



Community Conversation

## Richmond Borough Wide Community Conversation

**DATE:** 6:30pm – 9pm, Monday 26 January 2026

**VENUE:** Duke Street Church, Quadrant Road, Richmond TW9 1DH

**CHAIR:** Councillor Gareth Roberts

### SUMMARY OF EVENT

The annual Borough Wide Community Conversation brings residents and councillors from across Richmond upon Thames together to discuss priorities, opportunities, and the future of the borough. Key themes raised by residents during the event included youth engagement, the town centre, local business, community safety, transport, housing, the Teddington Direct River Abstraction, street litter, and bins.

### AGENDA

<b>6.30pm – 7.00pm:</b>	<b>Refreshments and Council information stands</b>
<b>7.00pm – 7.10pm:</b>	<b>Welcome and introduction to the Community Conversation</b>
<b>7.10pm – 8:55 pm:</b>	<b>Open conversation with the audience</b>
<b>8.55pm - 9.00pm:</b>	<b>Event close</b>

### COUNCILLORS IN ATTENDANCE:

Cllr Gareth Roberts, Leader of the Council and Chair

Cllr Nancy Baldwin, Vice-chair of the Finance, Policy and Resources Committee (Spokesperson for Communities, Equalities & the Voluntary Sector)

Cllr Julia Neden-Watts, Deputy Leader and Chair of the Environment, Sustainability, Culture and Sports Services Committee



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Cllr Jim Millard, Deputy Leader and Finance and Resources Lead Member

Cllr Phil Giesler, Business and Growth Lead Member

Cllr Alexander Ehmann, Chair of the Transport and Air Quality Committee

Cllr Chris Varley, Lead Member for Housing and Vice-Chair Adult Social Services, Health and Housing Committee

Cllr Katie Mansfield, Richmond Town Centre Project Lead Member and White Ribbon Champion

Cllr Julia Cambridge, Chair of Education and Children's Services Committee

Cllr Piers Allen, Chair of the Adult Social Services, Health and Housing Services Committee and Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board

### MEETING NOTES

<b>Welcome</b>	The Chair welcomed the in-person and online participants. He remarked that the Community Conversations were incredibly valuable and a way for the Council to gain first-hand insights into the views of residents.
<b>The Conversation - themes and questions raised by residents</b>	
<b>Transport</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concerns raised about <b>replacement streetlighting in Albany Passage</b> causing harm to the character and appearance of the St Matthias Conservation Area. The Council is aware of the issue. If there is cause for reconsideration and the preferred lighting columns are deliverable that is something the council can work towards.</li> <li>• Inadequate <b>streetlighting opposite the Deer Park car park</b> was flagged. It was confirmed that the streetlights are out on this section of road, which is why it is dark. It has been reported to TfL.</li> <li>• It was confirmed that the Council is supportive of <b>Crossrail 2</b> and it will be referenced in the new <a href="#">2040 Transport Strategy</a>. The new strategy will better articulate the borough's needs and future capital investment.</li> <li>• The scheme to build a <b>cycle and footbridge between Ham and Twickenham</b> was raised. There is in principle agreement but it would represent a significant capital investment, while the Council is facing financial constraints.</li> <li>• There was concern raised about the long waiting times at the <b>Mortlake level crossing</b>. The resident was thanked for his written submission which will be reviewed. The waiting times are due to safety considerations. The Council's first of a kind <a href="#">2040 Transport Strategy</a> aims to tackle road, rail and river severance issues. The long-term solution is to look at different infrastructure in these locations, but it will not be cheap, easy or quick.</li> <li>• There was a question on whether <b>traffic lights could be controlled manually</b> to allow better traffic flow when the Allianz Stadium holds events. The Council has raised the problem and will continue to push on finding a solution because of the impact of traffic build up.</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A question was raised on whether <b>speed cameras could be installed on Strawberry Vale</b>. This is unlikely. It is the preserve of the police and Transport for London, not the Council.</li> <li>• <b>Lime Bikes</b> were discussed. E-bikes play an important role, particularly for areas with weaker public transport infrastructure. They can also have a negative impact on residents, for example, inconsiderate parking. The Council has started a procurement exercise to understand who would like to operate in the borough and their proposals for improving behaviours that have negative impacts.</li> <li>• Any <b>parking violations</b> spotted by residents can be reported on the <a href="#">My Richmond App</a>.</li> </ul>
<b>Youth</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a wide-ranging discussion on the importance of providing <b>facilities for teenagers</b> in the borough. The importance of youth having a voice on future decisions was recognised. The Council would like to ask teenagers to come forward with ideas and suggestions, including on places where there is a lack of provision for teenagers. These can be emailed to <a href="mailto:Communityconversations@richmond.gov.uk">Communityconversations@richmond.gov.uk</a>. The audience and councillors highlighted activities currently available, including: Kew Gardens' <a href="#">youth programme</a> for 14 -18 years olds reserved for borough residents; Heatham House which has a range of <a href="#">activities</a>; there are drama and dance groups; and the <a href="#">Richmond Music Trust</a> which has provision for teenagers to form bands and write music. Specific activities that are free or subsidised were highlighted: Richmond Music Trust has many free activities and some are means tested with discounts; <a href="#">Powerjam Bands</a> in Heatham House has subsidised places; and Achieving for Children has offers for teenagers at <a href="#">Heatham House</a> which are subsidised.</li> <li>• The importance of bringing young people's perspectives to conversations like these was raised. The Council offers various opportunities for young people to engage including young people surveys. There is the Youth Council where their voices are amplified and heard. There is also the Children in Care Council. Achieving for Children has a youth strategy that is centred on the voices of young people.</li> <li>• There was also a discussion on <b>different ways to consult with young people</b>, including joining up with schools. Examples were shared on different Council initiatives: the <a href="#">Richmond Town Centre</a> consultation went to several schools to get feedback directly from students; a consultation exercise was also held on Richmond Green in the evening in order to go to an area where young people convene; and a lot of young people were also consulted when preparing the <a href="#">Nighttime strategy</a>.</li> <li>• The Council was encouraged to do more to disseminate information, which was noted. Information on the different Council <a href="#">newsletters</a> which residents can sign up to was shared. <a href="#">Visit Richmond</a> also has a monthly calendar of events.</li> </ul>
<b>Local business</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>challenge facing local pubs</b> was flagged. Space for convening is often an issue for young people (see above). Barnes has started 'The Tuesday Local' initiative using a local pub as a community space. The Council welcomed this initiative. The</li> </ul>



