



# Your Voice in Local Government

A guide for residents



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# Introduction

**This booklet is for anyone who lives or works in Islington. It has been developed with a group of residents working closely with council staff from the Democratic Services team, Evidence Islington and Healthwatch Islington.**

The booklet aims to explain how the council is organised, how it makes decisions, who from the council can make decisions and most importantly, the role residents can play in this process.

Evidence Islington is a partnership between the council, Healthwatch Islington, and two universities. The partnership

aims to improve decision-making in local government. The Democratic Services team support the running of council meetings and democratic processes.

We hope this booklet enables more residents and community groups to contribute to decision making within Islington council.

The residents who were involved in developing this booklet said that understanding how the council makes decisions and encouraging residents to participate is important for the following reasons.

“Decisions made by local councils have a real impact on health and wellbeing, social mobility and social justice.”

“The local authority should speak for local people – this needs community engagement and community.”

“It feels more personal, I can talk directly to local Councillors. There are opportunities to participate, feel heard, and see change.”

# 1. The structure of the council

The council is a democratic organisation – you decide who leads it.

The council is led by Councillors, who are elected by local people every four years. Islington has 51 Councillors representing 17 wards. As of 2025, the council is led by the Labour group of Councillors.

Councillors hold meetings to take decisions on council services and debate local issues. All Councillors attend meetings of Full Council. Some Councillors are members of the Executive, who take major decisions on council strategy and policy.

The council also has committees which are responsible for different things. Regulatory committees make

decisions about matters that are governed by a legal framework, such as planning or alcohol licensing. Scrutiny Committees evaluate the services delivered by the council to see if they are doing what is expected of them. Other committees review and manage internal processes at the council.

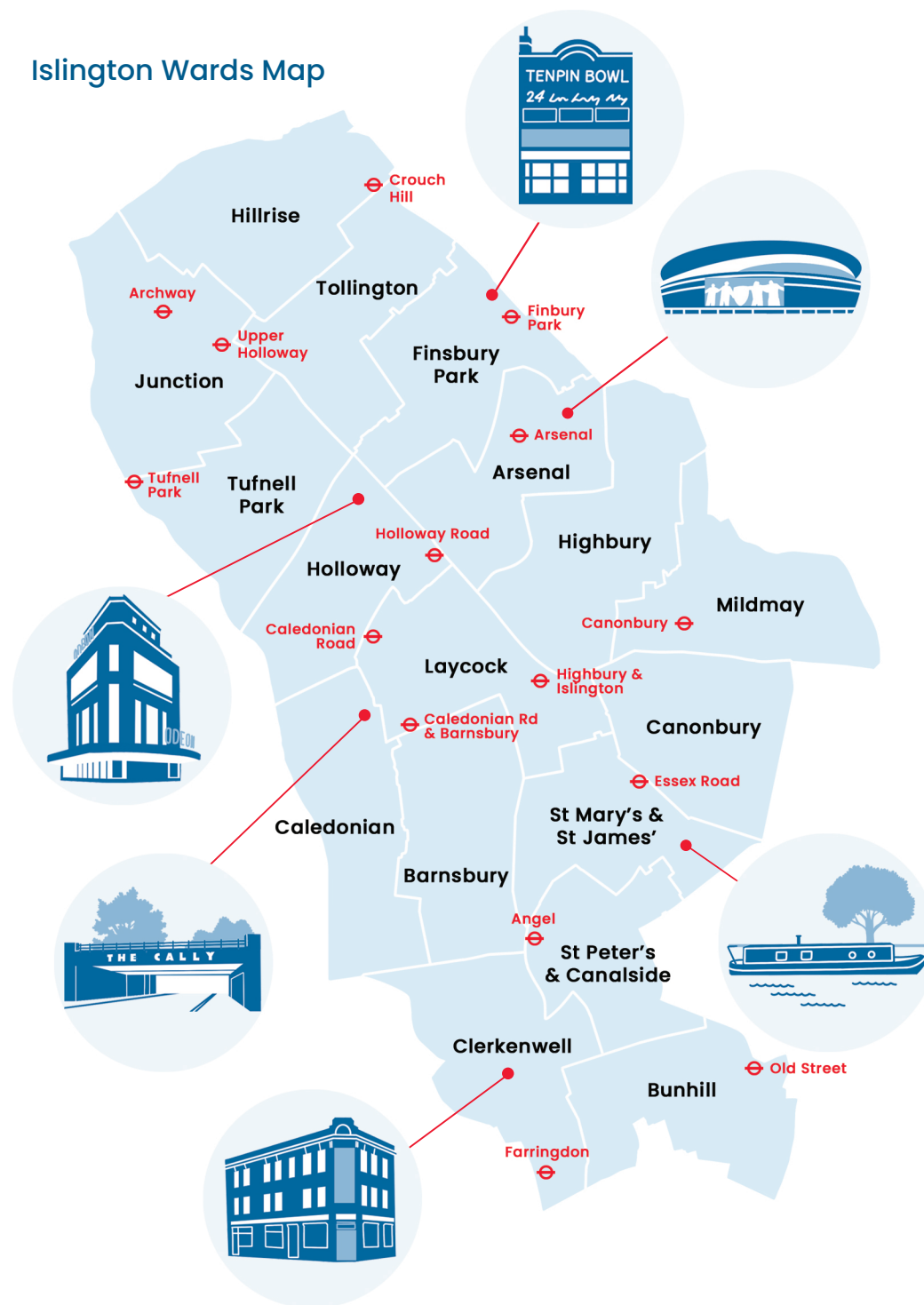
Almost all council meetings are open to the public to attend, and residents are often able to ask questions at meetings. Most meetings are also broadcast live on the council's website.

