



New group: Lord True is a committee member RT87726

Councils' merger is a 'landmark opportunity'

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South London councils have joined forces to push for devolved powers from the Government.

The South London Partnership (SLP), made up of the boroughs of Croydon, Kingston, Merton, Richmond and Sutton, believes by working together they will be able to create at least 500,000 new jobs by 2036 and 20,000 extra homes.

This figure includes 23,000 jobs in Croydon, stimulated by its £5.21bn regeneration programme.

The five committee members of the new group are Richmond Council leader

Lord True, Kingston Council leader Kevin Davis, Sutton Council leader Ruth Dombey, Croydon Council leader Tony Newman and Merton Council leader Stephen Alambritis.

At the partnership's first joint committee meeting on Tuesday, May 26, they outlined the growth potential for the region.

Together, they have agreed a joint project to put to the Government, which covers four themes for growth:

1. Devolved decision-making powers, including devolved funding streams and budget holding at a local level, and 100 per cent retention of business rates.

2. Matching skills to demand to support the local

economy and create new jobs and businesses through devolved funding and commissioning at a local level.

3. Realising infrastructure ambitions – including a stronger role in transport planning, local control of bus routes and stronger orbital connections.

4. Greater freedom to deliver homes – including a stronger voice in planning housing, easier and more direct routes to funding, and the removal of restrictions on borrowing.

This committee is the first in London to have been ratified by each of the member councils, granting it decision-making powers that set it ahead of other groups.

Merton Council leader Coun Alambritis has been appointed as the chairman of the joint committee.

He said: "This is a landmark opportunity for an unprecedented scale of growth in our region, which will bring huge benefits for residents. South London represents one of the biggest growth opportunities not only in London, but the entire country."

"We are starting from a position of strength and the strong track record we have of working together demonstrates a single focus on delivery. Together, we offer the perfect platform to deliver a unique growth proposition benefiting London and the UK."

MP says goodbye to councillor role

Tania Mathias has stood down as a councillor for Hampton Wick following her appointment as MP for Twickenham.

A byelection has been scheduled for July 2 and candidates are expected to be announced next week.

Dr Mathias said: "I will always be grateful to the residents of Hampton Wick for putting their trust in me and I look forward to continuing to serve them in

Parliament in my new role. I will be pushing for better rail services for our area, for high quality education, and will continue to fight Heathrow expansion."

Any residents in the ward not registered to vote must do so by June 16 and the deadline for postal votes, or to change existing postal or proxy arrangements, should reach Richmond Council by 5pm on June 17.

Visit richmond.gov.uk.



Farewell: Tania Mathias

In brief

POLICE CALL: Zac Goldsmith, MP for Richmond Park, will join the Metropolitan Police to provide information on how to avoid scams at 10am on June 5 at Duke Street Church, in Richmond.

SCHOOL PLANS: Construction work on a new free school planned for Richmond could begin in November. Deer Park School wants to build on the site of London House, in Lower Mortlake Road, but a planning application is yet to be submitted to Richmond Council. The school plans to open in temporary accommodation, with its first intake in September.

SPECIAL GUEST: Artist Scarlett Raven made a special appearance at the Falcons School for Boys art exhibition on May 16. Ms Raven spoke to students and viewed their work before presenting six awards for stand-out paintings.

TOP READ: An author from Barnes has released her first dystopian thriller for young adults. The Territory, by Sarah Govett, tells the story of a school in which 80 per cent of students have nodes to download information from computers straight into their brains. The book was shortlisted in The Times' children's fiction competition in 2014 and featured in the Metro as one of the best 12-plus Easter reads.

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