

Defending three academies

Sir – At Tuesday's full council I was most disappointed to witness what appeared to be a direct attack by the cabinet member for schools, Councillor Paul Hodgins, upon some of our academies. When asked to comment on the performance of our three sponsored academies, Hampton Academy, Twickenham Academy and Richmond Park Academy, as a response to a pre-agreed question asked by one of his backbench colleagues, Coun Hodgins took what must have been a premeditated decision to launch an extraordinary attack on

them. The reason? To score party political points against schools which had achieved their academy status through a different route under a different regime?

Nobody denies that these three schools have struggled over the years; however, there are real signs of improvement. The recent Ofsted inspection of Hampton Academy, for example, while grading the school as "requires improvement" noted that the academy's senior team "has introduced a number of changes that are already beginning to improve students'

achievement", they recognised that there "has been significant improvements in many areas including English" and that the "gaps in achievement between groups are beginning to close".

How refreshing it would have been had Coun Hodgins recognised and welcomed these positive notes.

Our students, and their parents, need to know that their local secondary school, whether a sponsored academy, a converter academy or a free school has the full support of the cabinet member for schools. Coun

Hodgins has a responsibility to work with all of our schools to improve standards, offering meaningful support. Let me be quite clear, if the Liberal Democrats win control of the council in 2018, then we will be unhesitatingly proactive in reaching out to all the schools within the borough, and offer such support where possible and when needed.

In conclusion I think it is important to consider that Coun Hodgins has been the cabinet member for schools for the last five years. If these schools have not been

able to fulfil their potential during this period it may be considered to be a reflection on his failure as the responsible cabinet member. If he is unable or unwilling to accept he has a role to play in helping these schools, then perhaps it is time for Coun True to consider appointing a cabinet member who will take this role more seriously.

**COUNCILOR PENNY FROST
Ham, Petersham and
Richmond Riverside
Opposition spokeswoman
for education and schools**

Response to refugee crisis

Sir – The refugee crisis currently engulfing Europe and the Middle East is appalling and requires urgent action.

As a former UN refugee worker in the Middle East myself, I am pleased the Government has listened to those of us urging further and more urgent action and I support plans to take 20,000 refugees from the existing camps in Syria and surrounding countries. I am proud our Government is the second highest bilateral aid donor to Syria, supporting the UNHCR and other NGOs.

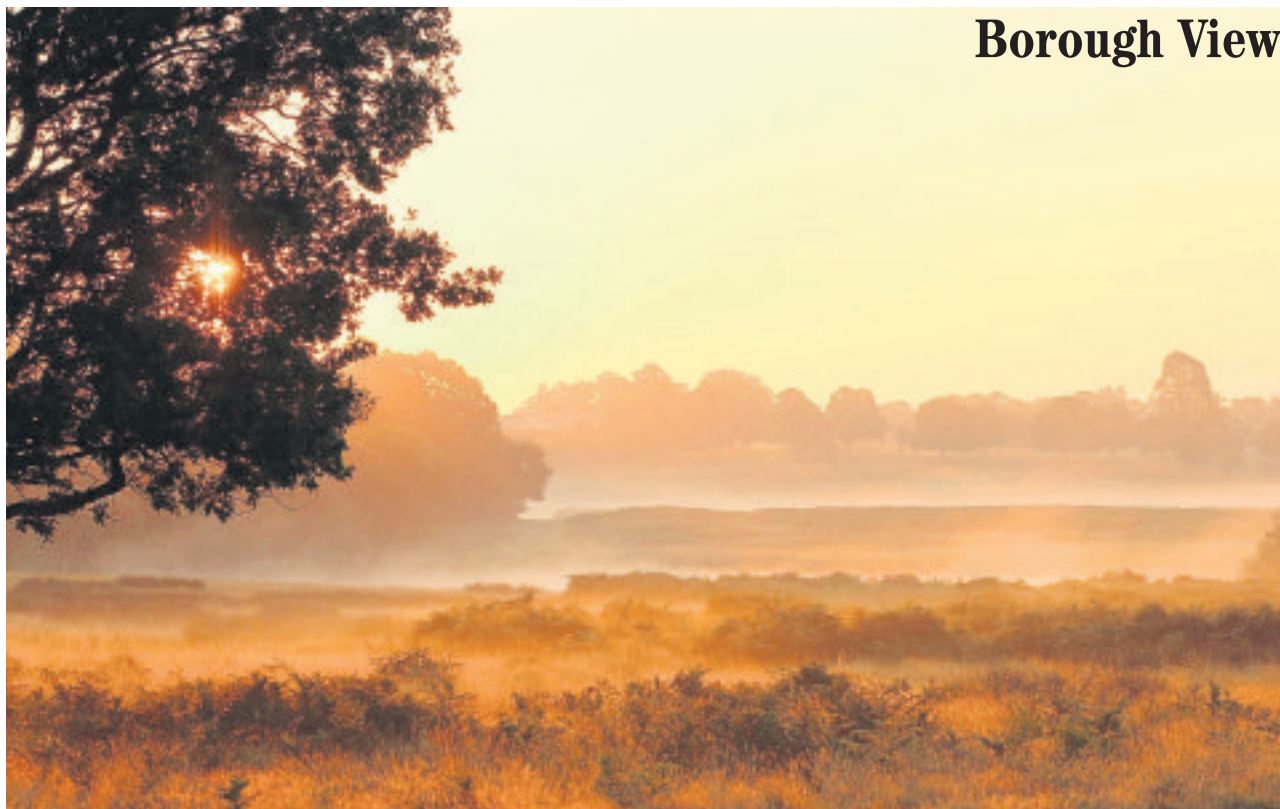
The experiences of many of these people seem a world away from Twickenham, but I have been overwhelmed by the generous response from residents. My postbag and email inbox have been inundated with offers of food, money and spare rooms for refugees coming to the UK – it is clear that any refugees coming to our borough would receive a warm welcome.

