

London Borough of Richmond upon Thames

Labour Manifesto 2018



Introduction

Richmond can be a great place to live; it's the greenest borough in London, with wonderful attractions including Richmond Park and Kew Gardens. Yet, for many people living in this borough, it's far from the idyll the Conservative run council would have us believe.

As a nation, we are suffering from austerity policies. These are making it impossible to recover from the recession caused by the global financial crisis. Analysis from the Resolution Foundation shows that pay won't return to pre-crisis levels until 2025: **that is 17 years of lost growth.**

One in seven children are living in poverty in Richmond. Families and young people are struggling with the cost and lack of housing. Social care and mental health budgets have been cut to the bone and there are areas where pollution levels are having a significant impact on the health of residents.

Council funding has been cut by more than 40 per cent by this Tory government. And Richmond's Tory council has passed on the impact of these cuts to the least able to pay and those who need services most.

It doesn't have to be like this. Labour councillors will fight against Tory cuts and to protect the services on which all of us rely. We will build the council and affordable homes this borough needs, increase funding for social care, clean up our air and invest in our young people. This manifesto, with key pledges that have been costed, sets out our ideas.

It's time for a change in Richmond.

Vote Labour on May 3rd

FOR THE MANY, NOT THE FEW

A LABOUR COUNCIL WILL:

- **BUILD HOMES**
- **PROTECT PUBLIC SERVICES**
- **CLEAN UP THE AIR**
- **INVEST IN YOUNG PEOPLE**
- **SUPPORT ALL OUR STATE SCHOOLS**

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1 High quality services when you need them

KEY PLEDGES

- Set Council Tax at the lowest level that ensures essential services are protected from further disastrous cuts, and staff are not paid poverty wages
- End the dogma of outsourcing and PFI, for which our local primary schools are still having to pay
- Ensure that all staff employed on council contract receive the London Living Wage.

Protect our services

Richmond's Tories have implemented cut after cut after cut. Like all Councils, Richmond has had to cope with endless austerity budgets imposed by the Conservative/Liberal Democrat Coalition and subsequent Conservative government. And the local Tories have worked hard to push the impact onto the poorest households. Key preventative services like substance misuse and mental health services for young people have been lost. This is a false economy; early intervention initiatives are good value for money.

Council tax is regressive, badly outdated and needs to be replaced. The Labour Party has good ideas on how to make the necessary reforms. But we shouldn't forget the essentially collective nature of tax: local taxation allows us to pool our resources so that we, as a community, can meet the costs for the sizable minority among us who, at various times in our lives, have higher needs – health needs, social care, special educational needs.

The Tories have mismanaged the Council's finances. They make reckless promises to unsustainably hold down tax. But each 1% reduction of Council Tax takes £1.2 million out of local services, whilst only saving local Band D households 27p a week. There is a £7 million black hole in

the Council's budget for the next financial year. Be in no doubt, voting Tory will mean more cuts.

Whilst the Tories have held Council Tax down for average households, it has tripled it for the poorest households in the borough, by reducing the Council Tax Reduction Scheme. This makes a mockery of any idea that "we are all in this together". Coming at the same time as the Universal Credit roll-out, this means added stress, insecurity and hardship to many residents across the borough.

Outsourcing

Outsourcing is a dogma that has had its day. The Tories took office with the explicit aim of turning Richmond into a "virtual" Council: they wanted to stop the Council from providing services itself, and to pay third parties to do the work instead. But comparisons between public and private never compare like with like – private companies are free to push wages and benefits down to the breadline, as has happened at Continental Landscapes. Working with private companies like Carillion and Capita introduces financial risks for the Council when those companies get into difficulties through risky profit-seeking. It also often leads to employment being shifted away from the borough to other parts of the country.

The Council has also scrapped grants and made local charities and the wider voluntary sector "tender for contracts" in order to go on providing the services they have delivered for decades. Often local charities lose out to bigger national organisations, which can undercut them on price but don't have the local knowledge and networks.

Calling Time On Outsourcing

The Council uses its buying power to push down prices on contracts. This means lower wages for contracted workers, which is unfair to them and bad for the local economy. Because of austerity, this has gone to such an extreme that companies are going bust. We shouldn't judge bids for contracts on price alone, but on a range of criteria including each firm's staff survey results and investment in training.



