

Highbury West Ward Partnership Meeting

Thursday 27th January 2022 19:00 – 21:00, on Zoom

Chair: Councillor Theresa Debono

In attendance were approximately 15 members of the public, plus:

CTD – Councillor Theresa Debono

CBI – Councillor Bashir Ibrahim

CRK – Councillor Roulin Khondoker

HS – Hayley Sims, Strategic Lead for Policy and Equality

CB – Catherine Briody, Head of Violence against Women and Girls and Youth Safety Commissioning

TS – Taanpreet Singh, Highbury West Ward Partnership Co-ordinator

Welcome and introductions

- Councillor Debono welcomed all present.

Minutes of the last meeting, updates on actions, and matters arising

- A resident stated that they were still having issues with mopeds being ridden on pavements. **CTD** replied that there was a meeting on this issue a few days ago, and that this behaviour is being looked into. The resident suggested regular spot checks and installing CCTVs to deter this behaviour. **CTD** replied that Councillors bring this up at every meeting on People Friendly Streets (PFS) and that they will continue to do so.
- A resident asked if more bins and dog bins could be installed, especially around the Gillespie Park area. **CTD** replied that it has recently been agreed to allocate money to installing new bins.
- A resident commented on the proposal to add greenery to Blackstock Road. **CTD** replied that Councillors have been pushing this idea and that it is something that they are keen on in principle. **CTD** added that security concerns must be considered when installing trees. On this point, **CKR** stated that it would be nice to start walkabouts again, so that Councillors and residents can walk around the neighbourhood together to explore what beneficial actions can be taken in the ward.
- A resident asked if the Council could give a timeline for when there will be permits for disabled people that will allow them to drive through PFS. **CTD** replied that they will talk to the relevant officer to see if this can be sped up. **TS** to follow this up. Another resident stated their support for ensuring that this blue badge exemption/disabled permit is put through as soon as possible.
- A resident raised concerns around visibility around Benwell Road, leading to dangerous situations with cyclists and drivers. An update on this will be sent out with the action log from the last meeting.
- Residents requested that the minutes for this meeting be sent out sooner, along with the invitations for new meetings.

Tackling violence against women and girls

- **CB** stated that she is attending tonight's meeting to discuss:
 - The context and local picture of violence against women and girls in Islington.
 - Islington Council's response.
 - Islington Council's Violence against women and girls strategy for 2021 – 2026.
- Please see **CB's** presentation (attached to the same email as the minutes) for more information.

- Context – safety of women and girls:
 - **CB** stated that her and her team were worried about the impact the COVID-19 pandemic would have on domestic abuse issues. Globally, sadly, it has been the case that domestic abuse cases have increased during this time.
 - Recent murders and violence against women and girls have led to increased public debate on how we can keep women and girls safe.
 - Part of this work has instigated debate on how we approach abuse and murders against Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic differently to how we approach the same issues against White women. Part of this work has centred on the conduct of the police and how we can increase confidence in their work.
- The picture in Islington:
 - Islington saw a 4.2% increase in domestic abuse issues compared to a 7% increase across the country.
 - Police Sanctions and Detections rate for Domestic Abuse were the highest in London, at 15%. The average in London tends to be around 11%. **CB** stated that this was of course still far too low and work is ongoing to increase this number.
 - Although the expected increase in domestic abuse issues was not as large as first feared, there was an increase in the complexity and the severity and risk levels of the cases referred to **CB's** team.
 - **CB's** team has observed that there has been an increase in inter-generational domestic abuse as well as intimate partner violence among young people.
 - There has also been an increased demand for emotional and mental health services.
- Violence against women and girls (VAWG) services in Islington
 - The Council invested an additional £2m investment in VAWG services, and this funding was complimented by Public Health, CCG, London Violence Reduction Unit, and Early Help via MHCLG. Please see **CB's** slides for a list of where this funding has gone.
- Islington VAWG strategy 2021 – 2026
 - This new strategy was launched in November 2021, to coincide with the UN's International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women.
 - **CB** stated that the Council have worked hard to amplify the voices of domestic abuse survivors and that their experiences have been central to informing the new strategy.
 - **CB** replied that the new strategy is focusing on training and upskilling across the Council's partnerships and the communities in Islington. A lot of this work is focused on prevention, to stop domestic abuse happening in the first place. When it does happen, the strategy focuses on protecting survivors and families and to make sure they have the support they need.
 - Islington Council have recently achieved the Domestic Abuse Housing Alliance accreditation (DAHA).
 - A key part of the new strategy was ensuring that there were measures to judge successes and failures by. Some of these measures include:
 - No or reduced homicide cases.
 - Increased sanction and detection rates of domestic abuse incidents.

- Increase engagement with minority groups, older people, and people with disabilities.
- A resident shared that, outside Sainsburys and the further education college, women feel very unsafe. The resident noted that the police have been engaging with this area of concern. **CB** replied that focusing on areas of concern has been part of her team's work and that recently, a survey was sent out to residents where they could highlight areas they felt unsafe. There were thousands of replies to this. **CB** acknowledges that this will not be reaching everyone and that more work needs to be done on this too. **CB** added that she is working with the police on this.
- A resident asked if the Council is linked in with Islington for Women and whether it was possible to talk about any training that is going on as part of this. **CB** replied that they are working in partnership and that **CB** has attended some of the Women's Walks the Islington for Women group arranged. On the training, **CB** stated that there is no standard training but generally it focuses on how to respond to someone telling you they have been the victim of domestic abuse, and where to signpost them so that they can receive appropriate help. **CB** stated that it is so important that people come forward with their experiences and that they feel supported to do so.
- A resident suggested that self-defence techniques be taught to girls in school. **CB** replied that her team is working with schools to help them to appropriately support students that may come forward with their own experiences of domestic abuse.

