

## **Worcester Park fire – Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)**

Following the fire at Richmond House, the local community has pulled together to help those affected.

We know this is a difficult time for residents, and we want to provide as much support as we can. These FAQs provide an update following the fire, including where residents can get support, and an outline of work planned for the next few days. Below is a list of questions we have been receiving, along with our responses.

We will continue to update these FAQs over time and as new questions arise.

### **Questions raised at residents meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> September (8pm)**

#### **1. When will residents' meetings be held moving forward?**

The confirmed schedule of meetings for the coming days is as follows:

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September - 8pm

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September - 1pm

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September - 8pm.

Further dates will be announced in due course.

#### **2. When will the investigative surveys be undertaken across the buildings?**

We have appointed a number of independent experts to undertake investigations of the apartment blocks on the Estate owned by MTVH. The investigations have started and will be continuing into the week commencing 16<sup>th</sup> September. The inspections look at a selection of properties. These have been chosen as examples of property types and not for specific reasons. The next investigation will be carried out to Weare House and two semi-detached houses on Sherbrooke Way. Further investigations are likely after these and we will update you on these once we know where these are to be carried out.

#### **3. What will the surveys involve?**

Unfortunately, this will involve intrusive investigations (the extent to which we will confirm as soon as possible) so we can fully consider the fabric of the building and the underlying construction details. Inspection vehicles will be on site in order to access points at height on buildings safely. We will endeavour to put these in locations which cause minimum disruption to residents, but we request you bear with us if they temporarily block access to parking spaces.

#### **4. Will the inspection report be published in full?**

MTVH has appointed a number of independent experts in various construction disciplines to inspect its buildings and advise on the extent of any remedial works required. The inspection programme is now underway. Once it had been completed the experts will produce reports. These reports have been commissioned by our solicitors and will be prepared for use in any future legal proceedings should they be deemed necessary. For that reason the full reports cannot be disclosed. However, we will be providing a comprehensive summary of the experts' findings and recommendations for any remedial works as soon as we possibly can.

5. **What additional fire safety measures are you undertaking to provide further reassurance?**  
Following feedback from residents that they would like further reassurance, we are fitting more smoke alarms in the structure of the blocks. In addition, London Fire Brigade will also provide and fit further smoke alarms in houses and apartments at residents' request. For further information please visit Maple Lodge.

In addition, The Waking Watch are also increasing the frequency at which they inspect the buildings and are receiving further training to assist them in doing so.

## **Questions raised at residents meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> September (1pm)**

1. **When will residents' meetings be held moving forward? (updated above at question 1, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 8pm)**

The next residents meeting at Maple Lodge is scheduled for 11th September 2019 at 8pm. Residents at the 1pm meeting today suggested reviewing the frequency of meetings. The proposal would be to hold one meeting a day at alternate times. The suggested schedule for the coming days is as follows:

Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September – 8pm

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> September – 1pm

Monday 16<sup>th</sup> September – 8pm.

This proposal will be discussed at the 8pm meeting tonight.

2. **How will the Waking Watch and their safety role be managed moving forward? (updated above at question 5, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 8pm)**

The Waking Watch has been introduced to patrol each of our blocks at night to ensure safety. The Waking Watch are being supervised and have been further briefed following feedback from residents. They will shortly be provided with a staff centre and toilet facilities to accommodate breaks. We will continue to liaise with the contractor to ensure they meet residents' expectations.

3. **How else can we ensure safety? (updated above at question 5, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 8pm)**

It is important that residents continue to keep the communal areas of the blocks clear of belongings including items such as doormats, and we would ask that people continue to do so. At the site, temporary fencing is being erected around Richmond House and will be replaced with hoarding as soon as possible. Lighting has also been installed at the site for security.

## **Questions raised at residents meetings on the 10<sup>th</sup> September, (8pm)**

1. **What process exists for residents to claim expenses incurred as a result of being in temporary accommodation?**

We ask that any Richmond House and Crayton House residents who are incurring, or have incurred, additional costs (for example transport, or temporary housing for pets) to

contact us directly and Metropolitan Thames Valley will make financial arrangements to support them.

**2. When will the investigative surveys be undertaken across the buildings? (updated above at question 2, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 8pm)**

We have appointed a number of independent experts to undertake investigations of the apartment blocks on the Estate owned by MTVH. The investigations are already underway but are likely to take several weeks due to the number of buildings that need to be inspected and because external and internal elements of each building will need to be inspected.

