

scrumptious ('skrʌmpʃəs) *adj.* *Inf.* very pleasing; delicious — 'scrumptiously *adv.*

scrumpy ('skrʌmpɪ) *n.* a rough dry cider, brewed esp. in the West Country of England.

scrunch (skrʌntʃ) *vb.* **1.** to crumple or crunch or to be crumpled or crunched. — *n.* **2.** the act or sound of scrunching.

scruple ('skrʌ:pəl) *n.* **1.** a doubt or hesitation as to what is morally right in a certain situation. **2.** *Arch.* a very small amount. **3.** a unit of weight equal to 20 grains (1.296 grams). — *vb.* **4.** (*obs.* when *tr.*) to have doubts (about), esp. from a moral compunction.

scrupulous ('skrʌ:pjuləs) *adj.* **1.** characterized by careful observation of what is morally right. **2.** very careful or precise. — 'scrupulously *adv.* — 'scrupulousness *n.*

scrutinise or **-nize** ('skrʌ:ti:naɪz) *vb.* (*tr.*) to examine carefully or in minute detail. — 'scruti.niser or -nizer *n.*

scrutiny ('skrʌ:ti:ni) *n.* **1.** close or minute examination. **2.** a searching look. **3.** official examination of votes [from Latin *scrūtiniūm* and *scrūtārī* to search even to the rags, from *scrūta*, rags, trash.]

scuba ('skju:bə) *n.* an apparatus used in scindiving, consisting of a cylinder or cylinders containing compressed air attached to a breathing apparatus.

scud (skʌd) *vb.* **scudding, scudded.** (*intr.*) **1.** (esp. of clouds) to move along swiftly and smoothly. **2.** *Naut.* to run before a gale. — *n.* **3.** the act of scudding. **4.** **a.** a formation of low ragged clouds driven by a strong wind beneath rain-bearing clouds. **b.** a sudden shower or gust of wind.

scuff (skʌf) *vb.* **1.** to drag (the feet) while walking. **2.** to scratch (a surface) or (of a surface) to become scratched. **3.** (*tr.*) *U.S.* to poke at (something) with the foot. — *n.* **4.** the act or sound of scuffing. **5.** a rubbed place caused by scuffing. **6.** a backless slipper.

scuffle ('skʌfl) *vb.* (*intr.*) **1.** to fight in a disorderly manner. **2.** to move by shuffling. — *n.* **3.** a disorderly struggle; the sound made by scuffling.

scull (skʌl) *n.* **1.** a single oar moved from the stern of a boat to propel it. **2.** one of a pair of double-handed oars, both of which are pulled by the same person. **3.** a racing shell propelled by a single oar. **4.** an act, instance, period, or distance. **5.** to propel (a boat) with a scull. — 'sculled *adj.*

scullery (skʌləri) *n.*, *pl.* **-leries.** *Chiefly Brit.* a small part of a kitchen where kitchen utensils are kept

scullion ('skʌliən) *n.* **1.** a mean or despicable person employed to work in a kitchen.

sculpture ('skʌltʃə) *n.* **1.** variant of **sculpture**. **2.** *Also:* **sculp.**

sculptress ('skʌltʃɪs) *n.* (*fem.*) **sculptress** *n.* a woman who is a sculptor

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by natural processes. — *vb.* (*mainly tr.*) **4.** (*also intr.*) to carve, cast, or fashion (stone, bronze etc) three-dimensionally. **5.** to portray (a person, etc.) by means of sculpture. **6.** to form in the manner of sculpture. **7.** to decorate with sculpture. — 'sculptural *adj.*

scumble ('skʌmbəl) *vb.* **1.** (in painting and drawing) to soften or blend (an outline or colour) with an upper coat of opaque colour, applied very thinly. **2.** to produce an effect of broken colour on doors, panelling, etc. by exposing coats of paint below the top coat. — *n.* **3.** the upper layer of colour applied in this way.

scunner ('skʌnə) *Dialect, chiefly Scot.* — *vb.* **1.** (*intr.*) to feel aversion. **2.** (*tr.*) to produce a feeling of aversion in. — *n.* **3.** a strong aversion (often in **take a scunner**). **4.** an object of dislike.

scupper¹ ('skʌpə) *n.* *Naut.* a drain or spout allowing water on the deck of a vessel to flow overboard.

scupper² ('skʌpə) *vb.* (*tr.*) *Brit. sl.* to overwhelm, ruin, or disable.

scurry ('skʌri) *vb.* **-rying, -ried.** **1.** to move about hurriedly. **2.** (*intr.*) to whirl about. *n.*, *pl.* **-ries.** **3.** the act or sound of scurrying. **4.** a brisk light whirling movement, as of snow.

scut (skʌt) *n.* a small animal, esp. of animals such as the deer or rabbit.

scuttle ('skʌtl) *vb.* **1.** to move quickly. **2.** *Dialect chiefly Brit.* to move quickly, esp. of vegetables, etc. **3.** to move quickly, esp. of a person, immediately behind the scenes.

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Small Business Task Group - Final Report

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FOREWORD



As Chair of the Co-ordination, Finance and Performance Commission, it is a great pleasure to introduce this report on small business and recommend this Task Group Report to the Commission for submission to the Cabinet and their acceptance.

May I congratulate all those members, Coopteers, small business owners, residents, witnesses and of course officers who took part in what I consider not only to be a very timely report but of real benefit to the Richmond upon Thames community as a whole. In my view the recommendations in this report are excellent, well thought out and will be of benefit, both short and long term to the health of small businesses throughout Richmond upon Thames and I hope that the Council will accept and take them forward as soon as possible.

To know that some of the information gathered has already been of assistance to the Council in promoting assistance to small businesses in the Borough is indeed the proactive step we wished to make. This task group could be a template for the future for business and residents in the Borough.

Councillor Sue Jones

Chair of the Co-ordination, Finance and Performance Commission



INTRODUCTION



I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the work of the task group and I am particularly grateful to those who gave up their time to attend meetings and share their knowledge and experience with us. Particular thanks are due to Christian Scade, Senior Scrutiny Officer, for his unstinting support and contributions to the task group.

We have noted how quickly the economic face of Richmond has altered during the six months in which the study has been prepared. The need for quick action to take account of the greatly changed economic conditions has been recognised by all those who we met.

We have detected profound changes taking place in the retail and small business sectors which could have long lasting effects. Retailers are having to respond to the 21st Century challenge of on line retailers as well as lower amounts of discretionary spending which could influence both size and complexion of our shopping parades. There are also early signs that the small business sector is expanding by people leaving paid employment to become self employed.