Let's Talk Islington and the Fairness Commission

- **HS** stated that Let's Talk Islington (LTI) is a continuation of the Fairness Commission, which was launched in 2010. Please see **HS's** slides (attached in the same email these minutes will be sent out in) for further information.
- **HS** stated that progress has been made but that new challenges are now facing the borough – austerity has damaged economic growth, Brexit has led to uncertainty, and the reduction in EU migration has led to supply chain issues, particularly in housing.
- **HS** stated that inequality is still the biggest challenge we face and that this is very apparent in Islington.
- The themes and recommendations that emerged from the Fairness Commission were, on a high level, as follows:
 - Income
 - Work
 - Families
 - Community
 - Safety
 - Housing
 - Health
- Some key recommendations as a result of this work were:
 - To become an accredited living wage borough. However, the advent of new issues, such as the gig economy and in-work poverty, means that this alone is no longer enough. These were problems in 2010 but they have only got worse since,

and this has required that the Fairness Commission evolve to adapt to these challenges.

- To address health inequalities, highlighted by COVID.
- **HS** highlighted the scale of this challenge.
- A new strategic plan was launched in response to these issues. The plan outlines what Islington Council's vision is for the next few years. This is a general vision statement with visions and principles that stipulate how the Council wants to work with communities. The strategy has communities at the heart of addressing inequality. **HS** stated that, as part of this work, the Council must understand what inequality means for people who live, work, and visit the borough – for example, what are their barriers in obtaining employment or why are they unable to fulfil their potential?
- To understand this, Let's Talk Islington was launched in November 2021 and will continue until the Summer. Part of this work will take place through tapping into local networks that already exist in the community, but a lot of it will focus on trying to reach people who the Council often do not hear from. **HS** stated that her team have been out in the community to gather the views of residents. The Council is also working with schools and hosting workshops with our Voluntary and Community Sector. There is also one-to-one engagement taking place, through 1-2-1 interviews, mementos, and ethnographic research. This is targeting minorities such as LGBTQ+ people, as well as groups such as older people. On top of this, **HS's** team is also conducting place based engagement, which includes work such as finding out about how people live in their housing.
- **HS** stated that the best way to get involved is to complete the survey, which you can find here: [Let's Talk survey | Islington Council](#). **HS** encouraged attendees to share this far and wide, and to feel free to submit evidence (data, case studies, reports) that they think would be useful to this work. **HS** stated that there will be workshops taking place too and that attendees should keep an eye out for these.
- A resident mentioned that there was no mention of the importance of green space on mental health in 2010's strategy. The resident stated that this issue is of particular importance in Islington, where there is a lack of green space. The resident noted the will to free up community space in the strategy, but that this does not explicitly reference green space. **HS** replied that in the new strategic plan there is an emphasis on a healthier, greener borough and that this emphasises protecting current green spaces as well as greening new spaces for residents. **HS** added that the Council declared a climate emergency in 2019 and that there is an awareness of how severe the climate situation is for the world, but also for local communities. **HS** added that she will take this point away and see if it can be incorporated into future work.
- A resident highlighted the accessibility issues she faces in the borough and that she does not feel disability is treated seriously in Islington, or that there is an understanding of it. The resident invited **HS** to spend a day with her to understand what action is required. **CTD** asked the resident what could be done to help improve access. The resident replied that she has difficulty in accessing green spaces and that PFS have made things more difficult for her. **HS** replied that she would like to get in touch with the resident to understand her experiences and to work to improve access. **HS** stated that she appreciates how frustrating it can be to hear talk of action, but that the work of Let's Talk Islington is action-focused and that the current plans being drawn up do focus on

action plans. Specifically within Let's Talk Islington, **HS** stated that an action plan on disability is being drawn up as part of the Challenging Inequality programme, and that the focus for year 2 of the programme will be disability. This is in response to changes such as people working from home, isolation, and health inequalities. **HS** stated that this work should be completed in the next month or so.

- A resident stated that the Fairness Commission was the most important piece of work the Council has completed in recent times and that there are now big issues facing residents getting into good quality housing, especially those who rent. The resident noted that it is difficult to complete this work in the context of national policy that makes this difficult. **HS** agreed that housing is a major issue and that this is one of the priorities for the Council.

Any other business

- A resident explained that they are concerned about events taking place in Finsbury Park in the Summer of 2022 and that this will restrict access to the park for local residents. It will also increase traffic and lead to there being crowds of people late at night. The resident requested that Councillors get involved with this work. **CRK** replied that Councillors are aware of this and are working alongside the organisers of these events.
- A resident raised concerns around air pollution levels by schools in Highbury West, and that these seem to be increasing. The resident asked when it will be possible to get detailed figures on air pollution in the area. **CTD** replied that the Council is aware of this alleged increase but that they are waiting for this data to be verified.
- A resident raised that there used to be a sign at the end of Drayton Park stating that there is no through route to Blackstock Road. This has now been removed. The resident stated that she is going to request that this sign be reinstated and that she will be in touch with the PFS team about this.
- **CTD** stated that money has been put aside to replace trees that are removed in the ward and to plant others as and when they are needed.
- **CTD** added that this will be the last ward partnership meeting that she will be chairing. After 17 years of representing the ward, **CTD** will not be standing during the May elections. Residents shared their appreciation for the work **CTD** has completed during her time as a Ward Councillor.