In order to make this work effectively, the 20,000 figure requires proper planning, particularly given the existing shortage of housing in London. I am encouraged the Government has committed to listen to the views of MPs, local authorities and voluntary organisations to make sure that we get this right. I hope that those residents who do feel able to help can be supported to do so, and I will be talking to Richmond Council and government ministers to support a fair and workable outcome.

We will not solve the current crisis in Syria and Iraq simply by offering refuge, and the current programme of humanitarian, diplomatic and military assistance is crucial, but Twickenham has a history of welcoming refugees, most notably the East Twickenham village taking in Belgian refugees in the last century, and I hope Twickenham will be as proud of what we are doing today as we have been in the past.

**DR TANIA MATHIAS
Member of Parliament
for Twickenham**

Borough View



Bett Atherton was up at the crack of dawn to take this photograph of Richmond Park. If you have a picture you would like published in our weekly Borough View slot, email it to lettersrtt@london.newsquest.co.uk.

We are all champions in the eyes of God

THE GOD SPOT

By Paul van Essen
greaterlife.org.uk

The Rugby World Cup – anticipated for several years – is now upon us.

The traffic is driving some of us crazy.

And thousands of fans from multiple nations can be seen and heard cheering

their team on towards victory.

But as we long to see "our team" become the champions, I want to ask us an even more important question: how do we view being champions in our own lives?

By living as champions I mean this: that we overcome the challenges that sometimes beset us; that we live at that high level most of us have dreamed of, even when circumstances are

contradictory; that we walk through this life with our heads held high and our self-worth intact.

That is living as a champion.

Even a cursory glance in the Bible will reveal that God intended us humans to be champions in life.

But in our communities today I see too many people that are in real need of a Christianity that is positive, full of love and full of a

champion spirit. Sometimes traditional religion can reinforce the idea of people being weak and defeated.

But this is never what God intended for you.

God believes in people.

He believes in you. He wants you to live as a champion in your context. Think about that.

Your life could really go to a whole new level.

God will be cheering for you.

High tides at Richmond Bridge

Hammersmith Bridge 26 minutes earlier; Kew Bridge 12 minutes earlier

	time	ht.m	time	ht.m
Friday	1203	3.87	0048	4.3
Saturday	0048	4.3	1309	4.33
Sunday	0144	4.72	1358	4.72
Monday	0231	5	1358	4.72
Tuesday	0316	5.17	1524	5.24
Wednesday	0359	5.27	1607	5.39
Thursday	0443	5.27	2206	5.41

National Severe Weather Warning Service 01344 856264.
Floodline 0845 9881188.

The Port of London Authority (PLA), Bakers' Hall, 7 Harp Lane, London EC3R 6LB.
020 7743 7900, portoflondon.co.uk. Environment Agency floodline information environment-agency.gov.uk/floodwarning.