We will explore meetings and committees in more detail later in this booklet.

## Find out more

You can find links to your local representative on page 18

Islington Wards Map



## 2. The role of MPs, Councillors, the Executive and officers at the council

Role/Title	What do they do?	How can they help?	How to contact them
<b>Councillors</b>	<p>Councillors all live locally and are voted in for up to 4 years to represent the views of residents in their ward.</p> <p>They work closely with senior council staff on the performance and direction of services. Councillors sit on committees to take decisions and review local services.</p>	<p>They provide information about services, within your ward or Islington in general, use your feedback to shape services, and advise on issues related to the committees they sit on.</p>	<p><b>In person:</b> Councillors have meetings called “surgeries” which take place in community spaces in each ward.</p> <p><b>In writing:</b> You can raise issues or ideas with your local councillor directly or through their support team who you can contact. See link on page 18.</p>
<b>Council Officers</b>	<p>Council staff are also known as officers. It is the role of officers to implement the decisions made by Councillors and run local services.</p> <p>Council services are managed by Senior Officers. They also provide professional advice and recommendations to Councillors on upcoming decisions.</p>	<p>Officers deliver hundreds of different council services for residents.</p> <p>For example, Housing, Benefits Advice, Employment Support, Adult Social Care, Children’s Services, and Environmental Services</p>	<p><b>Online:</b> <a href="https://www.islington.gov.uk">islington.gov.uk</a></p> <p><b>Telephone:</b> 020 7527 2000</p> <p><b>In person:</b> visit one of the Access Islington Hubs at 222 Upper Street, Manor Gardens, or Finsbury Library</p>
<b>MPs</b> <b>MP for Islington North</b> <b>MP for Islington South and Finsbury</b>	<p>Members of Parliament (MPs) are elected by residents and sit in the House of Commons. MPs consider national issues, vote on laws and can propose new laws.</p> <p>MPs are not part of the council and do not have responsibility for council services.</p>	<p>MPs can help with issues such as housing, benefits and immigration.</p> <p>They can signpost you to the right service for your issue, and may be able to liaise with other services on your behalf.</p>	<p>Islington has two parliamentary constituencies.</p> <p><b>In person:</b> Both MPs hold regular advice surgeries and can be contacted through their constituency offices</p> <p><b>In writing:</b> You can find the email addresses of local MPs at <a href="https://www.parliament.uk">parliament.uk</a></p>



## The Executive

The Executive is a group of Councillors selected by the Leader of the Council, to manage key service or policy areas.

The most significant decisions taken by the council are called “key decisions”. This means a decision with a financial value over £500,000 for services or £1 million for assets such as buildings or equipment. It can also mean decision that will significantly affect communities living in two or more wards.

Key decisions are most often made by the Executive. However, they can also ask senior staff to make some decisions.

Examples of key decisions include agreeing the council’s major strategies and policies on housing, the environment, and care services; and approving contract awards, such as, contracts for major works on estates.

The council publicises key decisions at least 28 days before they are taken. The details of proposals will be set out in a report, which will be published five working days before the decision is made.

### Find out more

To view the latest key decisions, see the links on page 18

## 3. Full Council Meetings

Full Council is a meeting where all Councillors are present. It is the most formal of the council meetings, but it is also where a range of local issues are raised. We want more residents to be able to use this forum to ask questions about issues affecting people in the borough.

### Petitions, a written request to a council to act on a specific issue. The council accepts petitions on local issues.

Petitions can be submitted by individuals, groups, or organisations. They must be signed by at least 5 people who live, work or study in the borough. The lead petitioner can speak at the meeting for up to two minutes, and will receive a response from the relevant service after the meeting.

### An opportunity for the public to ask questions to Councillors.

Up to 30 minutes are allocated at Council meetings for questions from the public. This is your opportunity to be heard and ask about local issues. Questions are answered in

the order they were received. Questions should be submitted in advance, where possible. If the councillor is not able to respond at the meeting, you will receive a written response afterwards.

### Councillors questions

Councillors can ask each other questions about local services. You could ask a Councillor to raise an issue on your behalf at a council meeting.

### Help for residents.

The Democratic Services team can help develop your question, provide advice on the meeting procedure, and support your participation in Full Council and Scrutiny meetings.