It is the professional services sector which is bearing the brunt of the present economic slowdown and Richmond has a high number of residents who were or are employed in this sector and difficulties they are experiencing will affect local businesses although they were or are employed outside Richmond.

The task group believe that their review is important irrespective of the current economic conditions although the timing is opportune because the review has highlighted the importance of increased Council support for the business sector. We were heartened to note that the Council support is growing.

We also want to recognise that the task group has been an active partner in the Council creating new initiatives in both support for the business sector and in formulating parking policies. Cllr Acton's contributions as the Cabinet's *Business Champion* have been welcomed. We see this as a good example of how Overview and Scrutiny should operate by working alongside the executive to have an input into new policy initiatives.

Cllr Brian Miller
Chair of the Small Business Task Group



SMALL BUSINESS TASK GROUP MEMBERSHIP

- Cllr Brian Miller (Chair)
- Cllr Pam Fleming
- Cllr Ben Khosa
- Mr Barrie Hatch



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

“Collectively, small businesses are big business. Of the 4.3 million businesses in the UK, more than 99% are small or medium sized enterprises¹.”

1. As employers of local residents and proprietors of local companies, small businesses are integral to the health and vitality of a local community. If local businesses decline, then neighbourhoods decline. Businesses have a genuine stake in the effectiveness of local government, as beneficiaries of services like waste disposal, street cleaning and the condition of local roads. Businesses are also vital contributors to services, through delivery of statutory and non-statutory services, alone or as key partners, as well as being major contributors of tax revenue. The council therefore has a direct incentive to support, not only the creation of new enterprises, but existing businesses too.
2. The Small Business Task Group was set up, on 15 January 2009, in response to the economic downturn and has worked closely with Cabinet (and other stakeholders) while carrying out its work.
3. The timing of the review allowed scrutiny to contribute to a Recession Action Plan for the short to medium term, and to proposals for developing a longer term strategy for how the Council and partners can assist local business during these difficult times. Therefore, whilst current economic conditions may have triggered this review it's important to note that the group were keen to look at both “surviving the recession” and “planning for recovery”.
4. As well as contributing to the work being carried out by Cabinet and the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) other ideas have also been suggested in this report. These address a variety of issues and it's hoped that these will be taken forward by relevant stakeholders. The group has made 18 recommendations (see table below) and believe the ones marked with a **star*** should be given priority status:

¹ “*Review of Support for Small Businesses in North Lincolnshire*” - Report of the Economic Development and Corporate Issues Scrutiny Panel - January 2008 (North Lincolnshire Council)



TABLE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Rec. No.	Recommendation	
1	In response to the economic downturn, the Local Strategic Partnership should review the terms of reference for the Business Skills and Employment Partnership to ensure the sub-group is pro-active when dealing with issues that affect small business in the borough.	*
2a	That the Cabinet Member for Traffic, Transport and Planning revise the 'short term' proposal for 'on-street' parking so its extended to a period of 20 minutes, rather than 15 minutes.	*
2b	That there is a flat rate of 10p for 20 minutes at all 'on-street' chargeable parking bays.	*
2c	As soon as relevant data has been analysed, a briefing paper, outlining the success (or otherwise) of the bank holiday trial, and the reduced tariff for car parks after 3.00pm, should be circulated to all members of the task group so they can make comments to the Cabinet Member for Traffic, Transport and Planning.	*
3	That research, on the effects of free parking in other boroughs, such as Ealing and Kingston, be commissioned by Cabinet, to enable a better understanding of the effects of 'free parking'. This should include looking at the effects on council revenue and the benefits to local businesses.	
4	That the viability of a Park and Ride scheme, for Richmond and Twickenham, be investigated.	
5	That the viability of a courtesy shuttle bus, from Richmond Park to Richmond Town Centre, be investigated.	
6	That the Council ensures there are two clear paths, for job seekers and those looking for skills and workforce support, on the new web-pages www.richmond.gov.uk/business	
7	Given that the website www.richmond.gov.uk/business provides information on a variety of different issues, the task group believes that 'business' may not be the most appropriate term to use and suggest this is reviewed.	
8	That the viability of an annual borough wide business fair be investigated by the LSP <i>Business, Skills and Employment Partnership</i> . Such a fair should enable all sectors of the business community to network with each other and with members of the public.	
9	The council should facilitate better co-ordination among borough wide attractions to ensure visitors to the borough are aware of what other attractions have to offer.	*
10	To improve dialogue between the council, small businesses and landlords, the newly appointed Economic Development Manager should explore the value and benefits of creating a database listing all business landlords in the borough. This should include understanding what is already there; desired outcomes; how and where to focus the work for most benefit; and resource implications.	



Rec. No.	Recommendation	
11	That the council ensures clear signage exists for all car parking so people can easily locate parking and understand the cost and hours of operation for all parking schemes across the borough. This information should be easily accessible via the council's website.	*
12	That consideration is given, at the next Network Management NRSWA Co-ordination meeting, to ways of improving communication between utility companies and small businesses in relation to road work scheduling.	
13	That the Cabinet Member for Resources asks the Government to make the business rate relief scheme automatic for small businesses with no need to engage in any application procedure.	
14	The council should work with partners to ensure information is provided to small businesses about which agencies can provide independent professional advice on matters relating to rent reviews and the 2010 business rates revaluation.	
15	To ensure that shopping areas remain vibrant places, Development Control is recommended to be flexible in using the Planning Protocol when dealing with change of use cases and should improve dialogue with applicants to ensure a swift determination.	*
16	As the Council's <i>Business Champion</i> , the Cabinet Member for Environment should work with the Economic Development Manager to develop strategic business policies across the borough.	
17	Rather than forming their own credit union the Council should provide people with information about joining existing ones.	
18	That further research is carried out, by a scrutiny task group, in relation to the self employed / home based business sector to ensure suitable business support is provided for this sector in the future.	*

Recommendations marked with a star* should be given priority status



PART I – ROLE AND FUNCTION OF THE TASK GROUP

BACKGROUND TO THE TASK GROUP

5. On the 23 October 2008 members of the Co-ordination, Finance and Performance Commission met (informally) with members of the Cabinet to discuss possible topics for review. It was suggested that a task group should be set up to review the business and employment support provided to local businesses.
6. Following this suggestion, the Co-ordination, Finance and Performance Commission agreed to set up a task group on the 15 January 2009. The group established the following terms of reference:
 - a) To review the business and employment support that is provided to local businesses in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.
 - b) To look at ways to help small businesses in the short term, during the economic downturn, and the long term.
 - c) To find out what services are currently offered / facilitated to small businesses by the Council and partners and look at what could be offered in the future.
 - d) To review how issues associated with small business link in with strategic priorities outlined in the Corporate and Community Plans.
 - e) To investigate the business and employment support provided in other boroughs.
 - f) To clarify the type of support that is needed for the following: Richmond and Twickenham town centres; High Streets; Small Parades and home based businesses.
 - g) To act as a “sounding board” for activities already underway, such as the Economic Development Strategy.
 - h) To report back to the Co-ordination, Finance and Performance Commission in June 2009.



