

**LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES  
HOMELESSNESS FORUM**

**Minutes of the meeting held in the Council Chamber, York House, Twickenham,  
on Monday 22 March 2010 at 2 p.m.**

**Present:**

Ed Tytherleigh ( <b>Chair</b> )	SPEAR
Elisabeth Bamber	Twickenham Citizens Advice Bureau
Pardip Barmi	Refuge
Michelle Binfield	CLG
Debi Blaxill	MID Mediation
Ben Davies	SPEAR
Councillor Denise Carr	LB Richmond
Joyce Curtis	Centrepoint
Ken Emerson	LB Richmond, Housing Operations
Sarah Filby	LB Richmond, Housing & Wellbeing
Laura Fox	Richmond LGBT Forum
Sophie Gill	Thames Valley Housing Association
Beryl Hawkins	Clerk (LB Richmond)
Karen Hopkins	LB Richmond, Housing & Wellbeing
Joanna Johnson	LB Richmond, Revenues and Benefits
Jonathan Monckton	Richmond Parish Lands Charity
Allan Price	LB Richmond, Revenues and Benefits
Liza Scicluna	Advice Plus Project – Richmond & Kingston Law Centre
Brian Short	RB Mind
Cass Williams	St Christopher's Fellowship

**Apologies:**

Trevor Akerman	LB Richmond, Leaving Care Team
Jane Bailey	NHS Richmond
Alison Barrington	Richmond CAB
Louise Brice	LB Richmond, Resettlement & Asylum Team
Dan Butler	LB Richmond, Housing & Wellbeing
Amy Cheswick	Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust
Helen Cuthbert	Victim Support London, Richmond upon Thames
Richard Eason	Chair, Richmond LGBT Forum
Sue Fox	LB Richmond, Commissioning Care Services (Mental Health)
Clare Granger	SPEAR
Angela Gray	Thames Valley Housing Association
Matt Hatton	Kingston Churches Action on Homelessness
Christina Isis	NHS Richmond
Bridget Jones	Richmond College
Nicky Parkhouse	Richmond Welcare
Lynn Pickerell	Victim Support London, Richmond upon Thames
Bridget Spring	Richmond upon Thames Churches Housing Trust
Sheri Tanner	LB Richmond, Revenues and Benefits
Nick Tarsh	

## 1. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2009 were agreed as an accurate record.

## 2. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

**2.1 LGBT Issues (Ref: Minute 5)** It was noted that Richard Eason had sent a copy of the Stonewall Guide to Ed Tytherleigh.

**2.2 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (Ref: Minute 7)** Ed Tytherleigh stated that Eleni Walia had contacted colleagues at NHS Richmond about LGBT issues in health strategies and had spoken to Richmond LGBT Forum members.

Laura Fox stated that the Housing & Homelessness Strategy had been discussed at an inquorate meeting of the LGBT Forum and that therefore no action had been taken, but that the Forum was aware of the consultation structure for future strategies.

## 3. FEEDBACK FROM THE STEERING GROUP

Ed Tytherleigh stated that the Steering Group was available to consider any projects that would fit in with the work being done by SPEAR or the Council. It was noted that no issues had been put forward by Forum members and that the offer was still open.

**ACTION BY: ALL**

## 4. ENDING ROUGH SLEEPING

Michelle Binfield, Specialist Advisor on Rough Sleeping for the CLG, was welcomed to the meeting and gave a presentation on proposals to end rough sleeping in London and nationally. Michelle welcomed ideas from Forum members. It was noted that

- Michelle had spent the entire 20 years of her working life working with homeless people and had been seconded to Communities and Local Government (CLG) to support the government's plans to end rough sleeping.
- Part of Michelle's work is to find out and raise awareness of what is happening locally.
- In 1998 the government set a target to reduce the number of rough sleepers by two thirds in four years. The 1998 target was met nationally and the number of rough sleepers then remained static, until 2006/07 when the government decided to use the 2012 Olympics as a target date for having no one sleeping rough.
- The 2012 target has hit problems because London as a city did not meet the 1998 target and because the date had raised, in Michelle's view, undue cynicism about the government's long-term commitment.
- Statistics show that the number of rough sleepers in Richmond