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	<p>Council lobbying for more predictable business rates. There are a number of positive examples where community pubs are being brought back.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <b>lack of affordable business space</b> in Richmond was raised. There are various ways the Council is meeting the demand. In Twickenham we have opened <a href="#">The Patch</a> workspace. We are looking at similar opportunities in Richmond and Teddington. We welcome ideas on this model in other areas. <a href="#">Community Centres</a> are another option we would like to pursue further. We'd also like to work in partnership with business providers. The council is keen to hear ideas, which can be emailed to <a href="mailto:Communityconversations@richmond.gov.uk">Communityconversations@richmond.gov.uk</a>.</li> <li>• There was a question on how Richmond has been <b>encouraging entrepreneurs</b>. The <a href="#">Phoenix Enterprise Programme</a> has been running for five years and has helped more than 2,000 entrepreneurs with training, mentorships and networking. As funding is coming to an end the Council are looking for sponsors. A Partnership Conference was held recently which brought together employers and education institutions to talk about employability and skills to ensure we support growth and our young people can get jobs in the borough.</li> <li>• There was a suggestion to change the <b>structure of business rates</b> so they are linked to profitability with a cap and collar on charges. It was explained that business rates are set by national government. The Council continues to lobby for fairer business rates.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Richmond Town Centre</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There was a discussion on <b>shop vacancies</b> in Richmond town centre. Richmond's vacancy rate of 7% which is very low compared to the rest of the country. The Council is having conversations with landlords on the better use of space. While there is churn, empty plots are usually taken up quite quickly. This isn't to underestimate the struggles that a lot of businesses are facing. Events are very important. There was a successful Christmas period with a lot of promotion for businesses. 'Be Richmond' has just been nominated for a national award for the marketing of the town centre.</li> <li>• An update was provided on the <b>enhancement of Richmond Town Centre</b>. So far, the focus has been on consultations. The Council has focussed on listening to the entire community and using this input to create a vision and a strategy for the town centre. A long list of projects to help deliver the strategy has been generated. Some short-term projects should be coming to fruition in March. In June a roadmap for the next 5-10 years will be published.</li> <li>• There was a discussion of the <b>Richmond Nighttime Strategy</b>. There are two priorities. First, safety: we are reviewing lighting to identify dark spots where safety could be improved. Second, supporting the creative and music economy.</li> <li>• There was a question on ways to incentivise landlords to <b>allow pop ups</b>. There is a national problem identifying a UK contact for the large number of overseas landlords with town centre properties. Richmond has been successful in putting together a list of all the landlords with commercial properties. They are being contacted about the better use of space as part of the Richmond Town Centre project.</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The question of <b>pedestrianising Richmond Town Centre</b> was discussed. Councillors acknowledged the significant interest in this, and the many potential benefits it could bring to the town centre, whilst also acknowledging that it is a complex change that would need to be managed carefully to minimise knock-on effects to surrounding areas. It was recognised that, some level of traffic change will be essential to the create a space that people want to visit and spend time and to address air quality. Any proposals would follow a full analysis of traffic flows, would be carefully designed and widely consulted on. Traffic in the centre is closed for a day each year as part of the <a href="#">Centre Stage Festival</a>. The next festival will take place on 18 July.</li> </ul>