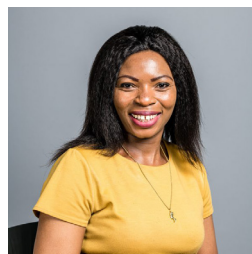
### Find out more

You can see the papers for previous Full Council meetings, including the decisions taken at Full Council and the responses to questions from the public via the links on page 18

## Responsibilities of the Executive

### Child Friendly

Islington will be a place where all children and young people are rooted in a community where they feel safe, can thrive and are able to be part of and lead change



Cllr Michelline Safi Ngongo  
**Children, Young People  
and Families**

### A Safe Place to Call Home

Everyone in Islington has a safe, decent and genuinely affordable place to call home



Cllr John Woolf  
**Homes and  
Neighbourhoods**



Cllr Angelo Weekes  
**Community  
Safety**

### Community Wealth Building

Tackling economic inequality and creating an economy that works for everyone



Cllr Santiago Bell-Bradford  
**Inclusive Economy,  
Culture and Jobs**

### Greener, Healthier

We want our communities in Islington to live healthy and independent lives and enjoy London's greenest, cleanest and healthiest neighbourhoods



Cllr Rowena Champion  
**Environment, Air Quality  
and Transport**



Cllr Dr Sara Hyde  
**Health and  
Social Care**

### Empowering People

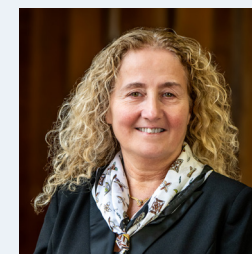
Everyone in Islington who needs extra help can access the right support for them at the time and in the right place



Cllr Sheila Chapman  
**Equalities, Communities  
and Inclusion**

### Leadership

All the services delivered by the council are enabled by the direction of the Leader of the Council Cllr Una O'Halloran, and the Executive Member for Finance and Performance, Cllr Diarmaid Ward



Cllr Una O'Halloran  
**Leader of the Council**



Cllr Flora Williamson  
**Finance and  
Performance**

## 4. Scrutiny

Scrutiny Committees review the performance of local services delivered by the council and key partners, including local health services, the Police, and others.

Scrutiny helps to review and develop council policy and make recommendations to improve service delivery for residents.

Here is an example timeline for the Environment Committee



### Month 1-2:

The Environment Committee chose to review Active Travel in Islington to encourage residents to travel more actively in the Borough and beyond.

### Month 3-6:

The committee heard from different organisations, such as, Living Streets, and Transport for London, about barriers to active travel and their efforts to overcome them.

### Month 7-8:

Recommendations are made for policies and processes to help the council encourage residents to actively travel.

### Month 9-10:

The final report was then written by the Committee Clerk using all the evidence received throughout the year.

### Month 11:

Once this report has been approved by the Executive, Council Officers begin working on putting the recommendations into action.

### Month 12+:

The Scrutiny Committee monitors the implementation of its recommendations. This could involve follow-up meetings or updates from Council Officers.



## 5. All Scrutiny Committees



### Corporate Resources and Economy

Finance, HR, Elections, Digital Services.



### Environment, Climate and Transport

Waste and recycling, roads and parks.



### Homes and Communities

Council housing, voluntary sector, community safety, occasional involvement from housing associations.



### Children and Young People

Schools and education, children's social care.



### Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care

Public Health, Adult Social Care, local NHS performance.

#### Find out more

Most Scrutiny Committee meetings are open to the public, meaning residents can attend and observe the discussions and decisions being made.

There is also an opportunity for the public to ask questions to Councillors and officers at the end of each agenda item.

For some scrutiny topics, residents may be invited to contribute to specific reviews or inquiries conducted by Scrutiny Committees. This might involve giving evidence or testimony about particular issues.

## 6. Practical Steps to Get Involved

### 1. Check the council Website:

Look for upcoming meetings, agendas, and published reports on areas you may be interested in.



### 2. Contact the Democratic Services team:

They can provide information on how to participate in meetings or give information about upcoming topics that are being discussed.



### 3. Engage with Local Councillors:

Contact your ward Councillor if you want an issue raised or discussed in a scrutiny meeting. Scan the QR code to find out more about Scrutiny Committees



Scan the QR code to find out more about Scrutiny Committees

## 7. Links and Further Information

Here are some helpful contacts and websites.

### Democratic Services

If you require any further information on how to get involved in committee meetings or need any assistance for attending meetings, please contact **democracy@islington.gov.uk** and a member of the team will be happy to answer any questions you have.

You can also find information on their website:

**democracy.islington.gov.uk**

### About Evidence Islington

Evidence Islington is a Health Determinants Research Collaboration funded by the National Institute of Health and Care Research (NIHR). By 'evidence' we don't just mean academic research, we also mean involving local people, groups and communities to identify problems and test solutions. Our aim is to improve how we collect, join up and use this evidence to improve services that affect people's health and wellbeing – such as housing, employment, and our local environment. If you'd like to find out more or get involved in Evidence Islington projects, please contact **ei@islington.gov.uk** or call **07549 440 700**.

Healthwatch Islington is the independent champion for people who use health and social care services in Islington. Healthwatch Islington aims to understand local needs, experiences, and concerns to speak out on behalf of residents.



Councillor  
information,  
Committees,  
meeting calendars,  
key decisions  
and more



Watch council  
meetings online



Write to a  
politician