- reduced from 16 in 1999 to 6 in 2003. There is no recent CLG count.
- Each borough needs to understand its own problem and possible reasons for rough sleeping in a particular area.
  - The number of rough sleepers counted in London last year was 3,500. A small proportion of these are young people; 10 to 11% were women; the proportion of non-whites was similar; most are white British middle-aged males; 3 to 4% are ex-armed forces.
  - Many homeless people take advantage of offers of sofas, hide away or stay in overcrowded accommodation while waiting for accommodation because they feel unsafe on the streets and are not therefore included in the data.
  - Rough sleepers are defined as:
    - flow – those who have become homeless in the last year;
    - stock – those living on the streets, for at least two consecutive years; or
    - returners – who have left the streets for more than one year and then returned.
  - About 53% of those seen have been seen for the first time in that year and a third has been seen only once.
  - The CLG's aim is to have no one living on the street, to get to everyone within 24 to 48 hours and to have no returners.
  - Both major political parties are committed to it, through the Mayor of London's own target and that of central government.
  - Michelle has done a lot of work on a pan-London basis and has worked with the nine individual boroughs with the biggest problems. Other boroughs are covered at sub-regional level. Lambeth is the representative borough on the London Delivery Board for the SW sub-region.
  - Michelle or Lambeth is able to take Richmond's issues to the Delivery Board.
  - The CHAIN database now includes data about the previous whereabouts of individuals and their reasons for choosing a particular borough – this data will help improve preventative work.
  - All boroughs are being encouraged to use the prevention mapping toolkit (PrOMPT). This uses a questionnaire to find out why people have become homeless so that Housing Options can offer appropriate options. The tool was used by Lambeth in January 2010 and produced interesting results. Use of the tool should be supported by outreach providers in each locality.
  - The CLG is working with the UK Border Agency with regard to migrants. Homelessness among migrants is a minor issue in Richmond at present. In other areas the situation has mushroomed over the last two years because of people being hit by the recession and ineligible to claim benefits.
  - A project in the inner London boroughs – called RS205 – concentrated on the 205 people who had been on the street for more than five years – three quarters of these are now off the streets; three have died.
  - The project has now been extended to outer London – 28 names have been added and in the future the list will be refreshed so that 115 more can be added.

- Initiatives have included creating a safe women's space for older female rough sleepers in a hostel garden in Westminster, development of an audit and quality standards for outreach work, finding out why people are reluctant to move off the streets, and working with GPs, NHS London and hospitals.
- In summary:
  - local authorities need a strategic delivery framework for early intervention services, prevention and emergency accommodation, a contact and assessment team, outreach, accommodation, support and specialist services.
  - PrOMPT should be used to tackle entrenched rough sleeping.
  - All the relevant partners need to be brought together.
  - Michelle is a specialist adviser and can support local efforts.
  - Money is available to local authorities for initiatives to tackle the issues via a small grants programme – in addition to the normal homelessness grant provided.

Ed Tytherleigh thanked Michelle for her very interesting and informative presentation. Michelle then answered questions from Forum members:

- A10 countries equals A8 plus A2 countries, that is, the eight countries admitted to the European Union in 2004 plus the two – Romania and Bulgaria – admitted in 2007. People coming to the UK from A10 countries are allowed to work, but are not entitled to benefits until they have worked continuously for one year on the Worker Registration Scheme.
- Local authorities need to be persuaded to use the available homelessness funding creatively in order to prevent long-term rough sleeping.
- Local authorities have been given funds to help people having difficulties with mortgage arrears. These funds could also be used to help with rent arrears. A little at a timely moment can make a big difference to keeping people off the streets.

It was agreed that possible action could include: pursuing PrOMPT and use of the Street Doctor if this option was available.

In answer to further questions, Michelle stated that:

- Buildings are opened up exceptionally during severe weather to keep people alive, not to encourage them to continue to sleep rough.
- An example of the Mayor's commitment is seen in Transport for London meeting the cost providing an outreach service to reach rough sleepers on the back of the (soon to be phased out) bendy buses – it is estimated that up to 30 people a night had been sleeping rough in the backs of these buses.

