

Highbury Ward Partnership Meeting

Location: Birchmore Hall, London, N5 2UA

Time: 19:15 – 20:45

Date: Tuesday 1 November

Chair: Cllr. Benali Hamdache

Councillors and Speakers: Cllr. Caroline Russell, Cllr. Ernestas Jegorovas-Armstrong, Sue King (SHINE), Liza Durrant & Lydia Brown (Thriving Neighbourhoods), Sally Oldfield (Nature Conservation Manager), Frankie Roberto (Resident).

Cost of Living Crisis

Sue King provided an overview of the measures that Islington Council and the SHINE team are taking to help residents with the cost of living. She gave details of the government's Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) and the Warm Home Discount and warned against scams as the EBSS will be automatically credited to your bills. Energy Doctors can be booked to come to your home and advise on various energy saving measures such as energy saving lightbulbs, radiator reflectors and energy saving plugs. SHINE can also help with debt support.

You can call the energy advice team directly on 0300 555 0195 or 0207 527 2121 for support. Their lines are open 9am-5pm, Monday-Friday. Alternatively, you can text 07800 006 143. You can find more information on [the SHINE London website](#).

Cllr. Hamdache – Highbury councillors are trying to get warm rooms set up in the ward and challenging the council on communal heating bills.

Cllr. Russell – People with communal heating are not protected by some government schemes. Hours of hot water and heating are being reduced to bring down bills, we are trying to make sure people have hot water when they need it.

Cllr. Jegorovas-Armstrong – Using our small pot of money to work with Highbury Roundhouse and have paid to fix the boiler at Sotheby Mews day centre.

Resident – We had a visit from an energy doctor who was magic!

Resident – Can we campaign for Islington Council to be more flexible in allowing green adaptations to listed buildings?

Cllr. Russell - We have spoken to the planning team. Assembly Member Sian Berry has a campaign to change planning rules to allow solar on south facing roofs in conservation areas. Also, double glazing rules in conservation areas need to be looked at. One issue is that planning rules are defined by central government.

Cllr. Hamdache – Cllr. Ward is currently doing a consultation on this and we will hold him to account.

Resident – Can Community Hubs be made aware of SHINE (*Taken as an action*).

Resident – Will libraries be kept open? They are an important place for people to be warm and for digital access.

Cllr. Hamdache – Libraries will be a part of the warm room agenda. Islington has done a good job of keeping libraries open and it is important that this continues.

Thriving Neighbourhoods

Liza Durrant and Lydia Brown presented on Islington's Thriving Neighbourhoods scheme. The scheme was designed to rejuvenate estates via projects such as new bike storage, recycling bins, play areas, MUGAS, landscaping and flower beds. This first year is a pilot year and although applications are now closed, they will open again in March/April next year.

The team have been doing walkabouts on estates and plan to cover more to identify a list of improvements. In Highbury Grove a locked green space has been opened and planters will be added. The Highbury Quadrant TRA have also put forward some potential improvements for more bike hangers and for the Highbury pitch to be revamped

All changes are subject to resident consultation and the team want to speak to residents when they are on walkabouts.

Resident – Does this extend to street properties?

Cllr. Russell – This money is only for estates. With budgeting pressures hitting people so hard this is a good way to make improvements as council budgets will be very tight with increased heating bills for council buildings.

Residents – We would like fruit bushes in Highbury Quadrant which would need fruit cages.

Cllr. Russell – We have funded Octopus to work with residents on growing projects and could speak to them about this request. You can have fruit bushes without cages and share the fruit with the local wildlife.

Residents – Could there be a plaque at the covid memorial? Could there also be signs saying that certain flower beds are 'adopted' by certain people?

Cllr. Russell – The covid memorial was installed by the council and is suffering from a lack of follow-up care. We need to engage people who are nearby and want to nurture and water plants in the long term. We will take forward the idea of a plaque and finding people to care for the plants.

Resident - I filled out a questionnaire about recycling and nothing was done about it. I think Islington Council do very well to encourage people. Do you know why people don't recycle?

Cllr. Jegorovas-Armstrong – The council has an ambition to raise recycling rates and having more facilities on estates will help, please suggest your ideas to us and help us reach the council's target of 40% recycling rate by 2030.

Cllr. Hamdache – Knowledge on what should and shouldn't be recycled is important, as is access to recycling. Waste chutes in Highbury Quadrant are now recycling and the council is rolling out more food waste recycling.

There followed a brief discussion on improvements that could be made to encourage recycling uptake such as providing recycling wheely bins, adding information stickers to bins and becoming an [Islington Council Recycling Champion](#). Councillors will ask if more recycling information can be put into existing council email newsletters.

