



Voluntary Sector Forum

Thursday 21 March 2019, 14:00 – 16:00

The Salon, York House, Richmond Road, Twickenham, TW1 3AA

Notes of the meeting

1. Welcome

Cllr Michael Wilson (Cabinet Member for Equality, Communities and the Voluntary Sector) welcomed attendees to the Forum.

2. Richmond Council Update

Richmond Council is moving from a cabinet system to a committee system which will change how decisions are made.

The SEND funding gap is a significant issue for the Council. There are 3,500 children and young people attending schools in Richmond upon Thames with special educational needs and a further 1,360 children and young people in the borough require Education Health and Care Plans. Richmond Council is lobbying government to protect quality special needs education in the borough encourages others to support this campaign through:

- Sending a letter to the Secretary of State for Education, Damian Hinds (damian.hinds.mp@parliament.uk) and the Department for Education. A template letter can be found on the Council website (www.richmond.gov.uk/special_needs_education_funding).

Richmond Council has taken the difficult decision to raise Council Tax by 2.99% to protect the quality of local services that our residents rely on.

3. What is new in Children's Services?

James Thomas (Director of Children's Services, LBRuT) announced that he is the interim Director of Children's Services while Richmond and Kingston consider the appointment of a joint Director. They are trying to understand the key issues for Children and Young People in the borough. Partnership working with the voluntary sector is a key priority for Children's Services. There will be work undertaken to create a more joined-up system, so a more seamless service can be offered to help Children, Parents and other carers of children in the borough.

Questions/points raised:

Is the SEND funding gap campaign in all boroughs or just Richmond? – It is an issue in the majority of councils across England and Wales.

The Council and voluntary sector can look at making joint funding bids to bring in additional resources to the borough.

4. Suicide Prevention Strategy

Graeme Markwell (Senior Public Health Lead, LBRuT) presented the suicide prevention strategy (NB the Suicide Prevention Strategy is not a statutory strategy). Key points of the strategy:

- Not all people that commit suicide have mental health issues
- Isolation is a killer
- The media need to be more responsible about how they report about it
- Richmond has some of the highest rates of self-harm in the country
- Suicide prevention training has recently been held for schools which has helped them to understand the challenges faced by a suicidal person.
- Usually suicide is seen as more of an issue for men, but in Richmond there are higher levels of women committing suicide.

See slides for details

ETNA and Hampton & Hampton Hill VCG expressed an interest in receiving mental health first aid training and suicide prevention training and Graeme will work directly with these organisations and the Council's Community Engagement and Voluntary Sector -

ACTION

Questions/points raised:

Helen (Kingston Samaritans): They are based in Kingston (Elspeth House, 2 Wheatfield Way, KT1 2QS), but support people in Richmond. There has been a 20% increase this year in the number of people they see face-to-face. This service is available from 7:30am to 9:30pm every day (even Christmas Day). They also offer their services on the phone or by text or email. Calls can be made for free 24 hours a day – call 116 123.

They also offer a service called step by step which provides support to schools after a teacher or student commits suicide. (www.samaritans.org/branches/kingston-upon-thames/how-find-us/outreach-team-kingston-samaritans/)

Cllr Campanale: Do you think there is a causal link between the high level of debt and drug and alcohol abuse and the suicide rates? – Yes

5. Adult Community Learning Fund Commissioning

Chantelle Daniel (Head of Employment and Skills, LBRuT) spoke about adult community learning funding that is available. The funding can be used to support adult learners particularly focussing on the priority areas:

- Supporting Learners with Disabilities
- Supporting older learners
- Social isolation
- Supporting older male learners
- Family Learning in Children's Centres

The funding round opens on 1 April 2019 and closes on 30 April 2019. More details can be found on the Council website: www.richmond.gov.uk/information_for_providers

*Chantelle will check if schools can apply - **ACTION***

See slides for details.

6. The Community Fund and Ward Based Budgets

Matthew Maher (Head of Community and Partnerships, LBRuT) gave a presentation on the Community Fund and Ward Based Budgets. This is Round 3 of the Community Fund and details of successful funds from Round 1 and Round 2 can be found on the Council website. The aim is to deliver projects that meet local needs. They have tried to improve the Community Fund to make it easy for people to access the money – there is £583,860 available. Further information is available on the Council website. (www.richmond.gov.uk/community_fund)

A group discussion followed about possible options for Ward Based Budgets.

See slides for details.

7. Richmond CVS and the Council

Kathryn Williamson (Director, Richmond CVS) and Matthew Maher (Head of Community and Partnerships, LBRuT) spoke about the partnership between the Council and the voluntary sector. Richmond Council has a Compact with the voluntary sector which is a framework for how we will work together. The Council, RCVS and the Voluntary Sector need to work together to ensure the Compact is still relevant and continues to be used. A Compact Commissioning groups will be set up to discuss this further. Contact Kathryn Williamson if you are interested in being involved: KathrynW@richmondcv.org.uk

Questions:

None.

8. Open Forum

Questions / points raised:

- No questions or points were raised.