We will:

- Set Council Tax at the lowest level that will ensure essential services are protected from further disastrous cuts, and staff are not paid poverty wages
- Become a London Living Wage accredited Council, by requiring that all staff employed on council contracts receive the LLW, in line with directly employed council staff
- Reverse the Conservative decision to treble Council Tax for the poorest households in the borough
- Create a Universal Credit liaison officer, working across housing/education and social services, to create and implement plans to ensure the council is doing all it can to help those affected by the switch to Universal Credit
- End the dogmas of outsourcing and PFI, for which our local primary schools are still having to pay
- Ensure management respond thoroughly to the staff survey regarding working conditions since joining with Wandsworth
- Conduct a review on the effects of the merger with Wandsworth Council, in terms of loss of sovereignty over decision making and the impact on services.

2 Tackling our housing crisis

KEY PLEDGES

- Double planned investment in affordable homes, with an extra £25m over five years, for building new Council homes available at social rents
- Working with London's Labour Mayor Sadiq Khan, ensure new developments incorporate at least 35 per cent social and affordable homes
- Seek that all housing associations in the borough have tenants and councillors on their boards.

Labour is the only party locally with an ambitious plan to invest in social housing in the borough. We want to start building council homes again.

Housing costs are too high across the borough. As elsewhere in London, increases in local house prices and rents have far exceeded growth in wages. Private renters do not have adequate security or protection, and there are over 3,000 applicants on the Council waiting list for social housing, with 269 families in temporary accommodation at the end of quarter three 2017/18 (Housing and Regeneration, Director's Briefing, Scrutiny Committee March 2018).

What does affordable mean?

Whilst the government claims that 80% of market rent should count as "affordable" housing, we think that is still far too high. We would use Sadiq Khan's preferred definition which is made up of London Affordable Rent (based on social rent levels), London Living Rent (based on a third of average local household incomes, different for each neighbourhood and adjusted for the number of bedrooms in each home) and London Shared Ownership.

The 2016 Strategic Housing Market Assessment identified that around 900 homes need to be built a year, and half of these, 450 homes, should be affordable. But as it stands only 64 affordable homes are set to be delivered in 2017/18, and only 103 in 2018/19.

In fact, Richmond has the worst record of all London boroughs over the last five years for building more social and affordable housing, and is being taken to task on this by the London Mayor. Larger sites that could be used to provide substantial amounts of affordable housing are instead used for low density luxury development, which is then often left unsold. Only 7% of the new units on Twickenham Station and the old Post Office site count as “affordable”, and there is no social housing. We must ensure we do better on the Mortlake site and on Twickenham Riverside. We want to seek up to 50% affordable, as set out by Sadiq Khan in the London Plan.

We cannot hope in the face of this public failure that private developers will provide the right kind of housing in the borough – we have over thirty years of evidence showing that this simply will not happen. Developers use viability rules to claim that building affordable homes would not create a sufficient return for their investment, but councillors do not even get to see these secret viability reports.

Mortlake Brewery Site

We want the Mortlake Brewery development to provide an inclusive, environmentally friendly community, with a mixture of housing for people in all income brackets, both family and smaller units, and amenities for everyone. We want to see 50% affordable housing provision and a meaningful response to the community's concerns over pollution.

Twickenham Riverside Plans

We will scrap the approved plans for Twickenham Riverside. We want to see a proper town square and a riverside park, moving cars away from the river frontage. Development of the riverside is a once-in-a-generation opportunity, not to be squandered. We want to see 50% affordable housing provision.



Richmond Housing Partnership

Richmond transferred its social housing stock to Richmond Housing Partnership (RHP) under the Lib Dems in 2000. It was agreed that the board of RHP would be made up one third tenants, one third councillors and one third appointees. Since then, RHP has removed nearly all the tenants and councillors from its board.

We believe this decision should be reversed. Tenants must be put back in control, and democratic oversight restored, on all local housing associations.

We will:

- Double the planned investment in affordable homes, with an extra £25m over five years, for building new Council homes available at social rents, and directly employ staff to support tenants
- Seek maximum on-site provision of social rented homes in all new residential developments
- Move to Open-book Viability reports, to properly challenge developers when they maintain that projects can't go ahead if they include affordable homes
- Seek high quality design and the provision of truly affordable housing and appropriate community amenity in plans for key sites such as Twickenham Riverside and Mortlake Brewery developments
- Work with residents of medium- and high-rise flats, to address their concerns over fire safety after the Grenfell Tower tragedy
- Target the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) on areas of greatest need within the borough; supporting new and better community amenities
- Ensure that tenants and their democratic representatives are put back on the board of Richmond Housing Partnership as originally promised when the housing stock was given to them; and give tenants a real voice in any discussion of local regeneration
- Establish proper standards and controls for the conversion of existing properties to houses in multiple occupation (HMOs)
- Apply for permission from central government to start a private landlord licensing scheme, and start using the powers the Council already has to crackdown on rogue landlords.

