A NEWSLETTER FOR RESIDENTS IN THE MIDLANDS

IN THIS ISSUE: PARTNERSHIP NEWS | PARTY TIME | YEAR IN NUMBERS | STAY CONNECTED

ALL CHANGE!

After six years, it’s time to say farewell to @Metropolitan with this final mini edition, as we look to an exciting future as Metropolitan Thames Valley and new ways of keeping you up-to-date on news from across your region.

Reviewing and improving how we engage with all our customers is critical to our success and we hope you’ll get involved, along with your resident representatives, as your input is essential to the way we do things by making sure that your voices are heard.

A new future as two become one

Thank you to everyone who got involved in our resident consultation on our proposal to join forces with Thames Valley Housing. All of your feedback was forwarded to the Metropolitan Board and they have been considering the comments that we received.

We are really excited about the partnership as it will enable us to invest more resources in our communities, as well as build more affordable homes and improve the range of services we provide you with.

We’ll be writing to all customers to confirm our plan, however if you’d like to find out more in the meantime, please visit www.metropolitan.org.uk/partnership.

Summer celebrations bring out the crowds

The long, hot summer saw us work alongside some of our key partners to serve up some great community events across the region. Here's a flavour of what was cooked up whilst the sun shone.

Over 120 customers came along to ‘Support in the City’, a celebration of services in Nottingham City. Delivered with Nottingham City Council there were lots of fun activities, including a tombola, flower sale, DIY demos from ‘Women in Construction’, stalls and fabulous food from the Super Kitchen.

Meanwhile, over in Brewsters Park, Nottingham, around 130 local residents enjoyed the ‘Love NG3’ summer party, which was organised in partnership with local Councillors and Nottingham City Homes. There was music from resident DJ Eddie “Soul” Morley, African drumming, science experiments, tasty food, sport and lots more.

And over in Trocadero Court in Normanton, Derby around 100 local residents enjoyed food, art, music and activities in the summer sunshine too. A delicious lunch was provided by our partners at Super Kitchen with food served in edible bowls!

Pictured left: Councillor Militia Brown, former Sherriff of Nottingham (centre) with Metropolitan team members Paul Goddard (l) and Tom Forster (r)

Fun in the sun

DJ Eddie “Soul” Morley, African drumming, science experiments, tasty food, sport and lots more.

Pictured left: Councillor Militia Brown, former Sherriff of Nottingham (centre) with Metropolitan team members Paul Goddard (l) and Tom Forster (r)
THE YEAR IN NUMBERS

From building new homes for rent and sale, supporting customers into paid work and investing in modernising more homes than ever, to developing new care and support services, fixing repairs first time and making homes safer in the wake of the Grenfell tragedy, here are some of the highlights of what we’ve delivered over the last year:

623 new homes built
5,870 in our development pipeline
£84 million on maintaining and modernising homes, including:
1,058 new kitchens
510 new bathrooms
2,180 new boilers

£4 million secured for new care and support contracts in our specialist areas (older people, mental health and transitional services aimed at vulnerable people)
£187,000 reduction in rent arrears by targeting support towards customers at risk, in particular those affected by the roll-out of Universal Credit

We’re now looking forward to achieving even more in the coming year – and beyond – as Metropolitan Thames Valley.

News at your fingertips

The way people access news has changed and we’re changing too to keep up! We already post news and details of what’s going on in your area online and are active on Twitter and Facebook.

We’re now going digital with your new-look regional newsletter so, if we have your email address, in the future you’ll receive your copy in your inbox, rather than your letterbox. As we know that some customers prefer to get a copy in the post, we’ll continue to print copies too. If you’d like to receive a digital copy and we don’t have your email address, please let us know. And remember, if you’d prefer not to receive general information from us that doesn’t relate to your tenancy and is addressed to you personally, you can call us on 020 3535 3535 to opt out.
How to get ready for Universal Credit

There’s lots about Universal Credit that is different, from how you claim it (online only), to how it’s paid (into a bank account only) and how often it’s paid (monthly, in arrears).

But for now, if you receive Housing Benefit (HB), the key things to remember are that:

- HB payments will no longer come to us directly. This means you will need to set up regular payments – ideally via Direct Debit
- It takes at least six weeks (and can take over ten weeks) from the date you make a claim until you receive your first payment

- You still have to pay your rent during this time or your tenancy will be at risk
- The average rent arrears that customers owe by NOT getting ready is £1200.

How can I get ready?

- The first thing you should do is start saving now so you don’t get into arrears and put your tenancy at risk
- Get in touch with us today on 020 3535 3535 so our team of friendly, helpful money experts can support you to keep on top of things.

Training bursaries provide a boost

A new bursary programme is open to Metropolitan residents who may benefit from a little financial support to cover training-related costs.

With up to £600 per person available to cover anything from course fees to equipment or child care, these one-off payments can make all the difference between signing up for training or not.

If you’re interested, simply email your name and a contact number to training@metropolitan.org.uk. We’ll then call you back to see if you’re eligible and to talk about your options. Once you’ve completed your training we’ll also be able to support you in finding work in the related field.

Negotiating new contracts will deliver better value

As one of the largest housing associations in the country, making an investment of around £100m each year into our 57,000 homes, Metropolitan Thames Valley will be an influential client that suppliers want to work with. We recently set up a Property Procurement Board to oversee a project to reprocure all of our property services which will enable us to establish relationships with contractors – both new and existing – that deliver a high quality service and a great customer experience.

A number of customers sit on the Board, ensuring your voices are heard.

Mark Everard, Executive Director of Property, commented, “Our reprocurement project is all about getting the best possible value out of our contracts so that we can invest more in maintaining our homes, which is what customers tell us matters most to them. Having attracted in excess of 220 companies who want to work with us at recent procurement events we’re confident that this refocused commercial approach will help us deliver just that.”
Nottingham resident Debbie is thriving in her job with Spotlight Cleaning Ltd, working across the East Midlands, including at some of our care and support schemes. She told us: “My job is so rewarding and it’s given me loads of confidence. I come to work every day knowing I’m making a difference to peoples’ lives.”

Phil Parr in our employment team has developed a relationship with Spotlight Cleaning which has so far resulted in 13 successful job placements for customers. He told us: “Building strong relationships with local employers means we become a supplier of choice and can offer customers flexible working options.”

To find out more about our training programme and regular job clubs across the region, please call us on 020 3535 3535 or email metroployment@metropolitan.org.uk.

Shining a spotlight on job success

Where there’s a Wilford, there’s a way

We’re working with partner Galliford Try on a brand new development of over 170 homes in Wilford Lane, in West Bridgford.

With fewer sources of funding available for housing associations to build social housing, and the demand for affordable homes continuing to rise, the first homes to be completed are for private sale.

Selling these homes on the private market will enable us to fund the development of much-needed houses and flats for affordable rent and shared ownership.

No limits for young people

In the last couple of years over 50 of our young residents, aged 11-16, have got involved in Limitless Youth, a term-time programme of fun sports and activities, including cooking, arts and crafts, music and design.

One of the regular activities is ‘favours for neighbours’, where the youngsters carry out random acts of kindness, such as here in the photo where they decided to give the local area a bit of a tidy-up.

Please feel free to join in the fun on Wednesdays after school, from 5-7pm, at Hill View Community Centre, Ransom Road, Nottingham NG3 3BP.

How to contact us:
Call: 020 3535 3535  Email: contactus@metropolitan.org.uk
Online: www.metropolitan.org.uk  Twitter: @MetropolitanOrg  Facebook: @MetropolitanOrg