 million for schools
 - over £1 million for learning initiatives
 - over £7 million for regeneration.

Regenerating Islington

We are working with many local organisations to improve the quality of life for people in Islington. Our key priorities are to:

- improve education standards
- improve services for children below school-age
- increase employment opportunities
- improve health services and ensure fair access to these services
- increase the amount of affordable housing
- tackle crime and anti-social behaviour.

The council is working successfully with local communities – we have won major funding from central government to improve King's Cross and Finsbury Park. We have set up an Islington Partnership that will have £14 million to invest in improving the quality of life for people in the poorest parts of the borough (over the next three years).

A recent survey has identified crime as the major concern for Islington residents. A key priority of the Islington Partnership is to achieve a 'safe and inclusive community'. With the Police and other key partners we aim to:

- reduce street crime by 12%
- reduce domestic burglary by 15%
- reduce violence by 8%
- reduce domestic violence by 18%.

But our aim is to increase by 15% the number of racist and homophobic crimes that are solved by 2002.

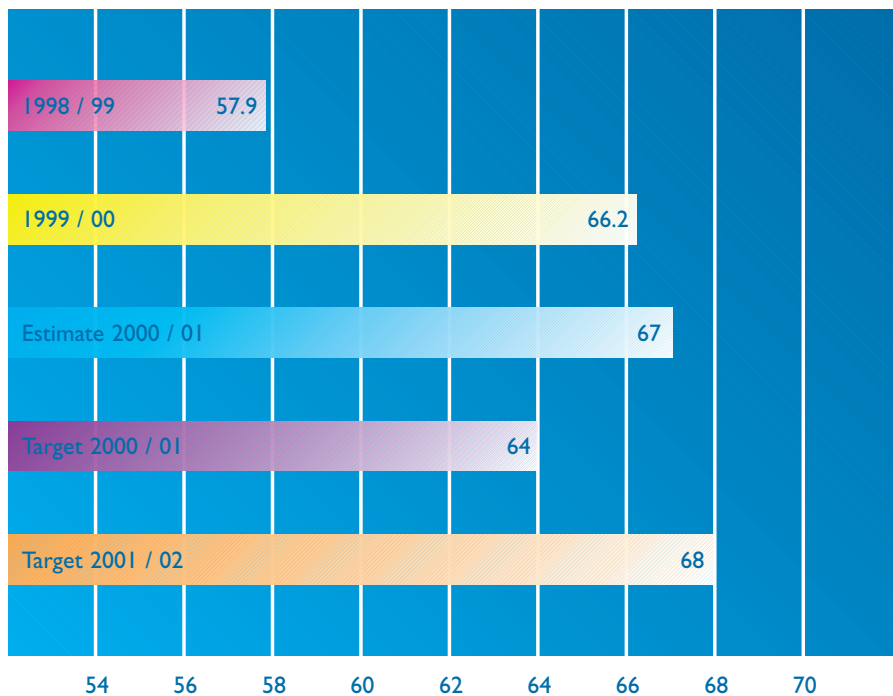
A greener Islington

Islington has a lot of traffic and is densely populated. We also have the least green space in London.

The council has a responsibility to protect, maintain and improve the environment. So we have made commitments to:

- spread door to door recycling across the whole borough
- improve cleanliness on our estates and streets
- keep the streetlights working
- plant at least 500 new additional trees by May 2002.

Proportion of 10 and 11 year olds in primary schools achieving level 4 or above in mathematics