If residents would like a sticker for their bin, they can obtain one via Contact Islington or by emailing recycling@islington.gov.uk. You can visit the Islington Council website for more information on [what can and can't be recycled](#).

Greening Our Ward

Islington Greener Together

Sally Oldfield, Nature Conservation Manager from Islington Council, and Frankie, a local resident, presented Islington's Greener Together grant scheme, aimed at small scale projects to green the borough. 30 projects were selected including Frankie's one to green the Highbury Fields through-road. Applications for grants will open again in 2023.

Frankie explained that he wanted the road to be a more welcoming place for the community and decided to bid for the funding. He ran a 'play street' day and asked adults and children to draw their idea of an ideal greener layout for the street on readymade templates. The money is not enough to dig up the road but it is sufficient for planters, seating, hopscotch etc.. He and Sally asked for ideas for the space from those at the meeting.

During open questions various attendees, including those from the Highbury Fields Association expressed a desire for more local consultation on the through-road proposals. It was also suggested that the park currently lacks a space for young adults and currently has spaces for young children. More toilets, a ping pong table, seating areas and an outdoor gym were suggested.

The safety of a play area being alongside a cycle path was questioned and a larger discussion was had around cycle safety around Highbury Fields and in the ward and the subject will be picked up at the next ward partnership meeting, which will be on transport. A resident also asked that the lighting on the church path towards Highbury Grove be improved. *After the meeting, October's Highbury Safe Neighbourhood Panel decided to monitor cycling behaviour around Highbury Fields as one of their priorities.*

Frankie offered his contact details to anyone with ideas for the through-road, they are: frankie@frankieroberto.com.

Transition Islington

Max from Transition Highbury presented on his organisation's campaign to ban the use of Glyphosate-containing weed killer in Islington. He raised concerns about Glyphosate being a potential cause of cancer and that whilst other councils, such as Hackney, only use it for Japanese Knot Weed, Islington uses it in significantly larger quantities.

Max highlighted residents' efforts in Balfour Road to weed their own street, having asked the council not to use weed killer, particularly in the winter. He proposed declaring Highbury as a Glyphosate free ward.

Resident – Our street uses vinegar to control our weeds.

Resident – What are other councils doing without Glyphosate?

Max – They are letting the weeds go, not aiming for weed free streets and only using Glyphosate for Japanese Knot Weed.

Resident - Weeding can be fun and communal and people are very appreciative, but I feel that we should be campaigning for a Glyphosate ban. In the meantime, people could weed outside the pavement near their property.

Sally Oldfield – Glyphosate is not used in Islington parks, only on the streets.

Residents can contact Transition Highbury for more information by emailing Info@TransitionHighbury.org.uk

Open Questions

Resident – Is there an update on the proposals for a traveller site at 71 Ronald's Road.

Cllr. Russell – There is currently a public consultation running to update the council's site allocations policy to include provision for up to six traveller pitches in Islington. If the site at Ronald's Rd is allocated by the inspector for (up to three) permanent pitches for the Gypsy, Roma and Traveller community there will then be a formal planning consultation process. Permanent pitches are in essence another form of social housing. Tenants would pay rent, council tax and own or have a mortgage for or pay rent on their static caravan.

After the meeting, the following update was provided by the planning team:

Representations received during the recent consultation, together with council's responses to those representations, are due to be submitted to the Inspectors early in December.

The council will then wait to hear from the Inspectors on the next steps.

It is hoped that, if the council receives the Inspector's report in the Spring and the Plan is found sound, it would be possible to adopt the Plan in the Summer.

Resident – Does the council deliberately put bike hangers in parking spaces rather than double yellow lines?

Cllr. Russell – There are consultations when new sites are proposed, usually they cannot be on yellow lines for safety reasons. It is good that bikes can be safely stored on streets. There aren't many places in Highbury under 'parking stress'.

Cllr. Hamdache – There is a mix of bike hanger styles, on estates they are not on roads.

Resident – Is there an update on the Highbury Quadrant Church developments.

Cllr. Hamdache – The planning inspector and mayor have overruled Islington and approved the development. There are currently issues with foundations and underpinning and I will ask planning officers for an update on timelines for completion. ***Update as follows: Planning Permissions are usually subject to have three years in which to be implemented (i.e. works start in earnest) and there is no requirement for us to be advised of when they're starting.***

Residents – The Highbury Corner pedestrian zone is not working well with bicycles cutting through. This corner is a showpiece area for Islington and we should be using the space more positively.

The station entrance and paved area at Highbury Corner is in Laycock ward. Highbury councillors have been meeting with the Laycock councillors on this issue. Councillors suggest that there be more signage and work with TfL to stop bicycles cutting through and that facilities such as toilets and parking spaces should be made available to delivery drivers. They will try to get a TfL representative to attend the next ward partnership meeting.