3 Education, childcare and youth services

KEY PLEDGES

- Invest an extra £2m a year in education and young people
- Oppose Turing House being built on Metropolitan Open Land in Heathfield, and initiate a Compulsory Purchase Order for a site in Teddington
- Invest in youth services and develop a youth outreach team to properly engage young people in the local community.

School funding crisis

Most school funding comes from central government. It is in crisis: by 2020, Richmond upon Thames schools face a real terms cut of £5.1m (Schoolcuts.org). Primary and secondary schools face losing teachers and teaching assistants, and our children's education is suffering. We have been supporting our schools in their calls on the Tory government to end education cuts.

School Standards

There has been a move to separatism in schools, where academies stand alone and compete with each other, supposedly driving up standards as they go. This approach has fragmented our education system. Under Local Education Authorities, schools across a community worked together and a key part of this was the School Improvement Team, a team of highly experienced motivated staff whose role was to offer essential support and guidance to any local school that ran into difficulties.

This team was dismantled when our schools became academies. We now see standards in some schools slipping, and there is not the local support network available to help them get back on their feet.

Heathfield Campaign on Turing House School

Twickenham Labour has been leading the campaign to stop Turing House being built on protected green space in Heathfield. The proposal would add unacceptably to parking pressures, traffic danger and air pollution. In the Labour Alternative Budget, we put forward a reserve to initiate a compulsory purchase of an alternative site in Teddington – the area it is meant to serve.



Re-establishing a School Improvement Team could bring our family of schools back together, provide much needed support and put us in a good position for when the next Labour government moves back to creating Local Education Authorities. We would also ensure that the team focused on driving up value-added scores for all students in all schools, taking a proactive approach to reducing educational inequalities, which have existed for too long in our borough.

Early Years and Children's Centres

Pre-school children are losing out; there was no capital funding to support the Tory government's promise of 30 hours free childcare for all 3 and 4 year olds, and the existing provision cannot meet demand.

Children's Centres have faced significant cuts to their funding, and have had to reduce their services for families.

Post-16

Further education has been starved of funding for years. Under the Tory/Lib Dem Coalition the ending of the Educational Maintenance Allowance (EMA) has made it harder for poorer students to study post 16. Locally the Tories' exclusive focus on 6th Forms has led to a reduced provision of vocational courses.

Free schools

Another consequence of the new 6th Forms is that there is no longer the opportunity to expand our secondary schools to cope with growing pupil numbers. Given that councils no longer have the power to build new schools (something Labour nationally are challenging), meeting the challenge of providing school places is being left to Free Schools. These are expensive and end up being built in the wrong place, because the decision about where they are built is not taken locally but by central government. The plans to put Turing House school in Heathfield, on Metropolitan Open Land, when it is primarily for students from the Teddington and Fulwell areas, is a prime example of how the free school system is failing.

Special Educational Needs and Disabilities

A recent survey found that fewer than one third of head teachers across Richmond and Kingston feel that they are fully delivering the support that has been specified for students with special educational needs and disabilities, due to lack of funding. We would top up the central government Dedicated Schools Grant funding in order to address this.

Youth Services

When the Tories took office in 2010 there was a reserve fund of a quarter of a million pounds to be invested in Youth Development schemes. The money is still there, untouched.

We will:

- Invest an extra £2 million a year in education and young people. This will enable:
 - Rebuilding a local School Improvement Team, in a first step back to a Local Education Authority role
 - Adding support to children with special educational needs and disabilities
 - Offering a Richmond Bursary, following best practice elsewhere in London, to assist those 16 to 19 year olds most affected by the removal of EMA
- Invest in expanding school-attached nurseries and improve wrap-around childcare; push the government to make good on its promise to expand free early years education; and stop the closure of Children's Centres
- Oppose Turing House being built on Metropolitan Open Land in Heathfield, and initiate a Compulsory Purchase Order for a site in Teddington to house Turing House, with money to be recouped from the Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA)
- Continue to work hard to highlight the pressure facing our local schools and to campaign to central government to fund them properly
- Support Richmond College, which has been ill-served by local and national Tory policies, to offer high quality breadth of opportunity post-16
- Tackle the huge increase in self harm and risk taking behaviour amongst our local young people by reversing the drastic cuts made to services for emotional and wellbeing support
- Develop a youth outreach team to properly engage young people in the local community.