METHODOLOGY

7. The task group agreed that it was important to gather evidence from a wide range of organisations. Members also decided that it would be best to split the review up into sections, so they could look at specific areas, including car parking and planning issues, town centre management, small business rate relief, skills and workforce support, and other partner services.
8. The task group interviewed the following witnesses as part of their evidence gathering (in order of their appearance before the group):
 - Philip Wealthy, Head of Policy and Design
 - Sue Rippon, Consultant, Planning Policy and Design
 - Cllr Geoff Acton, Business Champion
 - Mandy Skinner, Assistant Director, Commissioning Corporate Policy and Strategy
 - Christina Conroy, Chair, Business, Skills and Employment Partnership
 - Christina Jackson, President, Richmond Chamber of Commerce
 - Nick Taimitarha, CEO, Richmond Chamber of Commerce
 - Liz Rice, Twickenham Town Centre Manager
 - Sue Nichol, Barnes Town Centre Manager
 - Amanda Lyndon-Chappell, Whitton Town Centre Manager
 - Angela Ivey, Principal Tourism and Marketing Manager
 - Andrea Craig, Support Our Small Shops
 - Chris Turner, Senior Planning Officer (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)
 - Jo Hammond, Town Centre Initiatives Manager (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)
 - Andrew Darvill, Assistant Director, Environment (Traffic and Transport).
9. **Appendix A** outlines the issues discussed at each task group meeting.



10. The task group carried out a number of site visits during the course of their review. This included visiting the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea² and visits to more local shopping centres in Castlenau, Ham, Teddington and Whitton³. Input was also received from the St Margaret's Traders.
11. Members of the task group also attended seminars and briefings and carried out their own research by, for example, going to the *Breakfast – “withstanding the recession” – Conference* held on 21 January 2009. Members also contributed to the Local Strategic Partnership *Economic Visioning Workshop* held on 27 April, 2009.
12. The methodology allowed the task group to learn about a variety of (cross cutting) issues and ensured appropriate recommendations could be made in relation to improving support across the following key areas:
 - Retail
 - Business to business
 - Self employment / home based businesses

² An independent Retail Commission was set up by Kensington and Chelsea Council in 2006. The Commission's final report, published in May 2007, and the Royal Borough's response are comprehensive. Therefore, the task group were keen to learn from their experience and to establish what had changed as a result.

³ See **Appendix B** for a summary of the findings from the Richmond upon Thames site visits.



PART II – FINDINGS

SURVIVING THE RECESSION AND PLANNING FOR RECOVERY

13. It is necessary to define, at the outset, what we mean by “small business”. Unfortunately there are many varying definitions, used by different organisations, authorities and legislation. The general term in UK legislation (and therefore applicable to many funding programmes) is the definition adopted by the European Commission in 1996. In broad terms, this means small businesses are those that have (a) fewer than 50 employees and (b) turnover of under 2 million euros.
14. It is also important to note that there are subtle distinctions between the different ways in which the Council and partners relate to small businesses. These can be simplified as:
 - **Support** to businesses: the direct support that businesses receive in terms of specialist advice, funding, skills and workforce support.
 - **Services** to business: services that the Council provides, of which businesses are a consumer. Such services may be consumed collectively (for example environmental services or Trading Standards), or individually (for example, refuse collection).

Review of recent action

15. Following turmoil in the global financial markets and the reduction in available credit, the short to medium-term prospects for the UK economy have altered dramatically, witnessed by the continuing release of performance measures highlighting more and more potential areas for concern.
16. In response to the recession, the Council agreed a number of recommendations for immediate implementation and a nine-point plan offering support to the



community in December, 2008. The outcome of its implementation and other local actions implemented since December, 2008 are summarised below:

TABLE: Outcomes from early initiatives

ACTION	OUTCOME	ON-GOING
Business support	<p>Economic Summit held by Local Strategic Partnership in January with representatives from business, the public sector and voluntary sectors. Identified issues to be taken forward to support local business.</p> <p>Business seminars have been run locally; the council business web-pages have been re-structured and new “credit crunch” pages added; a new display board in the atrium and posters, distributed locally, aim to encourage more people to make regular visits to www.richmond.gov.uk/business</p> <p>Small Business rate relief campaign resulted in an initial increase of 461 businesses claiming relief.</p> <p>The <i>Go Green</i> business accreditation scheme, launched in June, 2008, has helped 32 organisations to identify resource saving opportunities across energy, waste, water, purchasing and travel.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>
Towns and business environment	<p>The town centre opportunity fund now supports Town Centre Managers (TCMs) in Twickenham, Whitton, St Margaret’s and Barnes and there are on-going discussions with representatives of another district. Twickenham’s action plan for the current year has clear objectives on improving the town’s image and environment and in attracting new investment (A Marketing Pack is currently being prepared)</p> <p>The Core Strategy of the Local Development Framework adopted in April 2009, places emphasis on maintaining and reinforcing town centres and on retaining employment land.</p>	<p>YES</p>
Public sector investment and purchasing	<p>Richmond Adult and Community College (RACC) plans for Clifden Road site, Twickenham, under the “Building Colleges for the Future” programme have been delayed because of funding issues at the Learning and Skills Council.</p> <p>Invoices are paid to small, local companies supplying goods and services to the Council within 10 days of receipt.</p>	<p>YES</p>
Skills and workforce support	<p>The Business, Employment and Skills Partnership (BESP) was involved in various initiatives during January- March 2009 and has set up its own task group to consider future strategy and actions. As of early June 2009, this task group is focusing on a short/medium term Recession Action Plan and starting work on a longer-term Economic Vision for the borough, which will feed into the development of the Community Plan.</p>	<p>YES</p>



