

Also in this issue

- Task Groups
- Focus on Cllr Coombs
- News brief and more...



Introduction by Gillian Norton, Chief Executive, Richmond upon Thames

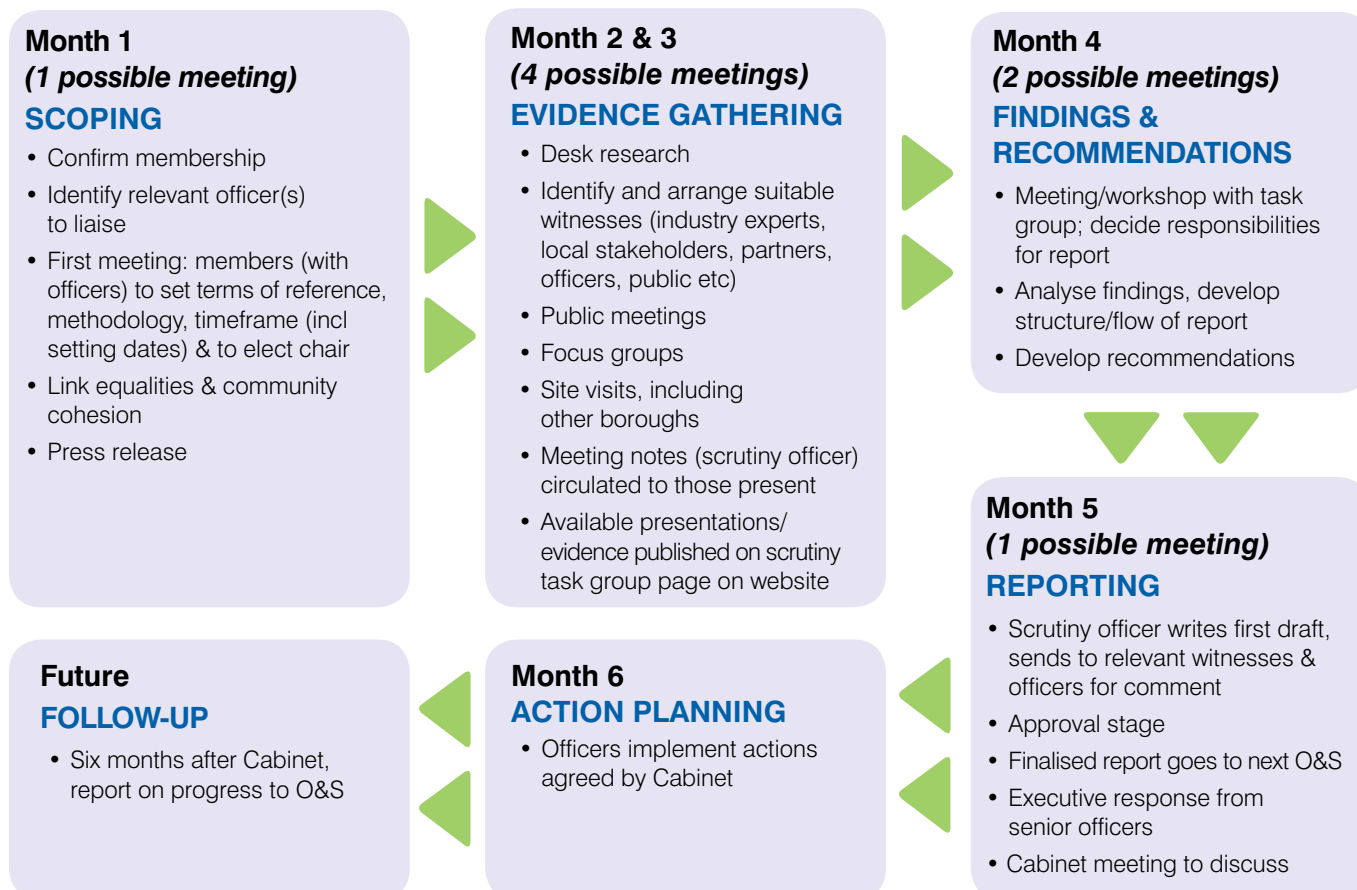


I'm delighted the focus of this newsletter is on work carried out via scrutiny task groups. Task groups are smaller than Committees and are set up to examine specific issues in detail, which means they tend to work more flexibly and informally. They are made up of between 3 – 6 members and have the support of a dedicated Scrutiny Officer.

