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Introduction

Introduction by Cllr Sue Jones, Chair of the Overview and Scrutiny Coordinating group.



“We want our scrutiny process recognised as one of the most effective in local government. To achieve this a number of things need to happen. We must change our relationship with Cabinet and become involved with decisions at a sufficiently early stage to exert real influence.

“We do not want a confrontational relationship with decision-makers. We would rather play the role of a critical friend. We will, however, not be a soft touch. We will do our job rigorously and hold the Council to account on behalf of residents.

“We also need to maintain close links with organisations across the borough such as the Primary Care Trust, Richmond Housing Partnership, the voluntary sector and others involved in providing vital services to our community.

“Over the next few months the Overview and Scrutiny Committees will be addressing a number of major issues. This newsletter will highlight the areas under discussion and keep you up to date with developments.”

Environment

The great CO² debate

At the end of October, Richmond Council announced proposals to charge owners of vehicles that produce high levels of CO² significantly more for residents' parking permits.

Following a consultation with over 3,500 residents and 1,000 businesses, the groundbreaking proposals were endorsed by Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee and approved by Cabinet.

Cllr James Mumford, Chair of Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee, said:

“Climate change is the single greatest challenge facing the world today. Local government has a key role to play in finding the solution.

“This proposal was not put forward lightly but we absolutely believe it is the right thing to do. During the consultation 47% of people voted in favour of the proposals. The Committee's support for the proposals was informed by the outcome of that consultation.”

For more information go to: www.richmond.gov.uk



Waste Task Group

In May 2006 Cabinet agreed to carry out a review of waste services to improve efficiency and increase recycling rates. Environment and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Committee decided to re-establish the Waste Scrutiny Task Group. The Group heard evidence from officers, the current contractor, and a number of representatives from the recycling industry.

They made a number of recommendations, including:

- Recycled material should continue to be source separated.
- Mandatory recycling should be supported in principle, with the emphasis on education rather than punishment.
- The new service should include kerbside plastic bottles and cardboard recycling collections.

Cabinet accepted the report and agreed arrangements that will increase the recycling rate towards 40%.

For more information contact Sue Harris on 020 8891 6334

Finance

Local Government Finance Settlement

Councillor Stephen Knight, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Resources attended the Finance and Strategy Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 6 December to report on the recently announced Local Government Finance Settlement.

He informed the Committee that Richmond would be receiving only a 0.8% cash increase in funding from the Government towards the growing cost of providing key services.

Cllr Knight said: "This is particularly bad news for Richmond upon Thames as we are already the poorest funded council in London.

We are now joining with other London boroughs to lobby the Government for a fairer settlement."

Adult Social Care

Charging policies under review

The Council's controversial charging proposals for home and day care have prompted a special meeting of Adult Social Care and Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Draft proposals, discussed by councillors in November, suggest raising charges for day care and home care, but only for people with substantial levels of savings. The plans are under consultation, before recommendations are presented to the Committee. Cabinet will make the final decision on the 26 February.

Cllr Sue Jones, Chair of Adult Social Care and Housing OSC is clear her Committee will be putting residents' needs first.

She said: "We have massive sympathy with officers who are working very hard in difficult financial times, but we won't hesitate to suggest the Cabinet makes changes if the new charges are too high.

"We are dealing with some very vulnerable people and it's essential they can afford the vital care they need."

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee Meeting will be held at 5.30pm on 20 February, York House.

Education and Children's Services

Secondary School Performance

A recent Task Group report on Secondary School Performance has been welcomed by Cabinet as a positive contribution to the debate on secondary school standards.

The report drew a distinction between the factors which were outside the influence of schools, e.g. pupil intake & funding, and those factors which are within their influence e.g. teaching and the curriculum. The report also concluded that a strong and stable senior management team is important to a school's success.

To view the report go to:

http://www.richmond.gov.uk/sec_school_perf_scrutiny_final_report.pdf



Focus on

Name

Mark Williams



Occupation

I am a teacher by profession, but I'm currently on a career break to look after my young son.

Which committee are you a co-opted member of?

Education and Children's Services

How long have you been a co-opted member?

About two months.

Why did you become a co-opted member?

I thought I could be of use to the Committee because of my previous experiences in education.

How have you found being a co-opted member?

It affords plenty of opportunity to make positive contributions. Because so much ground is covered in meetings, there's plenty of scope to ask questions about Council business. I also volunteered to join the task group looking at school attendance, so that's enabled me to contribute more and to feel like I'm being of some use.

Why do you think that Overview and Scrutiny is important?

It's another of those checks and balances that are needed in public life. Anything that helps to make things more transparent can only be good.

How would you like Overview and Scrutiny to develop in the future?

Hopefully it's here to stay and won't be swept away as part of some future local government reform. I think individual task groups will prove to be increasingly valuable as a means of addressing specific issues of concern to Richmond upon Thames.

News in brief

Secretary of State for Health

Cllr Nicki Urquhart, Chair of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee has written to the Secretary of State for Health, Patricia Hewitt, protesting at the latest top-slicing of Richmond and Twickenham Primary Care Trust's budget. This pays for overspending by other London PCTs, but the Committee feels it harms Richmond residents to solve others' problems.

Co-optees

Noticed some enthusiastic fresh faces at a committee recently? They could be one of 17 co-optees appointed, or reappointed, onto scrutiny committees in the autumn.

New staff

The Council scrutiny team is growing. Two new officers have been appointed. Introductions in the next newsletter.

Health

Modernisation of mental health services

Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee is refusing to give unqualified support to the proposals to modernise local mental health services. Whilst the Committee agreed that the consultation had been carried out satisfactorily, further information on the



plans was needed before the Committee could accept that the changes proposed are in the best interests of local residents.

During a lengthy debate in January, the Committee discussed changing the way that services are provided, meaning support, targeted intervention and social activities will be provided at a range of venues across the borough. This will open up services to more users. In return, the Mereway and Level Crossing Day Centres, two day hospitals and Cole Park ward in Twickenham will close.

There was particular concern about finances and the lack of investment in some services and cuts in others.

Cllr Nicki Urquhart, Chair of the Committee, explained that their support was dependent on clarification of how the changes will work, a clear explanation of timescales and a better indication of what facilities would close and when. Councillors asked this to be provided in time for Committee's next meeting on 1 March.

For more information, please contact Jeanette Phillips on 020 8891 7151 or j.phillips@richmond.gov.uk

Calendar

All meetings start at 7 pm at York House, Twickenham unless otherwise stated.

Date	O & S Committee
12 February	Environment & Sustainability
20 February at 5.30pm	Adult Social Care & Housing
21 February	Finance & Strategy
1 March	Health
13 March	Adult Social Care & Housing
15 March	Environment & Sustainability
20 March	Education & Children's Services
28 March	Finance & Strategy

Contacts for Scrutiny

If you would like further any information either about this Newsletter or Overview and Scrutiny in general or the role of a Co-opted Member please do not hesitate to contact:

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TW1 3AA
Telephone: 020 8891 7191
Fax: 020 8891 7701

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

Local Government White Paper

The Government published its Local Government White Paper "Strong and Prosperous Communities" at the end of October 2006. It sets out proposals to extend the involvement of local people and communities in local services through extending individual choice,

giving local people more say in how services are run, providing more timely information on the quality of local service provision, listening to and acting on local concerns and empowering communities to manage and own community facilities. It proposes extending scrutiny powers in two areas, Community Call for Action and External Services.

For more information go to:
www.communities.gov.uk



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

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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 مین 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 ਹਿਸ਼ਪਸ਼ਨ 'ਤੇ ਆਓ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਤੇ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰਿਟਰ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।