ACTION	OUTCOME	ON-GOING
	<p>The new web-pages on the Council website contain information about skills and workforce support.</p> <p>The Construction Training Initiative, training local residents to work in the construction industry, commenced in April 2009, and involves Richmond Housing Partnership, Notting Hill Trust (a pioneer of the CTI programme) and the Council.</p> <p>The Council has signed the Skills Pledge (a commitment to enabling all employees to develop skills to at least a level 2 qualification) and is a member of the Local Employment Partnership, enabling links with Job Centre Plus' efforts to provide enhanced support to those on Job Seekers' Allowance for more than so many months.</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>
Partner services	January, February and March 2009 saw events run for business people and for individual residents, attracting large numbers - more to the larger fair (run by RACC) and the business breakfast than to the seminars specific to small business needs. The breakfast event raised issues from local companies about parking availability and charges – these issues are addressed later in this report.	YES
Other items from the Community 9-point support plan	<p>The Council has continued to work in partnership with the Department of Work and Pensions to maximise the take up of Housing and Council Tax Benefit. The number claiming housing benefit and council tax relief has risen by 7% since April 2008 and now stands at 5,458 claimants (Feb 2009).</p> <p>The Council continues to work through initiatives including "London Warm Zone" to support individuals implement energy saving measures</p> <p>Smarter Travel Richmond scheme launched</p>	<p>YES</p> <p>YES</p> <p>YES</p>

17. In addition, several initiatives exist to assist local suppliers in doing business with the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames:

- The council is part of the South London procurement group, actively pursuing improvements for businesses pursuing public sector contracts. One significant recent improvement is the simplification of application forms;
- As required by European legislation, new contract opportunities valued at more than £139,000 are advertised widely through the Official Journal;
- The Supply2.gov.uk website is a dynamic government-backed and Business Link promoted, service designed specifically to give companies easy access



to lower-value contract opportunities (typically worth under £100,000) offered by the public sector: consideration is being given to making regular use of this portal for the for the council's tendering process for contracts valued at over £50,000;

- The *Business* web-pages and new pages relating to the London 2012 Olympics now provide hyperlinks to *Compete For*, the procurement portal for all contracts relating to the Olympic games, encouraging London suppliers to compete for the new business;
- The council is regularly represented at *Meet the Buyer* events, run by a west London business consortium, at Heathrow, where potential suppliers meet various public sector procurement agents to understand and pursue future bids for contracts (there is contact with approximately 100 companies over 2 days).

The effects of the recession in Richmond upon Thames

18. **Impact on people:** The table below shows some of the key indicators where there is a negative trend. The starkest indication of the local impact is the number of people claiming Job Seekers' Allowance, which although remaining low by national standards, has almost doubled since last summer, while vacancies have declined. This does not, of course, reflect the total impact on people's income as many others will have a reduced income, including those in the large self employed sector in the Borough and those in professional and business services, particularly real estate. The increasing financial hardship is beginning to be reflected in the growing number of housing benefit claims and the level of rental arrears; it is also reflected in the number of people seeking financial, redundancy and dismissal-related advice from the Citizens' Advice Bureau.

TABLE: Key performance indicators

- *The shaded areas of the table denote measures that recorded significantly worse results in the early 1990s.*

People	Job Seekers' Allowance (JSA)	The number of job seekers has increased from 1,102 in July, 2008 to 2,401 in February 2009.
	Job opportunities	The number of unfilled vacancies has fallen in the last year from 929 to 328 (Feb 2008 – Feb 2009)
	Total number of 18-24 year olds	Has increased from 220 in February 2008 to 445 in February 2009



	claiming JSA	
	Number of JSA claimants being out of work for 6-12 months	160 in February 2008 to 220 in February 2009
	Dismissal and redundancies advice	In the last quarter of 2008, the number of enquiries was 74% greater than for the same period in the previous year. Negotiations between the Council and the Citizens' Advice Bureau on the resourcing implications for the coming year are on-going.
	Housing benefit claims	There has been an increase from 5,107 claims in the period April 2007 – Feb 2008 to 5,458 in the same period of the following year.
Business	Self-employed	LB Richmond upon Thames has 15.6% of its economically active population self-employed (Jun 2008 data), compared with the London average of 10.8% and 9.4% for the UK
	Tourism-related	Number of visitors in 2008 estimated at 3.1 million, including major attractions. The number of bed-spaces in the borough increased from 1,600 to 1,756, following the opening of a new hotel in Twickenham in March 2009.
Business / Environment	Vacant shops	Since July 2008, the net loss in operational town centre shops is 15 units

19. **Impact on business:** Information on the performance of local business, such as VAT registrations and deregistration, is only available annually; therefore, there is no recent statistical data. Anecdotally, although many firms are concerned over trading and the lack of availability of credit, other firms are reasonably optimistic about the immediate future. A local indicator that can be collected is the change in the number of vacant shops in the town centres and these have increased by 15 over the last 9 months. The increase is concentrated in Richmond and Twickenham while East Sheen, Teddington and Whitton have seen no significant change. The impact on Twickenham is particularly conspicuous as the closures include large core frontage units while those in Richmond are small specialist shops; however, the overall vacancy rate in the town centres remains low.
20. **Impact on Council services and Partner services:** The local monitoring data confirms that, while income from land charges, planning and building control and car parking charges is falling, there is increasing pressure on services such as housing benefit, homeless prevention and, in particular, enquiries to the Citizens'



Advice Bureau in relation to debt, dismissal and redundancy. The recession could add to the existing pressure on local schools as parents will be less likely to choose the independent sector.

21. On the 27 April, 2009, an action plan, to assist the local economy and to minimise hardship, was agreed by Cabinet. The task group contributed to the development of this action plan (attached at **Appendix C**) and it is fully endorsed.

Developing the longer term strategy

22. The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Development Bill, now passing through Parliament, will place a new duty on local authorities, from 2010, to assess economic conditions, as well as a joint duty on regional development agencies and local authorities to produce a single strategy and powers to ensure that councils co-operate in promoting economic development.
23. In London, the duty will be on each borough to produce an economic assessment, either individually or in collaboration with other authorities, with a statutory requirement to consult the Greater London Assembly and other leading authorities in doing so.⁴
24. The Comprehensive Area Assessment (first results to be reported in November 2009) will look to see how the area and partners have worked to mitigate the impact of the economic downturn. The LSP have agreed to update the Community Plan with an additional chapter setting out the longer term vision for tackling the economic downturn in the borough. In addition, account will be taken of the Mayor's Transport and Economic Development strategies, which are currently under review.
25. The Outer London Commission has recently been established to explore how the outer London suburbs can play a full part in the economic success of the city as a whole. It will make its initial report in June, in time to feed into the review of the London Plan.
26. The drivers of change and the structures to support economic development can therefore be summarised as:
 - *Key policy drivers:*

⁴ On the 27 April, 2009, Cabinet agreed that the £244k income, received in 2008/09 from the Local Authority Business Growth Incentive scheme, should be applied to support the cost of producing the local economic assessment.