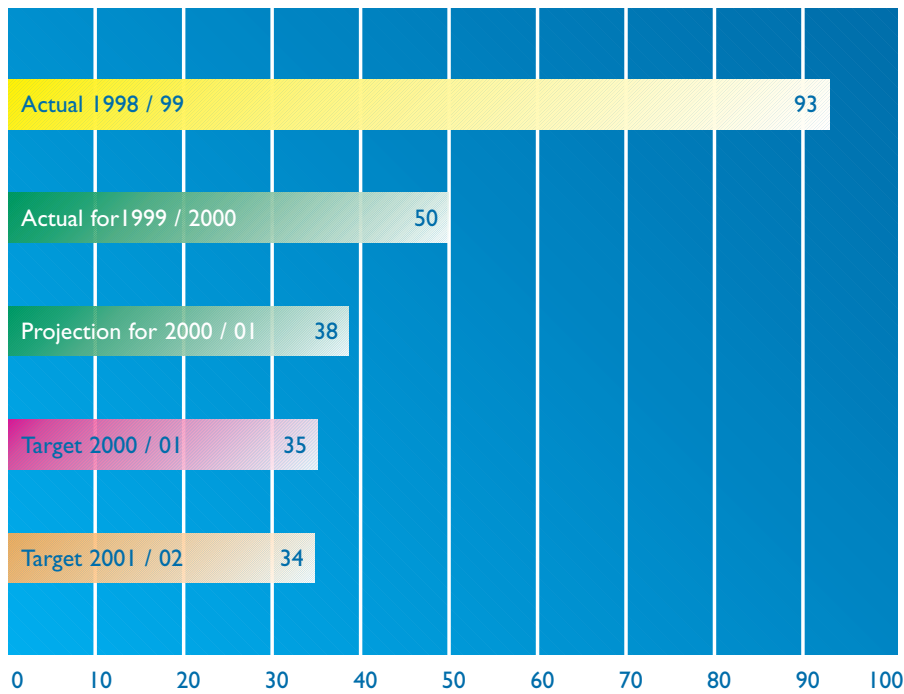


We are performing well, compared to other inner London councils, in helping schools raise achievement in primary schools. The chart above shows a result for mathematics at the key stage 2 test. The key stage 2 result for English also shows good improvement.

We do recognise that our performance is not increasing as fast as we would like in secondary schools. We have set ambitious targets for GCSEs together with our partner CEA@Islington.

Refuse collection

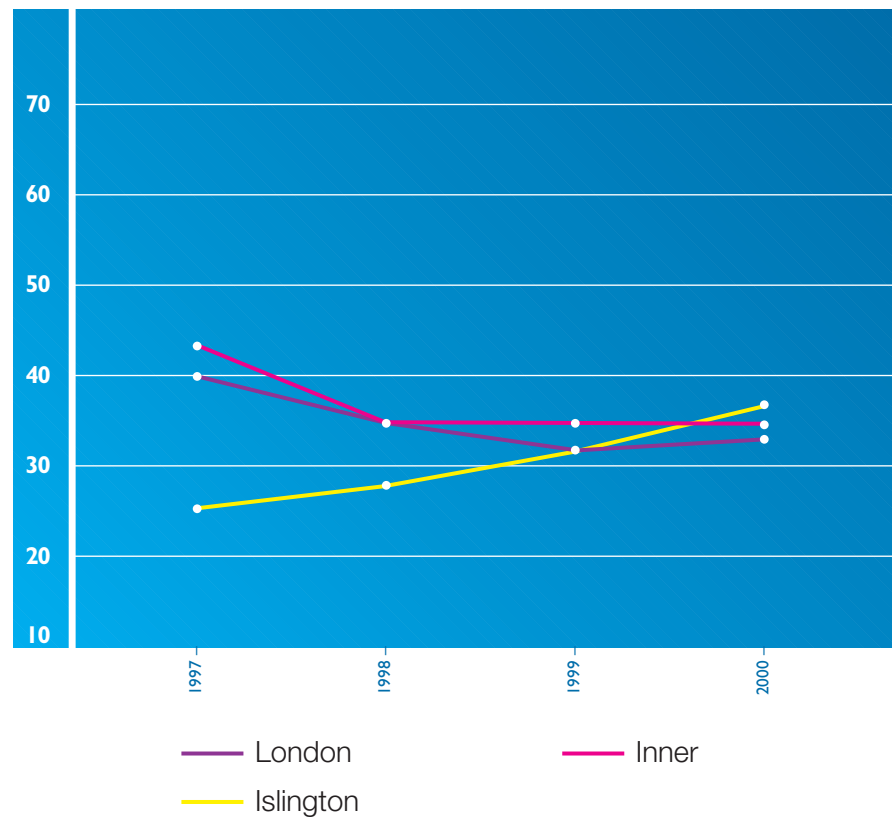
Number of household waste collections missed per 100,000 collections



We perform well on this indicator, compared to other inner London councils and we are working to continuously improve performance over the next five years.