<b>Bins and Litter</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Several issues related to bins and litter were raised and will be looked into, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The <b>lack of bins at the new 110 bus stops</b> on the A316. It was clarified that this is Transport for London issue and the Council will raise this with them.</li> <li>Whether there could be improvements to <b>litter collection on Church Road</b>.</li> <li>Why the <b>bin near the takeaway restaurant</b> opposite Friar Stile Road at the top of Terrace Garden was removed.</li> <li>A request from St Thomas Aquinas Church to <b>remove the bin in front of the cross</b>.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Residents can report issues with litter and bins using the following link: <a href="#">Litter - London Borough of Richmond upon Thames</a></li> <li>There was a request to offer residents free bulky waste collection. Richmond offers the <a href="#">Mega Skip</a> service which residents can use for free.</li> <li>There was a suggestion to introduce Torbay's approach where <b>QR codes to alert the council when bins are full</b> and need emptying. Richmond does have QR codes on some park bins. There will be follow up to see how successful this has been and whether it could be expanded to street bins.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Safety</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There was a discussion on whether the Council could undertake a risk assessment and invest in <b>more CCTV</b> to improve safety. The Council has invested heavily in CCTV will all the cameras upgraded to high definition which makes a significant difference when providing evidence for prosecution. The council will continue to monitor need in order to keep Richmond the safest borough in London and make it even safer.</li> <li>The safety and noise risks caused by <b>speeding motorbikes and cars was</b> raised. The only enforcement arm that can deal with this is the police. Funding cuts to the police pose a challenge.</li> </ul>
<b>Funding Cuts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The impact of the <b>£29m central government funding cuts</b> on council services was raised. The Council will fight to protect frontline services. The reduction in central government funding in three years' time represents a 58% cut. The Council has already found £50m in annual savings from back-office efficiencies. This will go further under a Transformation Programme which has four strands:</li> </ul>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Rationalising the different software and data systems. Residents will have one simple log in where you access all council services in a more seamless way.</li> <li>○ Using Council assets and space to the maximum efficiency. The Council will be more commercial, for example, securing revenue through renting out the top floor of the Civic Centre in Twickenham.</li> <li>○ Investing in growth. By growing the local economy, Richmond can be more financially resilient as a borough.</li> <li>○ Doubling down on early help and interventions for vulnerable residents. The Council is making sure that all its social services crowd in as early as possible to prevent escalation and more expense further down the line.</li> </ul>
<b>Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● There was a question on whether the council would <b>actively challenge excessive housing targets</b> imposed from higher authorities. The Council is building homes for all sections of the community. This includes affordable housing, intermediate housing for key workers in the borough, and private housing for people to rent or buy. The Council is not restricting or seeking to challenge targets – but it is important that the targets are realistic. There are a lot of protected green spaces. What the Council is going to do is ‘small-scale at scale’ – aggregating multiple smaller, unexpected and overlooked sites to create a portfolio of opportunities to support its strategic plan for affordable housing delivery. Council planning policies are very strong on protecting Richmond’s green space, waterways, and air quality.</li> </ul>
<b>The Environment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● A concern over the Thames Water <b>Teddington Direct River Abstraction (TDRA)</b>’s impact on the river was raised. The Council shares this concern. Cllr Roberts is working with Sarah Olney MP, Munira Wilson MP, colleagues in Kingston Council and the Save Our Lands and River (SOLAR) campaign. Thames Water undertook a statutory consultation last year to which the Council submitted a full and robust response. There were 14,000 responses. They will report back in early 2026.</li> <li>● The <a href="#">Make My House Green</a> leaflet refers to solar panels and batteries but there was a question on whether it could also include <b>heat pumps</b>. The Council will follow up on this. The current scheme offers a £500 discount if you install a solar panel scheme.</li> <li>● A concern was raised on the <b>decision to close Shacklegate Lane Allotments</b> to extend Teddington Cemetery. This was a difficult decision. The Council is taking a prudent approach of preparing the Shacklegate Lane site <i>and</i> looking at an overall burial strategy, to be informed by the Law Commission report which is due in “Spring 2026”. The Environment Committee will present a report on this later in the year.</li> <li>● A concern was raised on why Richmond Council uses <b>leaf blowers</b> when they are negative for the environment. The Council is looking at electric powered leaf blowers which are more environmentally friendly. It will be kept under review.</li> </ul>
<b>Close</b>	<p>The Chair closed by thanking the audience, the panellists, the officers and the British Sign Language Interpreter.</p>