- (a) Nationally:** CAA, Economic Assessments
- (b) Regionally:** London Mayor's strategies; Outer London Commission
- (c) Locally⁵:** **climate change** (sustainability); **community inclusion** (5 areas of need; worklessness, tackling disadvantage) and, latterly the response to **recession**.

- *Outputs:*

- (a) Short-term:** 9-point plan of 2008 to assist business and residents to withstand effects of the recession. Conference with Dr Vince Cable MP (Dec 2008); business seminars February 2009; Adult College "helping the individual" day event March 2009.
- (b) Medium-term:** 2009 Action Plan. Overview and Scrutiny review of retailers and small business: report to June 2009 committee.
- (c) Longer-term:** Clear expression of economic strategic direction linked strongly to the Community Plan and owned by the LSP. This will be underpinned by the Local Economic Assessment.

27. The information above confirms small businesses are a vital part of the complex picture that is the economy of Richmond upon Thames. The relationship the Council has with small business is a complicated one, with many facets and levels of operation. However, the task group believe that the Council is in an improved position to respond to the economic downturn and hope that the suggestions put forward, in the next part of the report, are acted upon to ensure the Council, together with its partners, have a clear strategy for steady, sustained and enduring growth.

A. Small Business and Strategic Priorities

28. Priority 6 of the Community Plan 2007 – 2017⁶, "*a vibrant and prosperous borough*", has objectives to encourage business enterprise, skills' development and the visitor/hospitality sector (including preparation for London 2012 Olympics). These all accord well with the London Mayor's three key principles of *jobs, skills and growth*, on which the draft London Economic Development Strategy is being formulated, for circulation in late 2009.

⁵ See Corporate and Community Plans for further information.

⁶ http://www.richmond.gov.uk/community_plan_2007_17.pdf



29. The LSP *Business, Skills and Employment Partnership (BSEP)* will play an important role in developing a partnership approach to dealing with the recession and planning for recovery. As a result, the task group were pleased that they were able to speak to Christina Conroy, Chair, Business, Skills and Employment Partnership, as part of their investigation. The terms of reference for the BSEP are attached at **Appendix D**.
30. A draft economic development strategy was considered by the BSEP, on 2nd March 2009 but the business partners decided not to proceed until there had been further debate with the LSP, in particular about the principles and objectives in the Community Plan 2007 – 2017 and their relevance to the current economic context. The emerging guidance for the Comprehensive Area Assessment anticipates that how boroughs are tackling economic downturn will be a significant feature.
31. Following on from this, and as noted above, the LSP have agreed to update the Community Plan with an additional chapter setting out the longer term vision for tackling the economic downturn in the borough. At the *Economic Visioning Workshop*, held on the 27 April, 2009, the LSP, asked Christina Conroy to Chair a task group⁷ which was charged with developing an action plan to help partners deal with the recession and plan for the recovery (including starting to develop a vision for the local economy). This approach is endorsed by the task group, who are pleased that the LSP will have the opportunity to consider this scrutiny report before the draft action plan is discussed further by the LSP on the 24 June, 2009.
32. Although the actions above are fully supported, the task group believe that the Business, Skills and Employment Partnership's term of reference need to be reviewed, especially as the economic conditions have changed significantly since it was established in 2007.
33. The remit of similar LSP sub-groups in Oldham and Sutton were cited as having terms of reference better reflecting the current economic climate and which allow these groups to be more pro-active when, for example, identifying the sectors that will be priorities for business opportunities in the future. The frequency of BSEP meetings is currently listed as "3 times annually". Given the current economic conditions it is unsurprising that the task group believe that the structure of this

⁷ The LSP task group currently includes representatives from the Council, Richmond Adult and Community College, Richmond Housing Partnership, Job Centre Plus and other key partners.



group should be reviewed so it can play a more active role when dealing with issues that affect small business in the borough.

Recommendation 1: In response to the economic downturn, the Local Strategic Partnership should review the terms of reference for the Business Skills and Employment Partnership to ensure the sub-group is pro-active when dealing with issues that affect small business in the borough.

B. Parking

34. Car parking was raised as an important issue by the majority of witnesses interviewed by the task group. Many witnesses felt that the Council could and should be doing more to assist local businesses. There were also concerns that a charging structure for 'on' and 'off' street parking based on CO2 emissions could damage the local economy.
35. The task group asked the Cabinet Member for Traffic, Transport and Planning to consider supplementary measures, to assist local businesses, as part of the *Parking Charges* report⁸, which went to Cabinet on 27 April, 2009.
36. The task group had the opportunity to comment on these ideas before the *Parking Charges* report was finalised and are pleased that a variety of approaches have been investigated. The task group, broadly, supports the following proposals:
 - The introduction, on a trial basis, of free parking, on bank holidays, in all borough car parks, in order to help small traders and local attractions. The first trial took place on 25 May, 2009.
 - Provide a reduced tariff (say a maximum charge of £1.00 for low and medium emission cars and £1.50 for others) for a period (say 3.00pm to 6.30pm) on one or more days of the week, in the boroughs car parks (excluding the multi story Car Parks that currently operate evening tariffs)
 - Introduce a 'short stay' tariff on all 'on street' parking bays of (say) 10p (low/medium) and 20p (high) for 15 minutes. The period of 15 minutes

⁸ See 27 April, 2009, Cabinet Report (*Parking Charges*) and Minutes for further information.



and this arrangement were chosen to help ensure there is a turn over of parking spaces in local shopping parades.

37. However, to ensure these measures are a success, the task group would like the Cabinet Member for Traffic, Transport and Planning, following feedback from traders, to re-consider the 'short term' 'on-street' parking proposal so it is extended to a period of 20 minutes, rather than 15 minutes, and strongly believe that there is need to have a robust method of measuring the impact, of free parking, on the trial Bank Holiday. With this in mind, the task group believe that the recommendations below need to be given serious consideration:

Recommendation 2a: That the Cabinet Member for Traffic, Transport and Planning revise the 'short term' proposal for 'on-street' parking so its extended to a period of 20 minutes, rather than 15 minutes.