% of people saying the council is doing a better job now than a year ago

Improvement since 1997



Putting people first

We want to open up the council by involving local people in the services that affect their lives. We want to be fair about how we do this to make sure everyone has an equal chance to have their say. Some of the ways we do this are:

- our annual survey of residents opinions that tells us about the key issues of concern to our residents and how they view the council and its services. The survey also compares our results with those from the rest of London. The results are important in shaping the council's priorities
- the Citizen's Panel where the council uses a representative sample of over 1,000 residents to consult in-depth on a wide range of issues, through postal surveys, focus groups and telephone polling
- our user satisfaction surveys that measure your satisfaction with council services.

Other ways we consulted local people last year included the Democracy Commission, a Citizens' Forum, a Citizens' Discussion Day, focus groups, and Neighbourhood Forums.

The Democracy Commission highlighted the need to make our consultation with local people even more effective. In response, we are developing an improved consultation strategy which will include:

- finding better ways to get the views of hard to reach groups

- better co-ordination of the different consultation exercises
- feeding back the results of our consultation to you
- making it easier for you to have your say using a wider range of methods, including the internet.

You can get a copy of the Democracy Commission's report by calling 020 7527 3002. You can also get more information about the future of local democracy in Islington by looking at our special pull out section on page 9 and looking on our website www.islington.gov.uk

Improving services for all

The council has produced shorter versions of this summary aimed specifically at three different age groups. We have called these documents 'Performance in focus' as they take a close look at areas that are of interest to:

- older people
- people of working age
- younger people.

You can request one of these documents by contacting Karen Amsden, on 020 7527 3437.

ISLINGTON

Performance Plan summary 2001/02

The council's finances

We are a big operation that spends over £700 million per annum. We are making sure that our finances support our corporate priorities of performance improvement, regeneration, a greener borough and putting people first.

More information about our finances are given in the full performance plan and the council tax leaflet which will be delivered to every household in the borough.

Best value reviews

Last year we began a five-year programme to review every aspect of the services we provide. As part of this process we are involving local people and organisations by:

- asking them to challenge us about why and how the council provides a service
- consulting people and organisations to find out if our services meet local needs.

We are also:

- comparing our performance with the best of public and private sector organisations
- assessing ourselves by testing whether our services give value for money.

We will review the following services in 2001/02:

- early years (under 5's), play and youth
- recycling
- community partnership
- our internal support services
- building control
- all our services that affect the streets of Islington.

The full performance plan report is available from libraries and neighbourhood offices. It can also be downloaded from our website, www.islington.gov.uk

This document is about the performance of your council. It tells you what we do for the people of Islington and how well we perform compared to other inner London councils. If you want to find out more about the performance plan, please contact Chris Lynch on 020 7527 3116.

Ky dokument la lihiyo ma malizimin o detyarwa nga Kashiili Ising. Na ts tregobat ne ciwre ban Kashiili per basorot o Islingtonu dbe na ma nire i kryen ni detyarw krahatar nse kashilist e tjeri tawada Londra. Na qofis ne doni ts mazaici na shama per kasa plan ts malizimni ts detyarwa, ja huzani kontaktoni shababimin o Perchintin ts matawira e telefonni 020 7527 3134.

تتعلق هذه الوثيقة بأداء بلديتكم و تطلعكم عن الإنجازات القوية التي نقوم بها هذه البلدية من أجل سكان "إسليجتون" مقارنة بالبلديات الأخرى في لندن.

**إن أردت معرفة المزيد عن منطقت هذه الإنجازات أو ملخصاً عنه لرجو الإتصال بقسم خدمات الترجمة الفورية و الكتابة في البلدية.
الهاتف: 020 7527 3134**

Dokumentigani (document) wuxuu ku saabsan yahay wax-qabadka kownsalkaaga. Wuxuu kuu sheegaa waxa uu Kownsalku u qabto dadka ku nool Islington iyo sida wanaagsan ee uu wax u qabato marka loo eego Kownsaladda kale ee ku yaal badhtamaha London. Haddii aad doonayso war dheeraad ah oo ku saabsan qorshaha wax-qabadka ama qoraal gaaban oo ah qorshahaan, fadlan la xidhiidh adeegga af-celinta iyo turjumida: telefoon 020 7527 3134.

