

Voluntary Sector Forum

05 February 2026

Agenda

- 13:00 – 13:10** **Welcome and Introduction:** Cllr Baldwin - Spokesperson for Communities, Equalities and the Voluntary Sector
- 13:10 – 13:40** **Council Update:** Clare O'Connor, Director of Climate Change, Policy and Communications, Richmond Council
- 13:40 – 14:10** **Crisis and Resilience Fund:** Bethany Pepper, Cost of Living Programme Manager, Richmond Council
- 14:10 – 14:30** **Day Services Alliance:** Rachel Soni, Director of Commissioning, Adult Social Care and Public Health, Richmond Council
- 14:30 – 14:40** **Refugee Services:** Michela Pomati, Refugee Services Programme Manager, Richmond Council
- 14:40 – 15:00** **Open Forum and Q & A**

Welcome and Introduction

Cllr Nancy Baldwin

Spokesperson for Communities, Equalities and the Voluntary Sector

Council Update

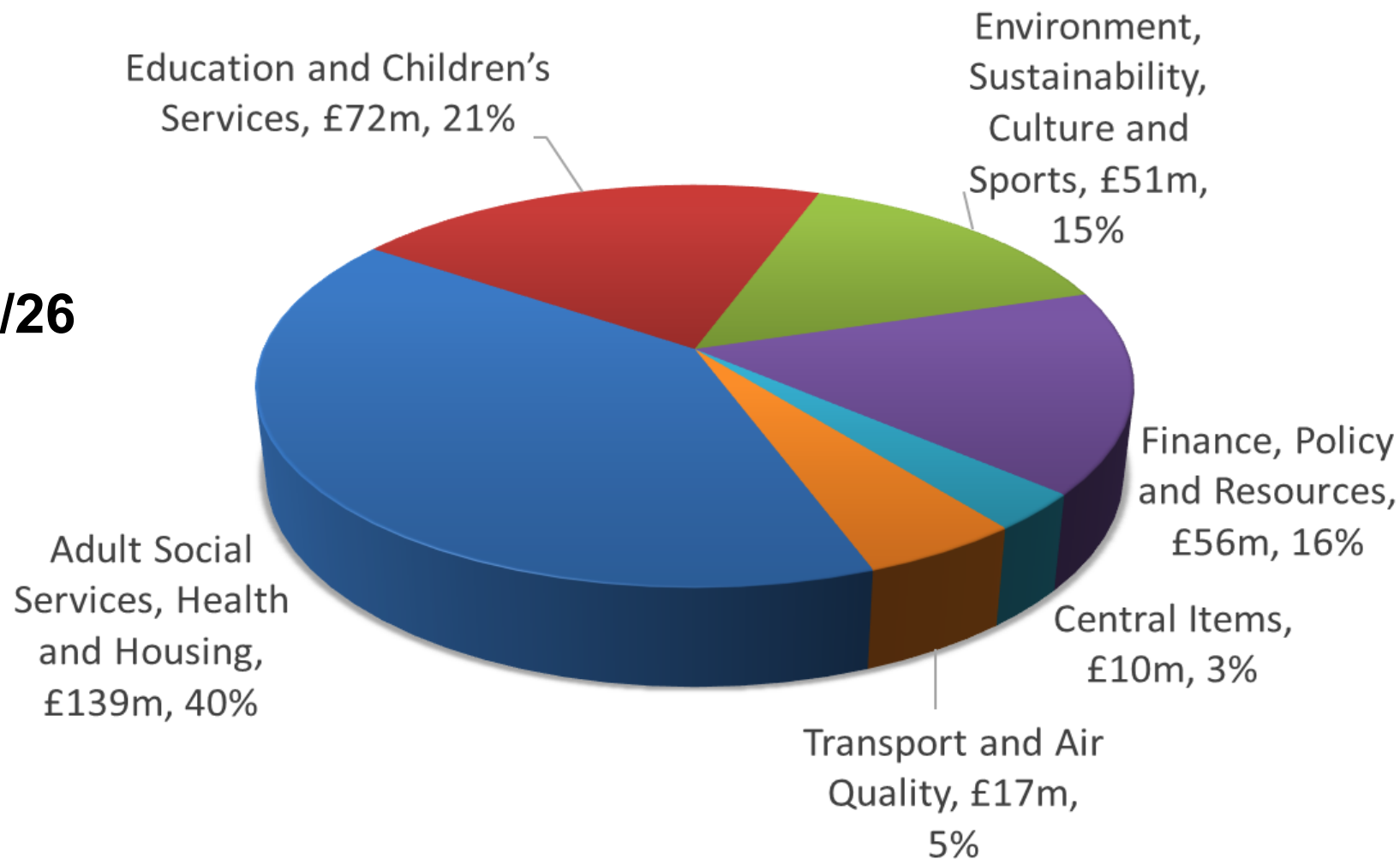
Clare O'Connor
Director of Climate Change, Policy and Communications
Richmond Council

