Summer sun brings out the crowds

Fairground rides, stalls, delicious food and a festival feel – not to mention blazing sunshine – greeted the crowds at this year’s Love Clapham Park summer party. Lambeth Mayor Councillor Christopher Wellbelove joined neighbours, members of the Metropolitan team and local partners for a really fun-filled day.

Meanwhile over in Roundshaw, Mayor of Sutton Councillor Steve Cook (pictured below with l-r, Angelique Banton, Metropolitan; Nellie Showers, Chair of Roundshaw Community Network; his wife Pauline and Reverend Mother Martha Mutikani) was treated to afternoon tea in St Paul’s church, before joining local residents, colleagues and partners at the annual community fun day organised by the Roundshaw Community Network. Music, drumming, stalls, car boot sale and a bouncy castle were the order of the day.

Don't let the cheats win

A District Judge awarded £20,000 in interim costs and a £31,000 Unlawful Profits Order against a tenant who was illegally sub-letting one of our properties in Lambeth. They said in their judgement “It is an outrage. Metropolitan has a duty to house and I have never seen a case where the evidence is so overwhelming. For someone to get so greedy has resulted in their comeuppance.”

Angelique Banton, Head of Housing Services in South London, commented: “We’re delighted to have regained possession of the property as it means a family in genuine housing need will be able to live in an affordable home.”

In the last 18 months we have regained possession of 49 properties across the country due to tenancy fraud, including 39 cases of sub-letting. When there’s a chronic shortage of affordable housing across the country and a huge demand for it, we are committed to doing everything we can to root out criminals who profit financially.

If you suspect a home near you is being illegally sub-let, please let us know, in confidence, by calling 020 3535 3535 or via suspected.fraud@metropolitan.org.uk.
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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>623 new homes built</th>
<th>5,870 in our development pipeline</th>
<th>£84million on maintaining and modernising homes, including:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>83% of repairs fixed first time (and 99% customer satisfaction with Metworks)</td>
<td>1,026 customers supported into work</td>
<td>1,058 new kitchens</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>£4million secured for new care and support contracts in our specialist areas (older people, mental health and transitional services aimed at vulnerable people)</td>
<td>£187,000 reduction in rent arrears by targeting support towards customers at risk, in particular those affected by the roll-out of Universal Credit</td>
<td>510 new bathrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2,180 new boilers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

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.

Training bursaries provide a boost

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.”
New community space coming soon

A contemporary and spacious community centre is opening its doors in Clapham Park any day now. On the corner of Kings Avenue and the South Circular, this interim space will provide great community facilities in a double height multi-use hall, with a computer room, cafe, catering kitchen, meeting rooms and outdoor garden space.

Nikia makes the perfect pitch

Congratulations to Lambeth resident Nikia Rodney (pictured with daughters Kimaya, left, and Tahirah, right), who was crowned the winner of our 2018 PitchYour Idea programme.

After 12 weeks of training, Nikia’s ‘Wraps and Tings’ business pitch to produce Caribbean-inspired wraps, cakes and juices, impressed the judges – and got their mouths watering. Her prize of £2,000 will help turn her idea for tasty vegan, seafood and meat wraps into reality and hopefully grab a bite of the increasingly popular street-food market at local pop-ups and festivals. In fact you might have already sampled her delicious food at the Love Clapham Park event!

We have a dedicated team of job experts who can provide support and advice on everything from training and volunteering, to job placements and setting yourself up in business. Why not see if we can help you by calling us on 020 3535 3535!

Making a material difference

The site of a former textile mill in Hackbridge, close to Mitcham Junction, is being redeveloped to provide 700 new homes.

We’re delivering 84 of the apartments for sale on a shared ownership basis, and the final block has just been completed.

The history of the site is reflected in the names of the blocks: Chenille Court, Moir Court and Braid Court, which are located on Twill Way and Angora Close.

Residents spell it out!

Residents at Lion Court in Twickenham were joined by friends, family and members of the Metropolitan team at their recent summer barbecue.

Over 60 guests attended, including customers from nearby schemes, and everyone enjoyed the musical entertainment and tucked into tasty treats. It’s become such a popular annual shindig that four family members travelled all the way from Wales to be part of the community-spirited F-U-N!

How to contact us:

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