这份文件是關於你的區政府的工作表現。它告訴你區政府為依士靈頓區居民所做的工作，及其表現與其他內倫敦區政府如何比較。如果你想知道有關這份表現計劃或這份計劃的摘要的更多資料，請聯絡傳譯及翻譯服務：電話 020 7527 3134。

Ce document traite des résultats de la municipalité. Il vous informe sur ce que la municipalité fait pour les habitants d'Islington et sur la façon dont la municipalité s'acquitte de ses fonctions par rapport aux autres municipalités londonniennes. Si vous voulez en savoir plus sur ce plan des performances, ou si vous désirez un résumé de ce plan, veuillez contacter le service de traduction au: 020 7527 3134.

Το έγγραφο αυτό αφορά την επίδοση του Δήμαρχειού σας. Σας λέει τι κάνει το Δήμαρχείο για τους κατοίκους του Ίσλιγκτον και πού είναι η επίδοση του σε σύγκριση με άλλους δήμους του εσωτέρου Λονδίνου. Αν θέλετε να μάθετε περισσότερα για το σχέδιο επίδοσης αυτό ή να έχετε μια πιο σύντομη σύνοψη του σχεδίου, παρακαλούμε επικοινωνήστε με την Υπηρεσία Μεταφράσεων και Διαρμηνείας, στο τηλέφωνο 020 7527 3134.

આ દસ્તાવેજ તમારી કાઉન્સિલની કામગીરી વિષે છે. ઈસલિંગ્ટનના લોકો માટે કાઉન્સિલ શું કરે છે તે તમા બીજા ઈન્ટર લંડન કાઉન્સિલોની સરખામણીમાં તે કેવી સારી રીતે કાર્યનું પાલન કરે છે તે વિષે માહિતી આપે છે. જો તમને આ કામગીરી યોજના વિષે વધારે માહિતી અથવા આ યોજનાનો ટૂંકો સાર જોઈતો હોય તો કૃપા કરી ઈ-ટરમિટીંગ અને ટ્રેન્સલેશન સર્વિસને 020 7527 3134 ઉપર ફોન કરો.

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Este documento trata sobre el rendimiento de su Ayuntamiento, y le explica lo que hace éste para los vecinos de Islington, además de comparar su rendimiento con el de otros Ayuntamientos en el centro de Londres. Si desea usted mayor información, o sobre el plan de rendimiento o la versión resumida de ello, le rogamos que llame al servicio de intérpretes y traducciones al 020-7527 3134.

Iwè yi wa nìpá ètò ilòṣè wàjù ijòbà agbegbé (Kànsù). Òṣo fùn wa nìpá isè ti ijòbà agbegbé n̄sè fùn awọn èniá tí ngbè ádùgbò Islington ti afi wè ijòbà agbegbé míràn ti wọn wá n̄ àrì ilú London. Tí a bàrì ènikèni tí òfẹ̀ mọ́ nìpá ètò ilòṣèwàjù tí akòsìlè tábí akò kùrù rẹ̀, éjówò èpẹ̀ awon atùmọ́ edé lòrì ago. (Telephone 020 7527 3134)

یہ دستاویز آپ کی کونسل کی کارکردگی کے بارے میں ہے۔ اس میں بتایا گیا ہے کہ کونسل اراکین کے لوگوں کیلئے کیا کرتی ہے اور ان لوگوں کی دیگر کونسلوں کے مقابلے میں اس کی کارکردگی کیسے ہے۔ اگر آپ کارکردگی کے اس منصوبے سے متعلق مزید معلومات چاہتے ہیں تو آپ اس کے خلاف سے گزارشت ہے تو براہ مہربانی انگریزی، ہندی اور ڈرامائیک سروس سے اس نمبر پر رابطہ کیجئے (Urdu) 020 7527 3134

What do you think about our performance plan? Is there any further information you would like? Give us your views

Name _____

Address _____

Please return this form to: Performance & Best Value, Room G04, Islington Town Hall, FREEPOST LON 6236, London N1 2UD.