4 Care, preventative services and public health

KEY PLEDGES

- Make use of the full Social Care Precept, to protect social care services
- Reverse cuts to preventative services as part of our £2m youth investment programme
- Launch a CLEAN AIR NOW strategy that includes a diesel levy to pay for expanded cycling infrastructure, accelerated electric car charging points and a diesel scrappage scheme.

Richmond has 25,000 residents aged 65 and over, and 1,500 who are 90 or over. Meeting the social care needs of our adult population takes up by far the largest proportion of Richmond's budget. As for all councils across the country, there is not enough money to do the job right. Staff are underpaid and overworked. 15 minute consultations are too short, especially given that a great deal of care in our community is being undertaken by young people, or by people who are themselves over 65. The Tories locally have made the situation worse by refusing to implement the full social care precept, costing the services £3.75m over the last two years.

Mental health

There have been cuts in mental health spending. Demand on CAMHS (Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services) far outstrips current resources and there are long waiting times when young people have been referred for therapies. There had been a long-run downward trend in people admitted to local hospitals for self harm. This is now on the rise.

Mental health of older people must also be a priority. About 16% of the over 65s live alone. It has become widely known that loneliness is a significant risk factor for poorer health outcomes in the older adult.



Social care in Richmond

Richmond under the Tories has consistently missed its own target to minimise the days of delay to hospital discharge attributable to lack of social care provision. This has a serious knock-on effect for our nearby hospitals. When there is delayed discharge from general wards, it means delayed discharge from adult critical care, which means ambulances having to queue up outside our NHS hospitals. And it means people are stuck in hospital when they don't need to be there.

There have been cuts in substance misuse preventative services for young people. Now the numbers of young people being admitted to local hospitals for alcohol reasons is also on the rise. The number of 15 year olds engaging in risky behaviour is the tenth highest in the country (Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2018). The point is clear: cutting preventative services is a false economy. We need to put back in place a network of effective early intervention mechanisms.

Air Quality as a Public Health Concern

Every year, thousands of Londoners are dying prematurely from long-term exposure to air pollution; and the latest research shows that hundreds of schools are located in areas exceeding safe, legal pollution levels.

London's Mayor Sadiq Khan is implementing tough measures to reduce London's deadly air pollution and protect the health and wellbeing of all Londoners. At the beginning of the year, he announced plans to protect London's schools from pollution. 50 'air quality' audits will take place at primary schools in areas exceeding legal limits of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂).

We have already called for the siting of more air quality monitors in Heathfield and West Twickenham. These two wards have the highest rates of emergency admissions to hospital in the borough for chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and asthma respectively. Pollution is one of the factors that aggravates the lung conditions

We will:

- Make use of the full Social Care Precept, to protect social care services
- Reverse cuts to preventative services as part of our £2m youth investment programme
- Launch a CLEAN AIR NOW strategy, including a diesel levy to pay for expanded cycling infrastructure, accelerated electric car charging points and a diesel scrappage scheme
- Install air filters in schools that fail to meet air-quality tests
- Support better mental health services, particularly for young people
- Build strong links with the voluntary sector
- Open up NHS planning to public scrutiny, so that you know what is being planned, and we will make sure your voice is heard.

5 A better, safer place to live

KEY PLEDGES:

- Work closely with the London Mayor to minimise the impact of Tory austerity on our police officers, and oppose further cuts
- Create a Domestic Violence liaison officer, working across council departments, to ensure the council is giving the best possible support to victims
- Support public transport
- Fight climate change and protect green open spaces.

Crime

While the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames remains a relatively safe place to live and work, crime is on the rise.

Crime is on the Rise

Over the 12-month period to end of November 2017, compared with the previous year:

- *Residential Burglary was up by over 80% - partly down to classification changes - but the largest proportional increase in London*
- *Sexual offences rose by over 27%*
- *Domestic violence rose by over 10%*
- *Vehicle Crime – gone from 4th lowest crime rate in London to 18th highest*
- *Fly-tipping up 8%*
- *A staggering proportional rise of over 90% in knife crime and of over 100% in robberies.*

(Data from Community Safety Strategic Assessment 2018, as reported to Richmond Council Scrutiny Committee, 12th March 2018.)

Labour believes that Tory-imposed cuts on the Metropolitan Police make a rise in crime inevitable. Furthermore, cuts to preventative services relating to drugs and alcohol misuse, as well as mental health and youth services are having a serious impact. Already we have seen the Met face

a stark choice of making cuts to stations or cuts to the number of officers on the beat. Parts of our borough suffer constant problems with fly tipping and dumped cars. Local businesses report concerns that many shop lifting offences are not investigated due to lack of resources.