## **5. THE VINEYARD PROJECT**

Brian Short, The Vineyard Project Manager, was welcomed to the meeting and thanked the Forum for their invitation to speak. Brian gave a presentation about some of the practical help offered by the project around housing, benefits and homelessness. It was noted that:

- The Vineyard Project had its origins in a group of professionals and local people. It was started by Mr Alfred Upstell in 1977 as a service for elderly people who felt isolated and people who had recently left prison were then added. Richmond and Barnes Association for Mental Health was asked to host the project.
- The contribution of the late Penny Wade was crucial to the development of SPEAR and The Vineyard Project and Richmond Borough Mind, which now runs the project, continues her ethos.
- There are three full-time staff and many volunteers and helpers.
- Partners include SPEAR, the Metropolitan Police, The Council of Churches, HM Prisons, the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, the local health authority and Jobcentre Plus.
- There are no typical clients. Many have complex and multiple needs. Some have military backgrounds. Others include those involved in alcohol abuse, substance misuse, people with learning difficulties, refugees, senior citizens from local almshouses, ex-offenders, and ex-professionals (victims of the credit crunch).
- Food and drink are available every day. There is a washing machine and showers.
- A charity shop is open three days a week and is soon to open on Saturdays. The project liaises with the Dogs Trust to provide veterinary care. A hairdresser and a solicitor are also available. There is a film group, arts and crafts, and a gardening group.
- The Richmond Parish Lands Charity is main funder of project, also issues discretionary grants, has provided winter clothing grants, for sleeping bags, boots and parkas. Hampton Fuel Allotments Charity also provides financial help, for paying bills and meeting needs.
- Trips have been organised, including one to Kew Gardens. The purpose of activities is to re-skill in order to help people to move on.
- The rules are simple. No drugs, alcohol or violent behaviour. Anyone breaking them will be excluded, initially for one month.
- The project relies on donations from charitable trusts, the local authority and other organisations. Grants are always needed.
- The affluence in many parts of the borough can highlight need.

Brian invited questions and asked Forum members to speak to him after the meeting if they wished to arrange a visit. Forum members were also referred to the Richmond Borough Mind website for more information about the project or to make an appointment to visit.

In answer to questioning, Brian stated that:

- There is no need for clients to be referred or to make an appointment. The age range is from 18 years up.

## **6. HOMELESSNESS FIGURES AND PROGRESS UPDATE FROM SPEAR**

Ben Davies reported that:

- Up to March 2010, 58 rough sleepers had been identified by SPEAR and the total by the end of the year was expected to be between 62 and 64.

- SPEAR had been responsible for 67 resettlements.
- A total of 52 people had visited the hostel; 36 of these had moved on.
- There had been 3 evictions.

With regard to the capital improvement project at the Kew Road hostel, it was noted that:

- The estimated cost of refurbishment currently stood at £927,000.
- Six double rooms would be replaced by 14 single en suite rooms.
- The refurbishment would help to support clients who required medium to high support.
- Work was due for completion on 20 August 2010, there would be a two to three week settling in period and it was expected that the hostel would be full by the end of September 2010.
- Funding for skills development was being used to provide a 'shed' and internal education and training for clients.

In answer to a question from Councillor Carr, Ed stated that SPEAR was liaising with Richmond Adult Community College and that provision would include therapeutic support, gardening, cookery and skills development.

Copies of the SPEAR Impact Report 2008/09 were available at the meeting and Forum Members were invited to view the SPEAR workshop digital photography display in the Civic Centre.

## **7. HOMELESSNESS FIGURES AND UPDATE FROM THE LONDON BOROUGH OF RICHMOND UPON THAMES**

Ken Emerson reported that:

- There had been 94 people in the borough officially registered homeless in the third quarter of 2009/10 and 99 in the fourth quarter.
- This was a slight increase on the same period in 2008/09.
- There had been a local rough sleeper's event.
- Richmond would be reviewing its homelessness strategy action plan from April 2010 with a view to meeting the 2012 target.
- The borough was also considering the CLG document 'Fair and Flexible', giving draft statutory guidance on the allocation of social housing and advocating mixed communities.
- The strategy would focus on preventative work.
- Over 200 visits had been made with regard to overcrowding. Issues for the people involved included quality of life and building work.

## **8. FUTURE MEETINGS**

Monday 11<sup>th</sup> October at 2.00 pm – The Salon, York House, Twickenham

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The meeting ended at 3.30 p.m.