Recommendation 2b: That there is a flat rate of 10p for 20 minutes at all 'on-street' chargeable parking bays.

Recommendation 2c: As soon as relevant data has been analysed, a briefing paper, outlining the success (or otherwise) of the bank holiday trial, and the reduced tariff for car parks after 3.00pm, should be circulated to all members of the task group so they can make comments to the Cabinet Member for Traffic, Transport and Planning.

38. The issue of "free parking" was also considered. The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea introduced free parking, on Saturdays in April. The Council made 5,600 pay-and-display bays available knowing it would lose a significant sum. However, as reported in *The London Paper* (15 April, 2009) Cllr Merrick Cockell, Council Leader, believes it was money well spent and states "Initial reports...suggest it has had a positive impact on the street".
39. This was an issue that was raised by various other stakeholders during the course of the investigation and the issue of 'free parking' (for either 30 or 60 minutes) was considered by Cabinet on the 27 April, 2009. Such an approach may reduce the level of 'turnover' of spaces making it harder for drivers to find a parking space adjacent to the shop they are wishing to visit. However, given the effects of free parking are widely unknown, the task group believe that further information is needed before recommendations can be made. As a result, the



task group suggests that further research is commissioned by Cabinet to enable a better understanding of the effects⁹ of 'free parking'.

Recommendation 3: That research, on the effects of free parking in other boroughs, such as Ealing and Kingston, be commissioned by Cabinet, to enable a better understanding of the effects of 'free parking'. This should include looking at the effects on council revenue and the benefits to local businesses.

40. As noted above there are numerous parking options available. What the Council needs to ensure is the right balance is struck between competing demands. The task group believe this can be done if the recommendations are implemented and also think there is scope to look at other suggestions as well. The Chamber of Commerce, and other witnesses, suggested that a Park and Ride scheme, for Richmond and Twickenham, for example from the RFU car park, should be investigated. Another option, that could help increase footfall in Richmond Town Centre, is the possibility of running a courtesy shuttle bus from Richmond Park to Richmond Town Centre.
41. While the suggestions above have not been discussed in great detail the task group believe that they have the potential to add value and hope they're investigated further.

Recommendation 4: That the viability of a Park and Ride scheme, for Richmond and Twickenham, be investigated.

Recommendation 5: That the viability of a courtesy shuttle bus, from Richmond Park to Richmond Town Centre, be investigated.

C. Skills and Workforce Support

42. The task group were keen to learn more about *skills and workforce support* and were informed that the Business, Employment and Skills Partnership, as the strategic private-public sub group of the LSP, is responsible for monitoring partner programmes and actions.

⁹ Looking at the *effects* should include looking at the effects on council revenue and the benefits to local businesses



43. The sub-group was involved in various initiatives during January – March 2009 and, as noted in section A of this report, has set up its own task group to consider future strategy and actions.
44. The Construction Training Initiative¹⁰ commenced in April 2009 and involves Richmond Housing Partnership, Notting Hill Trust and the Council. The Council has also signed the Skills Pledge (a commitment to enabling all employees to develop skills to at least a level 2 qualification) and is a member of the Local Employment Partnership, enabling links with Job Centre Plus' efforts to provide enhanced support to those on Job Seekers' Allowance for more than so many months.
45. The task group are pleased that the new web-pages on the Council website have been improved. The website www.richmond.gov.uk/business now contains a significant amount of information about skills and workforce support and provides links to a variety of partner services. Whilst these improvements are welcomed the task group have made two recommendations which they believe will improve access to this important information.

Recommendation 6: That the Council ensures there are two clear paths, for job seekers and those looking for skills and workforce support, on the new web-pages www.richmond.gov.uk/business

Recommendation 7: Given that the website www.richmond.gov.uk/business provides information on a variety of different issues, the task group believes that 'business' may not be the most appropriate term to use and suggest this is reviewed.

D. Communication / Sign-posting

46. After interviewing various witnesses the task group believe that this is an area that needs to be improved. A number of recommendations have been made and these are listed below:

¹⁰ Training local residents to work in the construction industry.



Recommendation 8: That the viability of an annual borough wide business fair be investigated by the LSP *Business, Skills and Employment Partnership*. Such a fair should enable all sectors of the business community to network with each other and with members of the public.

Recommendation 9: The council should facilitate better co-ordination among borough wide attractions to ensure visitors to the borough are aware of what other attractions have to offer.

Recommendation 10: To improve dialogue between the council, small businesses and landlords, the newly appointed Economic Development Manager should explore the value and benefits of creating a database listing all business landlords in the borough. This should include understanding what is already there; desired outcomes; how and where to focus the work for most benefit; and resource implications.

Recommendation 11: That the council ensures clear signage exists for all car parking so people can easily locate parking and understand the cost and hours of operation for all parking schemes across the borough. This information should be easily accessible via the council's website.

47. The impact of road works on small business was also raised as a priority by traders. It was suggested that more should be done to keep small businesses, especially shops, informed of work carried out by utility companies. The task group learned that Transport for London had recently set up a meeting with Richmond Business and Retail Association to discuss the 2009 Richmond Circus. This approach is fully supported and the task group would like to see further consideration given to ways of improving communication between utility companies and small businesses.

Recommendation 12: That consideration is given, at the next Network Management NRSWA Co-ordination meeting, to ways of improving communication between utility companies and small businesses in relation to road work scheduling.



E. Small Business Rate Relief

48. Another issue that kept raising member's concerns during this review was the take up and the marketing of the Small Business Rate Relief (SBRR) scheme. This is part of the legislation of business rates calculation and is administered (for central Government) by the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.
49. The scheme is funded by a supplement on the rate bills of larger business ratepayers. Properties with a rateable value of less than £5,000 are eligible for 50% rate relief on their liability. Above £5,000 relief is available, but by 1% for every £100, below a maximum rate of £10,000 rateable value.
50. The task group were informed that nationally take up, in some areas has been lower than expected. The Local Government Association believes that some 870,000 firms are eligible for the rebate but only half have claimed. (1 June 2006). An FSB survey found that 49% of eligible businesses were claiming SBRR. They also found huge regional variances in take up, with no identifiable pattern by region (May, 2006).
51. Members were told by various witnesses, especially those interviewed on the site visits to small parades¹¹, that, despite the recent awareness campaign, many businesses were still unaware of the scheme and that they need to apply to receive it. Additionally under Section 49 of the Local Government Finance Act 1988, councils have the power to reduce or remit all or part of a business rates bill on the grounds that the ratepayer is in extreme financial hardship. The task group believe that business rate relief should be automatic for small businesses with no need to engage in any application procedure. This would reduce the resources needed to complete time consuming paper work for both the council and small businesses.