For further information or large print, tape, disk or braille format please indicate on this form and return as above or call Chris Lynch on 020 7527 3116 or email him at chris.lynch@islington.gov.uk

Time for a change

Islington will be changing the way it makes decisions on issues that affect you. We want you to tell us how you'd like these decisions to be made.

Why change?

We consulted Islington residents and you told us that decisions taken on residents' behalf could be improved. You also wanted to be more involved. A new law has just been passed which instructs all councils to change the way they make decisions, offering three options.

What are the three options?

Islington must choose between three methods of making decisions. And we must put the new system in place by May 2002.

The options:

- an executive and leader
- an executive and elected mayor
- an elected mayor and council manager

What change can we expect?

At the moment all Islington Council decisions are made in committees which are made up of between four and ten different councillors. At the committee, councillors make a decision after examining evidence for and against proposals made by officers.

All the options will put an end to this, the 'traditional' way of making decisions. In its place, decisions will generally be made by a group of councillors while the remaining councillors examine those decisions separately. The number of councillors that make the decisions depends on the option chosen: one option could involve just two people.

All 48 councillors elected by Islington in 2002 will still have their say in key decisions – such as the annual budget and level of council tax.

The independent recommended option

Islington Council has been keen to use these changes as an opportunity to improve the way it makes decisions and give you, the resident, more control over those decisions. Last year, the council set up an independent 'Democracy Commission' to tell us which option they thought best suited Islington.

This independent commission, which took evidence from residents and community groups across the borough, recommended the first option – an executive and leader. The commission said this option, "allows for a combination of improved efficiency of decision-making and greater transparency as to who is responsible for those decisions, together with greater inclusivity".



You will get your chance to vote in a referendum.

A group of about seven elected councillors would form the executive, while other frontline councillors would scrutinise decisions, examining the effect on services – especially value for money.

Transparency and openness

If the leader and executive is chosen, all decisions made by the executive will be taken in public.

Some councillors will be members of the executive and some will scrutinise decisions.

We will also set up a Standards Committee, mainly made up of independent people who are not councillors. This committee will examine conduct within the council.

Taking residents to the centre of decision-making

The commission also recommended area committees, made up of councillors who will take decisions on matters that effect specific areas. There will be more communication between the council and residents and an improvement to consultation and information. This newsletter is a part of this.

See page 10 for details on referendum proposals.



Islington's independent Democracy Commission: (left to right) Ann Sofer, Sue Richards and Eric Sorensen.

Time for a change

Your views will determine what model Islington chooses. Here are some more details about the options.

An executive and leader

- the councillors would choose a leader from their members
- the leader would work with a small group of councillors and form an executive (or cabinet)
- the leader and executive would meet in public
- each executive member would have responsibility for one area of the council's services and policy
- new 'scrutiny bodies' would be set up (involving councillors not in the executive) to hold the executive to account and to scrutinise its decisions. They would also help the executive by commenting on proposals before decisions were finally made
- decisions on council tax and all major policies would continue to be made by the whole council.

An executive and elected mayor

- the mayor would be elected for a four year term by all residents
- the mayor would have individually delegated powers but would need to work together with a small number of councillors who would form an executive (or cabinet)
- the mayor would be free to select either a single party executive or executive with councillors from different parties
- councillors who were not part of the executive office would sit on scrutiny bodies and continue to represent their local communities
- having a person in charge that people easily recognise could improve the turnout at local elections
- although there will be a named person in charge, responsibility for specific services may not be so clear.

An elected mayor and council manager

- the mayor would be elected by all residents for a four year term of office
- the council would employ a council manager to implement the council policies
- the manager would be given a political 'steer' by the mayor
- there would not be a cabinet
- you could not vote for the council manager, who could be quite a powerful figure, similar in role to our current chief executive
- other than attending council meetings the role of councillors would be to sit on scrutiny bodies and represent local communities.

A referendum

Following the Democracy Commission report we are committed to a referendum to be held later this spring. You will be asked to vote on which option you think is best. Look out in the next edition of the residents newsletter for more details. And there will be information in libraries and other places. If you have any questions about democracy in Islington, please write to us or call our answerphone service on 020 7527 3416. A summary of your letters and our response will appear in the next issue of this newsletter.