Each task group sets itself clear terms of reference. The group refers to these throughout the review, particularly when it is deciding what information to gather and what witnesses to hear from.

I hope that this newsletter gives you a flavour of past and future reviews.

TASK GROUP PROCESS AND TIMELINE



Parental engagement in children's secondary education task group

Research shows that the support offered by parents and carers, particularly at home, has a measurable impact upon children's results at secondary school.

Early in 2009, a task group of three councillors and one co-opted member from the Children's Services O&S Committee started to investigate how such engagement between parents, school and students is encouraged in our borough.

A questionnaire analysed the methods already in use, together with perceptions of their comparative success; and the group has met with parents, students and teachers from several schools to learn about the rewards of and barriers to engaging parents. Members also visited Compton school in Barnet, a well-known example of good practice.

It was soon clear to the task group that Richmond upon Thames schools are committed to encouraging parental engagement wherever possible, using innovative approaches. However, members hope to identify some new ideas or practice that may ultimately help to drive up academic attainment.

Road safety task group

In July 2009, the Environment and Sustainability O&S Committee set up a task group to look at road safety and traffic calming in the borough, including the use of 20mph limits, a measure already attracting widespread interest from other local authorities.

There are three elected and two co-opted members in the task group, who met for the first time in July to discuss terms of reference. It has initially been agreed that whilst the group would examine the use of 20mph zones across the borough, it would look at other traffic calming measures in addition. The work will assess not only the impact of traffic but also of related traffic calming measures from a non-safety angle, e.g. environmental or community considerations.

In September, the group will attend a conference in Portsmouth, the first city in Britain to make almost all its residential roads 20 mph.

Dementia task group

The remit of this task group, which reported in June, was to review existing services in Richmond and establish how they relate to the National Dementia Strategy, identify gaps in current services and set out a view for future services.

The importance of early diagnosis and intervention was also an overwhelming theme during the witness sessions. The task group were keen to highlight the importance of "Care before Crisis" to improve the quality of life for sufferers and carers alike.



Home-based Business

"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 household ."

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

Following the work of the Small Business Task Group (June, 2009) a new task group has been launched to review the business and employment support that is provided to the self employed/ home based business sector.

Chairman of the Group, Councillor Brian Miller, says: "Despite the economic downturn, the work of the Small Business Task Group highlighted that increasing numbers of people are running part-time or full-time businesses from home. Given that the number of residents claiming Job Seeker's Allowance has doubled in the last year, combined with the benefits listed above, it's more than likely that the number of home based businesses in the borough will increase further, especially as other vacancies have declined. I am sure that the outcome of this review will be keenly awaited."

Focus on Cllr Coombs

You have recently taken on the champion role in scrutinising the performance of partners. What does this role entail?

Nowadays, the Council rarely does anything by itself, external partners are normally involved and it's important we oversee what these partners are doing.

How will the new powers given to Overview and Scrutiny change the way the council is perceived by external partners?

The first thing we need to do is to establish proper contact with outside organisations. Scrutiny is a new concept for many external partners and it can be a daunting prospect.

What challenges do you think you will face?

The biggest challenge for us is ensuring that they see us as a 'critical friend'. We also need to make sure that anything we do is accepted by the relevant partners.



What is the benefit of scrutiny to the Local Strategic Partnership (LSP)?

Scrutiny is important because it gives a fresh perspective. If we all work together we can pool resources and save money, ensuring that things are working as efficiently as they could be. In a year's time, I hope we'll be in a position where external partners are actually relishing our role.

Update on the work of our co-opted members

Co-opting members onto Overview and Scrutiny committees is a recognised and valued way of ensuring public participation in local democracy. Richmond upon Thames O&S committees have 15 co-opted members, who are held in high regard by elected members. We were keen, however, to find out how the co-optees themselves view the experience, and if it could be improved in any respect. We therefore asked co-optees for some structured feedback.