Voluntary sector – Fair Funding

5th February

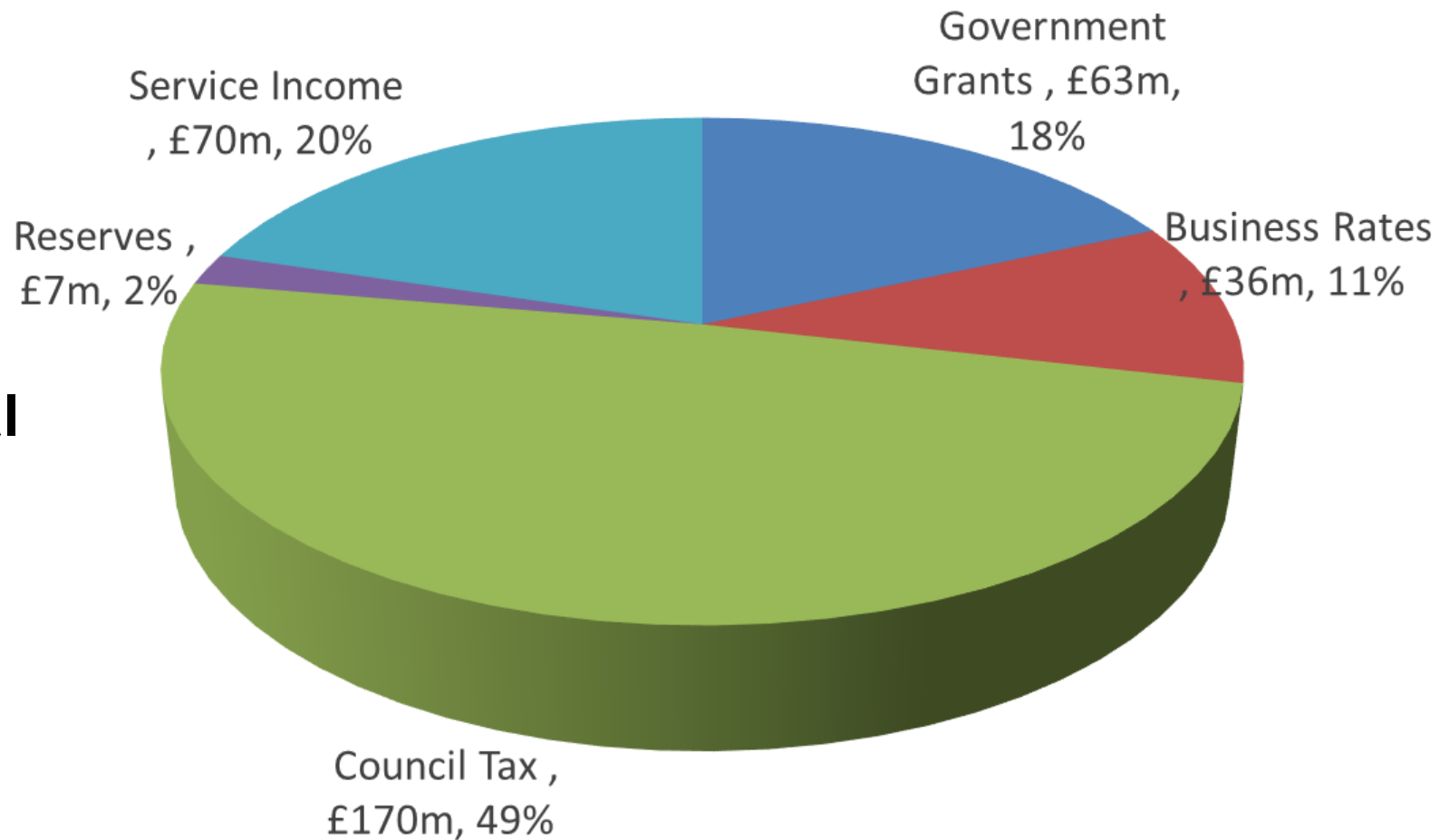
What we spend our money on

General Fund expenditure 2025/26



How is this funded?

Funding – General Fund 2025/26



Fair Funding

- Since 2010/11, Central Government funding overall has reduced significantly
- Fair Funding Review 2.0 (“FFR”) attempts to refresh the methodology for distributing a fixed pot of funding between local authorities
- The aim is to redistribute resources towards areas with higher deprivation and weaker tax bases
- Impact is a severe and disproportionate reduction in funding for Richmond
- Successful lobbying has led to improvements, but still tricky

The Provisional Local Government Finance Settlement (PLGFS)

- Announced the funding for the next 3 years
- Reduced funding of **£29m** by year three (2028/29) - a loss of approximately **58%** of core funding allocation
- This is not comparable to the national picture. Richmond's position is markedly worse, reflecting the cumulative impact of successive national funding distribution changes and overall level of sector funding
- The Council has strongly challenged the fairness and sustainability of the funding approach with some wins
- Also have "Mansion tax" and Tourism Levy

What does it mean for you and the residents you support?