Having your say

In the meantime, to get a copy of the Democracy Commission's report, call in to the Town Hall or:

- phone John Lynch on 020 7527 3002
- visit your local library
- or visit the council's website at www.islington.gov.uk
- see page 3 to contact us.



Consumer rights . . . can we help?

What about that washing machine that has had 10 repairs in as many months? The dodgy builder who half demolished your kitchen? The holiday from hell? And the car that has holes where your feet are meant to be?

Ever had the sinking feeling that you've just been ripped off? Islington Council's Trading Standards team may be able to help save the day. A team of experienced officers are on hand to give you advice.

Bogus Cures

Trading Standards recently took up the case of a resident who bought a gel that the manufacturer claimed was a medicinal cure for arthritis. Sufferers will know that, to date, there are no known cures for arthritis. Trading Standards checked with the Medicines Control Agency who confirmed that the gel was not licensed for supply in the UK and the claims of pain relief were bogus. Although the manufacturer is based in Austria, they were challenged to prove their claims and our man then had his £49 returned.

So what else do they do?

As well as telling you where you stand, Trading Standards also enforce a wide range of criminal consumer laws designed to ensure fair trading and the sale of safe goods.

Checks are carried out on price displays and descriptions, petrol pumps and scales, toys, fake goods, firework storage and the team even weigh overloaded lorries and vans. They also carry out projects every year on areas of particular concern like the sales of cigarettes and fireworks to children, and then prosecute retailers who flout the law.

Making sure local businesses and companies get the best advice on consumer law is another aim. Comprehensive advice is always available to help them get it right before they get it wrong.

In another recent case, a rogue trader from Bedfordshire set up a bogus wholesale business in Islington and then casually proceeded to rip off other businesses around the country. Trading Standards initially received

the complaints and investigated. After inquiries, it became clear that it was a far bigger scam than it first appeared. They successfully argued for the police to investigate further. A man has now been arrested in Yorkshire and charged with obtaining property by deception to the tune of over £30,000.

How, where and when can I contact trading standards?

The advice line is open on the following times:

- Monday, Wednesday & Friday 9am-5pm
- Tuesdays & Thursdays 9am-1pm
- telephone: 020 7527 3198
- personal callers can call at 159 Upper Street, during the same hours
- e-mail: trading.standards@islington.gov.uk
- fax: 020 7527 3057.

Handy numbers in this issue:

Ashburton Grove Depot	020 7607 1040
Bulk Refuse	020 7527 4692
Democracy Commission	020 7527 3002
Ecology Centre	020 7354 5162
Faculty Street Lighting	020 7527 2674
Islington Cleansing Services Department (ICSL)	020 7525 4692
Islington Council Feedback	020 7527 3416
Performance Plan	020 7527 3116
Play Centres - general	020 7527 5641
-for disabled children	020 7833 1388
Recycling	020 7527 2674
Streetscene Hotline	020 7527 4814
Summer 2001	020 7527 5558
Trading Standards	020 7527 3198
Weekend Skips	020 7527 4692

More useful numbers in the next edition.

Council Tax Benefit

If you claim benefit to help you pay your council tax, you should have received a note with your council tax bill. This tells you that we know there are problems with the benefit service and we are going to delay sending out reminders and summonses until mid May 2001.

If you think that your benefit will be less than the full amount of your bill, you should start making payments now to avoid having to make larger payments later. If you wish to discuss payment arrangements please contact council tax on **020 7527 2632/3**.

New tenants repair line

Launched in December to improve the repairs service to the borough's 31,500 tenants, it is now taking around 5,000 calls every week. No more being passed around from one person to the next, one call - and a better service.

Open from Monday to Friday, tenants can report problems between 8am and 8pm. Details of anything from a leaking tap to replastering a ceiling are then passed directly to contractors who will inspect the property and find out what work needs to be done. This means that the vast majority of requests can be dealt with in just one call. Every day 250 orders are being placed. The best times to call are before 9am and after 6pm.

Tenants Repair Line 020 7527 5400