

Two charities clash over rent prompting MP's intervention

Two borough charities are at loggerheads over rent, after unpaid bills led to the larger group deciding it would no longer provide meeting space for the other to use.

The Richmond Legal Advice Service (RLAS) has described the actions of Richmond Council for Volunteer Service (CVS) as "inexplicable," as it calculated the amount outstanding at any one time represented only 0.00864 per cent of Richmond CVS's income.

It also believes the "real victims" are RLAS clients, who rely on its service to get free legal advice from trained lawyers; the only service of its kind in the borough for the past 50 years.

By Ian Mason

imason@london.newsquest.co.uk

Charity secretary Victor Warner said: "First they increased the rent four-fold, then later they wanted the rent paid in advance and then they still evicted us even when we agreed to pay the increased rent.

"The final thing they did after they evicted us was to send us invoices for some outstanding amounts and backdated the increase in rent to before they had notified us of the increase.

"All these things have been done without notice."

The rent was initially £5 per week

but this rose to £20 in April and when RLAS tried to contact Richmond CVS trustees and staff, Mr Warner said no response was given until the decision to evict.

He added: "RLAS is actively looking for another place in central Richmond, which is easily accessible to the public and which charges a reasonable rent. These are not easy to find.

"The simple solution to all this is for Richmond CVS to allow RLAS to run its weekly sessions at their premises again."

Chief executive of Richmond CVS David Sidonio said: "There has been a long period where they have been

failing to make payments on the room.

"At the moment the decision has been taken not to rent to them."

MP for Richmond Park Susan Kramer has waded into the argument and called for Richmond CVS to reverse its decision.

She said: "I am really distressed at reports that the charity was evicted with so little notice and that staff had to stand outside the premises to redirect people who had arrived for a session."

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