- Will be challenging, but Council will continue to support those hardest hit and focus on improving outcomes for residents and safeguarding the future of our borough
- Council will need to look at how we work differently – ambitious transformation programme
- Focus on prevention – key role for VCS
- Focus on place – opportunity for all partners

Questions?

Crisis and Resilience Fund

**Bethany Pepper, Cost of Living Programme Manager,
Richmond Council**

CRF headline points

- Replaces Household Support Fund and DHPs.
- Covers 1st April 2026 to 31st March 2029.
- Provisional allocations suggest a 21.5% decrease for Richmond from previous HSF and DHP amounts.
- Government expect this to deliver the following outcomes:
 - Provision of effective crisis support
 - Improving individuals' financial resilience
 - Bolstering the local-level support landscape

Key principles

- Person centred and respectful
- Seeks to meet underlying needs, not just crisis symptoms
- Integrated support that considers the range of services and actions open to the Council
- No wrong door and use of warm referrals to connect people to the right service
- Trauma informed – recognising the extensive and continuing impacts that trauma may have on an individual's life

Four funding strands

1) Crisis payment

**2) Housing payment
(replaces DHPs)**

3) Resilience services

4) Community coordination

What does this mean for you and the residents you support?

- Lots of positives with this fund, in particular the focus on investing in resilience and strengthening referral routes
- However, we have less overall funding (21.5% reduction)
- Change in guidance and reduction in funding means that Holiday Food Vouchers for families in receipt of Free School Meals will have to end after Easter 2026
- Crucial that we get the right resilience services in place to support these families

Key areas of focus

- Work with Citizens Advice Richmond / Richmond AID to shape Crisis Payments
- Scope out resilience strand – including continuing successful elements of Cost of Living Programme and exploring new approaches that meet the aims of the fund
- Strengthen support for families who previously received Holiday Food Vouchers
- Establish process for warm referrals and improving connections between agencies working in this area

Questions for today

- What are the gaps in existing services that we could meet with this fund?
 - What existing services should we prioritise for investment?
 - How can we all support families who have relied on Holiday Food Vouchers previously?
- What would make the biggest difference for improving connectivity?
 - Digital referral routes
 - Staff focused on convening networks
 - Shared training
 - Co-locating services
 - Investment in printed materials

Questions?

Day Services Alliance

**Rachel Soni, Director of Commissioning, Adult Social Care
and Public Health**
Richmond Council

Questions?

Refugee Services

**Michela Pomati, Refugee Services Programme Manager,
Richmond Council**

Borough of Sanctuary

- Commitment to welcoming and supporting sanctuary seekers
- Strategy, 3-year action plan and partnership with the VCS
- Richmond Sanctuary Board/Partnership
- Bi-monthly newsletter from March 2026
- Welcome Packs
- BoroughOfSanctuary@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk

Borough of Sanctuary accreditation – VCS role

How the VCS can get involved

- Contribute examples of inclusive practice, service data and lived-experience involvement
- Join partnership activity supporting re-accreditation
- Help embed welcoming, safe and accessible services across the borough

Tools & Resources (City of Sanctuary UK)

- *Streams of Sanctuary* guidance (e.g. Health, Arts, Faith)
- Practical toolkits, templates & case-study examples
- Support to apply for Sanctuary Awards

Local Support

- Borough of Sanctuary Grant Scheme for inclusion-focused projects

Refugee Week Funding

Refugee Week will take place from 15 to 21 June 2026.
This year's theme is 'Courage'.

Refugee Week grants

- Grants of up to £2,000
- What we can/cannot fund
- Now open for applications and granted on a rolling, first-come-first-served basis
- Closing on 27 March 2026

Borough of Sanctuary Grant Scheme Round 3 will open later in the year.

Home Office Consultation: Background

- Immigration White Paper published 12 May 2025
- Earned settlement main proposals:
 - Significant extension of qualifying period for ILR
 - Qualifying period reduced or increased depending on circumstances
 - No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF) condition to settlement
 - **Transitional arrangements** subject to consultation
- **Consultation closes 12 February 2026**

Key challenges in the consultation

- Question framing and overall design
- Consultation open to individuals
- Content concerns:
 - Insecurity for people already on a settlement route
 - Needs of sanctuary seekers insufficiently considered
 - Penalties for accessing welfare support
 - Risk of creating a two-tier settlement system

Consultation response

- Individual responses
- Broad VCS engagement on the consultation
- Guidance note on key questions to be circulated

Questions?

Open Forum and Q&A



Looking for a venue to host your next community group meeting that provides healthier food options?



60+ businesses signed up in Richmond and Wandsworth

Choose a venue signed up to the **Healthier Catering Commitment**. These local cafés and restaurants offer healthier options without compromising on taste – ideal for befriending meetups or community events.

PUT PEOPLE FIRST

CONNECT BETTER

THINK BIGGER

LEAD BY EXAMPLE

EMBRACE DIFFERENCE





Scan the QR codes to see the list of participating businesses in Richmond and Wandsworth.

PublicHealth@richmondandwandsworth.gov.uk



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