Public transport

The Conservative Government refused to allow Transport for London (TfL) to take over the running of our local rail services, which would have seen new investment and improved services. The new South Western Railway company, who were awarded the contract instead, are already consulting over cutting fast services from Whitton.

A good bus service is essential to get residents to work, to schools and colleges, and so that everyone can easily access their local services. There are parts of the borough where bus routes could be improved – you have to take two buses just to get from Heathfield to Whitton High Street.

Parts of the borough are blighted by traffic, bringing danger to health and well-being. This is not helped by the very poor cycling infrastructure in the borough.

Green public space

The London Borough of Richmond upon Thames has an enviable amount of green open space. While most of this is Royal Park land, some is council-run and some is designated metropolitan open land. This space must be cared for and protected so it can continue to enhance the quality of life for every resident in the borough. We welcome Sadiq Khan's no-ifs no-buts approach to stopping development on Metropolitan Open Land.

Climate Change and Recycling

Local government has a role to play in meeting the challenge of climate change. The Tories closed down the Council's sustainability unit and left its budget sitting idle since 2010. They blocked Labour's motion to divest the pension fund assets from fossil fuels. Recycling has flat-lined under

the Tories with no new initiatives or provision, especially for those in flats.

Heathrow

No expansion should take place at Heathrow until the very real concerns regarding noise pollution, air quality and climate change have been addressed.

Equalities

Eight years after the Equalities Act, there are still big issues with accessibility across the borough. Homophobic bullying continues to be an issue in all schools. There was a spike in hate crime after the Referendum. The Council itself has a significant gender pay gap. All these issues need to be addressed.

We will:

- Work closely with the London Mayor to minimise the impact of Tory austerity on our police officers, and oppose further cuts
- Create a Domestic Violence liaison officer, working across council departments, to ensure the council is giving the best possible support to victims
- Employ an Equalities Officer to work across the Council and with the police
- Create the role of a "Disability Champion" within the cabinet.
- Back Sadiq Khan's resolute stance on protecting the green spaces that serve as the lungs of the borough
- Divest Council pension funds from fossil fuels
- Introduce 20mph zones on residential roads
- Campaign to maintain and improve current train services into Waterloo
- Campaign to improve the bus connections in poorly served parts of the borough.

6 A stronger economy, meaningful secure jobs

KEY PLEDGES

- Consult on introducing discretionary business rate relief for big employers in the borough who do pay the London Living Wage, have high quality apprenticeship schemes, and meet gender equality targets
- Seek to provide “pop up hot desks” and services for self-employed and home workers.

Richmond Borough’s economy generates around £3.4bn (Local Economic Assessment, 2010). The Council itself is among the largest employers alongside the NHS, NPL, the Government Chemist, Kew Gardens, St Mary’s University, Haymarket and the RFU; so cuts in council employment and expenditure have had a negative impact on the broader local economy. Self-employment is rising, raising issues of precariousness of employment and the loss of in-work benefits such as pension contributions.

Council staff are feeling undervalued; they have gone through redundancies and pay restraint, and a large restructuring process in terms of joining with Wandsworth Council. We need to show support for our staff, and commit to funding services, creating public sector excellence.

There has been a significant loss of office space due to the planning rules introduced by the Coalition government, which allowed offices to be turned into residential units without due consideration of local planning policies. We have lost some very significant business sites, such as Teddington Studios, which were highly valued as part of the local business culture.

The direction of travel for council finances is that Richmond will depend more and more on business rate collection, and yet many small businesses are finding those rates being set at a punitive level, because of the cost of real estate. This adds pressure to our high streets, at a time when they are already competing with online retail, and we are seeing a higher than desired level of coffee shops, estate agents and betting venues as a consequence.

We will:

- Consult on introducing discretionary business rate relief for big employers in the borough who pay the London Living Wage, have high quality apprenticeship schemes, and meet gender equality targets
- Ensure small businesses are aware of available assistance such as Temporary Small Business Rate Relief
- Invest in services to help the growing number of self-employed in the borough, such as legal advice, and access to services offered by unions
- Seek to provide desk and meeting spaces for self-employed or home-workers
- Work to control the cost of business rents, to stop rising rents further damaging local high streets and driving employers away
- Work with developers to create good quality office and other work space, to help to retain and attract businesses.