Recommendation 13: That the Cabinet Member for Resources asks the Government to make the business rate relief scheme automatic for small businesses with no need to engage in any application procedure.

¹¹ See **Appendix B** for further information.



52. Other issues discussed in relation to SBRR include the 2010 Business Rates Revaluation¹² and rent reviews. The task group recognise that a demand for an increased rent has the potential to bring a business to its knees. However, there is often a substantial amount of money that can be saved, if the correct advice is sought in good time. With this in mind the task group believe that the council should work with partners to ensure information is provided to small businesses about which agencies can provide independent professional advice on matters relating to rent reviews and the 2010 business rates revaluation.

Recommendation 14: The council should work with partners to ensure information is provided to small businesses about which agencies can provide independent professional advice on matters relating to rent reviews and the 2010 business rates revaluation.

F. Change of Use

53. Empty shops can be eyesores or crime magnets. With this in mind many of the stakeholders interviewed by the task group stated that they did not want to see spaces such as unused shops go to waste, especially when others could put the space to good use.
54. To facilitate easier 'change of use' a number of witnesses suggested that the process for applications needed to be reviewed and the Council needed to ensure a reduced timeline for responses to such planning applications.
55. Whilst the task group acknowledge these concerns they also recognise the complex legal process that exists in relation to change of use planning applications.
56. However, the task group are pleased that the Government, in April, announced new measures and up to £3million to help communities find creative ways to reduce the negative impact empty shops have on the high street. The new provisions, including special planning application waivers, standard interim-use

¹² See **Appendix E** – “*Looking ahead to the 2010 Business Rates Revaluation*” – for further information



leases, and temporarily leasing shops to councils, will allow empty shops to get makeovers for use as cultural, community or learning services.

57. Taking the above information into account (and noting the Council's new Planning Protocol which gives a commitment to assist local businesses through the planning process) the task group ask that Development Control Officers be proactive when dealing with change of use cases and improve dialogue with applicants to ensure a swift determination.

Recommendation 15: To ensure that shopping areas remain vibrant places, Development Control is recommended to be flexible in using the Planning Protocol when dealing with change of use cases and should improve dialogue with applicants to ensure a swift determination.

G. Business Champion

58. As noted earlier in the report, local authorities, from 2010 will be given new responsibilities in relation to economic development¹³. With this in mind, the task group are pleased that, due to a recent Council restructure, support for the business sector has increased. There is now an economic development section comprising a new manager, the existing tourism, business partnership and Twickenham town centre managers and the whole tourist information centre team, that is currently taking shape in the Policy and Design division of the Environment Directorate.
59. The task group particularly endorse the appointment of the Economic Development Manger and are pleased that Cllr Geoff Acton, Cabinet Member for Environment, has been selected as the Council's *Business Champion*.
60. As part of their evidence gathering the group heard from the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea about how they'd created "strategic shopping policies". Their approach was concerned with promoting and securing diverse and vibrant shopping centres across the borough. While recognising that direct comparisons are often difficult, the group were able to gain an understanding of how such

¹³ For further information see The Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Development Bill (2008)



policies are developed and how they relate to a council's "place shaping" responsibility.

61. The task group supports the creation of strategic business policies (across Richmond upon Thames) and suggests, as the Council's *Business Champion*, that the Cabinet Member for Environment works with the Economic Development Manager to ensure these policies are developed in harmony with other Council policies such as the Local Development Framework.

Recommendation 16: As the Council's *Business Champion*, the Cabinet Member for Environment should work with the Economic Development Manager to develop strategic business policies across the borough.

H. Credit Unions

62. Credit Unions are financial co-operatives owned and controlled by their members. They offer savings and have loan rates which are very competitive.
63. With high street banks and building societies tightening their lending criteria members of the task group were keen to look at credit unions, especially as the Government has announced proposals to allow more flexible membership. Currently members must share a "common bond", such as living in the same area or working for the same employer. Easing this requirement could mean that more savers and borrowers are able to join credit unions.
64. During their investigation the task group were informed that Hampton Fuel Allotment Charity and Richmond Parish Lands jointly funded a feasibility study, which was commissioned by Richmond Citizens Advice Bureaux, in 2005.
65. The feasibility study was published and a presentation made to the lead Member at the time. Although interested, it was not felt to be something that the Council could commit resources to. Richmond Citizens Advice Bureaux were unable to raise funding for the project and did not have capacity to continue to lead the Steering Group, which lapsed.
66. As part of the Council's consultation on the Housing Strategy, a workshop was held on 27 July 2007 on the subject of *Improving Financial Opportunities*, one of the issues discussed was credit unions. Richmond Citizens Advice Bureaux were unable to attend, but Hilary Elwood from Thamesbank Credit Union outlined a



less costly model for establishing a credit union, estimated to be about £75k over 5 years.

67. The subject has been raised with various organisations but the task group feel there are various issues that need to be considered:

- The feasibility study did not look at the risks and benefits and was based on a very small sample (50 people)
- There needs to be evidence that a credit union would reach those who most need it.
- It has been suggested that the Council should join with another body in order to reduce costs and widen the customer base, but this would require the need to identify a common community benefit.
- Even if external funding could be found, the Council would probably still need to devote some legal and financial resources to the project.
- A Joseph Rowntree Foundation report on credit unions, dated 2006, notes that the sector has seen solid growth but there is a question mark over the long term survival of at least half.

68. Despite these concerns, the task group believe that credit unions will become more popular in the current economic climate and rather than form their own, the Council would be better off giving people information¹⁴ about joining existing ones, especially if Government proposals about relaxing the rules come to fruition.

Recommendation 17: Rather than forming their own credit union the Council should provide people with information about joining existing ones.

¹⁴ If the Council is to provide 'financial' information care must be taken to ensure that compliance is made with any financial requirements for financial advisers.



I. Home Based Businesses / Self-Employed

“More home businesses means more dynamism in the economy, less traffic on the roads and tighter social cohesion as parents stay at home to run a business and the household¹⁵.”