Key findings are as follows:

- They feel that they add value to the committees through their specialised and independent viewpoint
- The four year term they serve provides continuity, and builds up familiarity with the process
- Whilst ongoing training opportunities are thought to be plentiful and increase skills and experience, they felt that they could have had more structured support at the beginning
- They derive considerable job satisfaction, particularly in small cross-party task groups, carrying out highly focused research on topics that have real significance to the community.

In summary, our research confirmed the value of co-optees to Richmond upon Thames O&S process and the importance of supporting them wherever possible.

Committee News in Brief:

Section 19 of the Police and Justice Act 2006 requires every local authority to have a crime and disorder committee with the power to scrutinise decisions made by the responsible authorities. In September, Council will be requested to include community safety within the remit of the Co-ordination, Finance and Performance Commission (and thereby removing it from the Environment & Sustainability OSC) as the Commission has lead responsibility for both performance management and partnerships.

Council will also consider the renaming of Children's Services OSC to Children's Services and Culture OSC to reflect both the name of the directorate and the Committee's remit more accurately.

For further information on the above and on Councillor Call for Action (CCfA), please follow the link given:

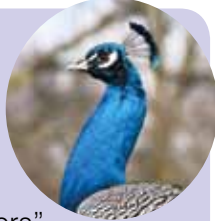
http://www.richmond.gov.uk/home/council_government_and_democracy/democratic_processes_and_events/calendar_of_meetings.htm?mgl=ieListDocuments.asp&CId=173&Mid=2210

How does your personality affect your scrutiny?

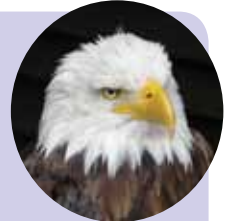
At the recent annual conference held by the Centre for Public Scrutiny (CfPS), one of the sessions on leadership included personality profiles on 'scrutiny types', giving rise to the following questions.

Which of these is you – and how could you learn from the others?

The expressive peacock is effusive and talkative, with a consistent flow of thoughts and ideas. It can be hard to keep up with them, or get a word in edgeways. They are great "intenders" and procrastinators so you have to pin them down to a commitment.



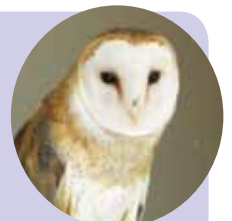
The eagle is likely to be direct, in a rush, abrupt and to dislike any "beating about the bush". They like detail but can stay remote so if they see the benefit they make immediate decisions.



The amicable dove is likely to be warm, friendly and helpful. They are primarily concerned with impact on people – themselves and others. They may look for help from others before taking a decision.



The analytical owl is likely to speak in measured tones and be interested in the details of things. They may want all arguments proved logically, usually in writing, with figures to back up claims, before deciding.



Acknowledgement: provided by Laura Murphy CfPS Associate

Public consultation

Following the work of the Public Consultation Task Group (April, 2009) and the work that is taking place to develop a Community Engagement Strategy, which will provide the Council with a framework to meet the requirements of the new "Duty to Involve" a new Local Community Groups Task Group has been set up. The scope of this review will be confirmed when the group meets in September.

Contacts for Scrutiny

Overview and Scrutiny Team
Democratic Services
York House
Richmond Road
Twickenham
TW1 3AA

Telephone: 020 8891 7158
Fax: 020 8891 7701

Further information is also available on our website:
www.richmond.gov.uk/scrutiny

Please contact us if you need this leaflet in Braille, large print, audio tape, or another language.

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames, Civic Centre, 44 York Street, Twickenham TW1 3BZ, Telephone 020 8891 1411

إذا كانت لديك صعوبة في فهم هذا المنشور، فنرجو زيارة الإستقبال في العنوان المعطى أدناه حيث بإمكاننا أن نرتب لخدمة ترجمة شفوية هاتفية.

اگر در فهمیدن این نشریه مشکلی دارید لطفاً به میز پذیرش در آدرس قید شده در زیر مراجعه نمایید تا ترتیب ترجمه تلفنی برایتان فراهم آورده شود:

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਪਰਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਪੇਸ਼ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਪਤੇ ਉੱਪਰ ਰਿਸੈਪਸ਼ਨ 'ਤੇ ਆਓ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਤੇ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰਿਟਰ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।