

# Legal services of four councils come together for first time

In a first for local government in the UK, the legal services of Merton, Kingston, Sutton and



Richmond Councils will become one legal team serving four boroughs. The move is set to save £600,000 between the four councils over the next four years while providing each borough with a substantially increased pool of legal expertise, reducing the need to instruct outside lawyers.

Leader of Merton Council Councillor Stephen Alambritis said:

*“The success of Merton and Richmond’s shared legal services since 2011 has proved that joining forces with other boroughs can make a positive difference in providing a quality in-house legal service while making significant financial savings. We are looking forward to working with our colleagues in Richmond, Kingston and Sutton and to making the legal services for all four boroughs resilient and robust.”*

Deputy Leader of Richmond Council and Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources Councillor Geoffrey Samuel said:

*“Richmond and Merton established a shared legal service in September 2011 which has since proved a success, achieving savings of between 16 – 20 per cent and a high percentage of internal customers surveyed reporting that service quality has improved.*

*“Additionally, the service has streamlined processes, increased transparency and reduced external legal costs. We’d also expect any transition process and future partnership would continue to improve the effective provision of legal advice and support, improve customer satisfaction and client care.”*

Leader of Kingston Council Councillor Derek Osbourne, said:

*“The new service will bring together legal professionals from the four boroughs in an environment where they can share best practice and expertise. The aim is to have the new service operational by 1 October 2013 which will involve a considerable amount of work, including detailed consultation with staff affected by the change.”*

Deputy Leader of Sutton Council, Councillor Colin Hall, said:

*“Sutton Council is always looking for ways to provide improved services at reduced costs. This scheme, which builds on our previous experience of sharing services, will allow us to continue that record.”*