69. According to the *Home Business Report*, compiled by Enterprise Nation in October 2008, despite the economic downturn, increasing numbers of people are running part-time or full-time businesses from home.
70. There were more than 2.5 million home based businesses in the UK at the start of 2007, an increase of 16% on the start of 2006. The greatest numbers are located in London, East of England and the South East¹⁶. In Richmond upon Thames there are 18,200 self-employed people – 14.5% of the workforce. This is around 50% higher than the national figure.
71. Enterprise Nation believes there are five key factors influencing rapid growth in the home business sector. These are:
- **Reducing costs** – New business owners are avoiding the cost of a second office and starting up in the spare room/attic/garden shed. Established businesses are heading home too. Research published in August 2008 showed firms not renewing leases and 60% of those still operating from an office or industrial park considering giving it up within the year¹⁷. Home workers are saving on travel costs to the tune of £8.40 per day, equal to £2,000 per year and for home business owners who can do without a second car, annual savings of in excess of £6,000¹⁸.
 - **Increasing income** – people are looking for ways to earn extra income, sometimes alongside a day job. Research from Capital Economics shows 56,000 people ‘exploiting their job skills to earn extra cash’ and Robert Watts wrote in *The Sunday Times* on 13th July 2008: ‘Thousands of professionals – lawyers, financial advisers, computer programmers and

¹⁵ Emma Jones, founder of Enterprise Nation, *Home Business Report*, October 2008

¹⁶ Department for Business, Enterprise & Regulatory Reform, *SME statistics*, August 2008

¹⁷ ‘Working from home is the business, small firms say’ *The Daily Telegraph*, 11 August 2008

¹⁸ *Home Business Report*, October 2008



marketing managers are looking for freelance work outside of normal office hours’.

- **Greater demand** – home businesses tend to cater to niche audiences and provide a personal service or tailored product. Such niche businesses face a growing level of customer demand, as confirmed by Yell in June 2008, showing a 60% increase in searches for businesses offering help around the home from June 2007-08. The businesses offering this help are, in the main, home based businesses¹⁹.
- **Lifestyle choice** – a clear shift towards individuals wanting to find work that’s fulfilling is leading many to self-employment and the freedom and flexibility it brings. This is resulting in hobbies being turned into businesses. Witness the rise of crafts marketplace, Etsy.com and findings from Hiscox Insurance showing a surge in the number of non-traditional businesses looking for policies; professions including badger consultants, dog psychologists and Feng Shui consultants²⁰.
- **Advances in technology** – there is no doubt that technology has been the key enabler driving home working levels even higher. In entries to the Enterprise Nation 2008 Home Business Awards, 73% of business owners said they believe technology is critical to the success of heir business. Entries show home business owners making the most of all forms of technology (telecoms/software/web applications) to keep costs low and sales and productivity high.

72. The task group recognise the growing importance of this sector but have been unable to analyse significant local data in relation to home based business due to limited information being available.

73. The task group believe this is something that needs to be addressed to ensure suitable business support is provided in the future. Given the current economic conditions and the fact that the number of residents claiming Job Seeker’s Allowance has doubled in the last year, combined with the benefits listed above, it is more than likely that the number of home based businesses in the borough will increase further, especially as other vacancies have declined.

¹⁹ ‘Demand for domestic services on the rise as UK households seek home help’, Yell.com, 30 July 2008

²⁰ ‘When I grow up, I want to be...’ Hiscox Insurance, 01 August 2008



74. With this in mind, the task group believe that the council and LSP should give serious consideration to the recommendation below. The task group were impressed with the work that the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea had done in this area (*sector, area and market based intelligence*) which was carried out by a leading UK economic research and strategy consultancy firm.

Recommendation 18: That further research is carried out, by a scrutiny task group, in relation to the self employed / home based business sector to ensure suitable business support is provided for this sector in the future.



SELECTED READING

- The Richmond upon Thames Community Plan – 2007 to 2017
http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/community_and_living/neighbourhood_information/community_plan_2007_to_2017.htm
- *A Balance of Trade* – Report of the Commission on Retail Conservation to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea – May 2007
- *Review of Support for Small Businesses in North Lincolnshire* – Report of the Economic Development and Corporate Issues Scrutiny Panel (North Lincolnshire Council) – January 2008
- Cabinet Report – *Economic Downturn and Support* – 15 December 2008
- Cabinet Report - *Economic Update and Future Support* – 27 April 2009
- Cabinet Report – *Parking Charges* – 27 April 2009



APPENDICES

Appendix A	Timetable of meetings
Appendix B	Summary of findings from the Richmond upon Thames site visits
Appendix C	2009 Action Plan
Appendix D	Terms of Reference – Business Skills and Employment Partnership
Appendix E	“Looking ahead to the 2010 Business Rates Revaluation”



APPENDIX A – TIMETABLE OF MEETINGS

Date	Witnesses	Issues discussed
20 Jan 2009	Philip Wealthy, Head of Policy and Design	Scoping Session
26 Jan 2009	Sue Rippon, Consultant, Planning Policy and Design	Introduction to the services / support available to small business in Richmond upon Thames.
9 Feb 2009	Mandy Skinner, Assistant Director, Commissioning Corporate Policy and Strategy; Christina Conroy, Chair, Business, Skills and Employment Partnership	Strategic priorities / role of the Business, Skills and Employment Partnership.
20 Feb 2009	Christina Jackson, President, Richmond Chamber of Commerce; Nick Taimitarha, CEO, Richmond Chamber of Commerce	Input / feedback from Richmond Chamber of Commerce
23 Feb 2009	Liz Rice, Twickenham Town Centre Manager; Sue Nichol, Barnes Town Centre Manager; Amanda Lyndon-Chappell, Whitton Town Centre Manager; Angela Ivey, Principal Tourism and Marketing Manager; Andrea Craig, Support Our Small Shops	Town Centre Management and input from “Support Our Small Shops”
23 Feb 2009 – 19 March 2009	Members of the task group visited a number of parades during their evidence gathering, including: Castlenau, Ham, Teddington, Whitton and St Margarets.	Input / feedback from traders and retailers. Various issues discussed.
19 March 2009	Chris Turner, Senior Planning Officer (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea); Jo Hammond, Town Centre Initiatives Manager (Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea)	Site visit to the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea in response to the publication of their <i>Balance of Trade</i> report.
23 March 2009	None	- Site visit feedback - The Lewes Pound - Credit Unions



14 April 2009	Andrew Darvill, Assistant Director, Environment (Traffic and Transport) and Sue Rippon, Consultant, Planning Policy & Design.	An opportunity to comment on the following draft reports before consideration by 27 April Cabinet: (a) Parking Charges (b) Economic Update and Future Support
27 April 2009	None	Discussion of initial findings and recommendations
20 May 2009	None	Drafting final report

