

# » Letters

Send your letters to [islingtongazette.letters@archant.co.uk](mailto:islingtongazette.letters@archant.co.uk) by noon on Monday for inclusion in that week's paper

## » Disability Help our work in providing breaks

Our Paralympians are quite deservedly getting a world stage for their achievements but let's not forget the millions more people with disabilities and those who care for them.

They confront hurdles of a very different kind in their daily lives – financial hardship, social isolation, ill health and depression.

I work for disability charity Vitalise. We provide desperately-needed respite breaks for disabled people and carers at our Jubilee Lodge centre in Chigwell.

We don't get a penny from government but rely on the compassion and generosity of our supporters to keep providing our vital services.

To make a donation or for more information call 0303 303 0147 or visit [www.vitalise.org.uk](http://www.vitalise.org.uk).

**Colin Brook,**  
Communications Officer,  
Vitalise, Upper Street, N1

## » Leaseholders A silence that is far from golden

Why the deathly silence

from our MPs on the subject that our council owes thousands of Islington Council leaseholders money – lots of it?

Instead of being paid back our money is being used for construction – all against our leases as has been acknowledged by the council. Why? When are we going to be repaid our money?

**Kay Newsom**  
Islington Leaseholders Association member

## » Democracy Champions must not be chumps

In 1981 David Steel exhorted the Liberal conference to “go back to your constituencies and prepare for government”. Despite polling well, the Liberals remained irrelevant. I'm afraid the same fate awaits our candidates for the various Residents' Champion positions; they'll become irrelevant.

I've looked at their profiles and they all seem perfectly decent and well-intentioned people. It's not the candidates I'm worried about, it's the set-up, which is designed to sideline our future champions.

Firstly, they'll find it almost impossible to get anything on the agendas, yet alone on

## » Letter of the week 'Legalised money laundering' by council

In a recent Channel 4 Dispatches programme, Housing Minister Grant Shapps referred to Islington's profit-sharing 'sweetheart' deal as “shameful” since leaseholders have been overcharged for repairs as a direct result of profit taking.

Though it is true to say the council's own repairs department provided a less than efficient service, the subsequent 'profit-sharing' contract performed no better and, effectively, cost more.

The details of the 'profit-sharing' arrangement of the new contract was that, after all the operating costs were covered, the surplus was split 50/50 between the council and the contractor. It has now been established that over the contractual ten-year term this amounted to £24 million – affording an extra payment to the operator of £12 million, with £12 million going to Islington Council as profit.

The annual cost of the new contract included servicing



■ **Brian Potter**

all outstanding repairs; unfortunately, however, all pending repair dockets were inexplicably “mislaidd” in the ensuing reorganisation, somewhat fortuitously allowing the new management to fulfil their contract without requirements to service the backlog. Consequently, if costs related to outstanding repairs were not omitted from the original agreement the contract was grossly overpriced from the start.

So, how else could this contract generate profit? Simple. Instead of treating all new job requests as

'responsive repairs' just re-allocate them to the new Cyclic Maintenance and Decent Homes programmes, where all leaseholder S20 billing would be re-chargeable, for not just the repair but also the massive scaffolding and associated set-up costs. This would drastically reduce spending on the responsive repairs budget, and, at the same time, justify extortionate leaseholder billing by Homes for Islington (Hfi) on major works projects.

Notably, since this contract was financed through the ringfenced Housing Revenue Account, and the ensuing surplus was not reinstated, this cosy arrangement constitutes nothing less than 'legalised money laundering' by the council who have admitted to using it for “purposes other than responsive repairs”.

**Dr Brian Potter, Islington Leaseholders Association/ Federation of Islington Tenants Association**

the council executive agenda.

Secondly, paperwork prepared by council staff tends to be in two kinds – ‘for information’ or ‘for

decision’. Papers for decision, if they get that far, will be drafted in terms of accepting staff recommendations. Residents' reps will be in a minority so there's very

little chance of ever defeating a staff recommendation.

Thirdly, how will the Residents' Champions communicate with the residents? Will they have

their own newsletter to tell us what they think of council proposals? Our 'champion' might get a page in the council's magazine but I suspect his or her freedom to voice their views will be severely curtailed.

Fourthly, despite their good intentions only one of the candidates came across with a clear set of ideas that they want to pursue. If they have no clear idea of what they want to achieve beyond 'change', 'benefits' or 'inclusion', how on earth are they going to present a convincing way forward?

Fifthly, our Residents' Champions run the risk of being absorbed into the management structure and thus being apologists for council policies already decided. The way 'consultation' works is basically that the council tells us its decisions, asks us to comment on them and then ignores our comments.

I don't want to dampen our candidates' enthusiasm but I do want to warn them what they face when they are dealing with a large and well oiled bureaucracy.

My message to our champions is that they should be responsive to the residents: always. Stake your ground and hold it.

**Richard Rosser**  
Highbury New Park, N5

## CAMDEN & ISLINGTON BUSINESS AWARDS

The CIBAs are our way of acknowledging the hard work and achievements of businesses based in Camden and Islington. A local awards ceremony for local business.

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There's still time to enter or nominate a business you believe deserves this coveted award. Apply online at [CIBAWARDS.COM](http://CIBAWARDS.COM)

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SPEAKER AND HOST:  
LARA MORGAN

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## Win a family ticket to see Scrooge

Tommy Steele is returning to the London Palladium for a strictly limited season, to play the title role in Bill Kenwright's spectacular production of the festive musical SCROOGE.

Based on Charles Dickens' heartwarming story A Christmas Carol, Scrooge is the perfect family treat: with stunning sets and costumes, specially created illusions by magician Paul Kieve (acclaimed for the magic effects in the Harry Potter films) and a fantastic musical score which features Leslie Bricusse's Oscar nominated hit Thank You Very Much. And Scrooge wouldn't be complete without Ebenezer, Bob Cratchit, the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future, and of course Tiny Tim!

Tommy's legendary career also includes over twenty hit singles, Hollywood movie hits such as The Happiest Millionaire and Finian's Rainbow, and countless award winning stage musicals such as Half a Sixpence, Hans Andersen and Singin' in the Rain.

Two lucky winners will receive a family ticket to see the show (worth £230!). To be in with a chance just answer this question.

**Whose novel is Scrooge based on?**  
A) Charles Dickens B) Charles Darwin C) Ray Charles

Text: LC SCROOGE, your answer A, B or C, your name and email address to 80058 eg LC SCROOGE C JOHN SMITH [john@email.com](mailto:john@email.com).

**Scrooge – Tickets from £25!**  
London Palladium, Argyll Street, London W1 – Box Office: 0844 412 4655

Texts cost £1 plus your standard network rate. Usual Archant terms and conditions apply. SMS customer services: 020 7633 5020. Closing date: Midnight September 3, 2012.

Terms and conditions apply. Tickets are valid on Monday-Thursday performances until 10th December 2012. Subject to availability. Prize cannot be transferred or exchanged. No cash alternative will be offered. Family ticket consists of four tickets for a minimum of one adult and one child. Producers reserve the right to restrict prizewinner tickets to specific performances during busy periods.

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