**3. What will the surveys involve? (updated above at question 3, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 8pm)**

Unfortunately, this will involve intrusive investigations (the extent to which we will confirm as soon as possible) so we can fully consider the fabric of the building and the underlying construction details. Whilst we will do this as quickly as possible, it is a process that must be undertaken carefully and thoroughly as we want to ensure we capture everything. We will also inspect houses.

**4. Will the results of the survey be made available? (updated above at question 4, 11<sup>th</sup> September, 8pm)**

Once the experts have concluded their investigations and we are aware of the results we will make them known to you. It is our intention to be transparent about any recommendations that the experts make following their investigations. We will set about undertaking any and all remedial work that might be necessary as a result of those recommendations. In the meantime, the mitigation measures that have been put in place in consultation with the fire brigade and the experts enable the buildings to be safely occupied.

**5. How do you know the mobility of residents in the blocks?**

MTVH has a list of everyone we know that has mobility issues in the buildings. If anyone has a mobility issue and is unsure as to whether MTVH are aware, please contact us to confirm this with the Home Ownership Team at MTVH on 0300 456 2929 (option4) between 8.30 and 5.30 Monday to Friday or visit the team at Maple Lodge.

**6. What emotional support is available to residents?**

The British Red Cross are providing ongoing practical and emotional support to residents affected by the Worcester Park Fire. If you would like to receive independent support from the British Red Cross please visit Maple Lodge where they are based.

## **General information about the fire**

**7. Where was the fire?**

Richmond House, Sherbrooke Way, Worcester Park, Morden, Epsom, KT4 8FJ

**8. When did it happen?**

The London Fire Brigade were called just before 1:30am on 9 September 2019.

**9. How did it start?**

The London Fire Brigade are investigating the cause of the fire and we are following this closely.

**10. Were there any casualties or fatalities because of the fire?**

The London Fire Brigade have confirmed that there were no fatalities or casualties.

**11. Who was affected by the fire? How many households**

23 shared ownership households in Richmond House were directly affected and residents were evacuated. Households from Crayton House, a neighbouring block, were also evacuated. Everyone was accounted for as of 11am on 9 September 2019.

**12. How old is Richmond House?**

Richmond House was built in March 2011.

**13. Who is responsible for the households / building(s) on site?**

St James, a division of The Berkeley Group, were the developers of the Worcester Park site. Metropolitan Thames Valley manages 255 homes in Worcester Park, including Richmond House.

**14. How can local residents help people directly affected?**

Metropolitan Thames Valley, Sutton Council, the developer St James (part of Berkeley Group), and local volunteers have been providing support to residents onsite, including at the local Community Centre.

A fundraising page has been created to support residents affected by the fire.

<https://www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/hamptons>

## **Support for residents**

**15. What is being done to ensure the safety of all Metropolitan Thames Valley residents living in Worcester Park?**

While the cause of the fire is being investigated, we are taking action to ensure that all of our residents living in neighbouring blocks feel safe in their homes. As a safety precaution, and in coordination with fire safety experts, a 24-hour patrol has been put in place at the buildings which we manage. On the advice of London Fire Brigade we have changed the evacuation policy for the blocks from a 'Stay Put' policy to a Simultaneous Evacuation, which means that all parts of a building are evacuated in the event of a fire. We are also conducting intrusive surveys on all our blocks to ensure they are safe.

**16. Some residents are in temporary hotel accommodation. What will be paid for?**

All temporary accommodation is provided free of charge with breakfast and dinner included.

**17. Who will pay the hotel parking?**

We will cover these but residents will need to keep your receipts.

**18. Who will pay for other additional hotel costs?**

We will consider other reasonable claims for costs. Again, residents will need to keep receipts.

**19. Where will post be delivered?**

All post is going to be delivered to Maple Lodge. Residents can collect this from the front desk.

**20. How do residents speak to someone at Metropolitan Thames Valley?**

Residents in Crayton and Richmond House have been given a named Metropolitan Thames Valley contact. For more general enquiries residents can contact the Home Ownership Team at MTVH on 0300 456 2929 (option 4) between 8.30 and 5.30 Monday to Friday. Our switchboard also has a number for out of hours emergencies.

We will also have a team on site who can help with enquiries. They will be located in the Community Centre but may also be out and about on site.

**21. Can Metropolitan Thames Valley provide confirmation of the fire for residents' bank or mortgage lenders?**

We are happy to provide this. Residents should contact the Home Ownership team.

**22. When can residents expect another update?**

We will be producing a regular newsletter for MTVH residents which we will distribute and also post on our website.

We will also be having open meetings for all residents and we will let residents know when these are happening.

**Support for residents: Richmond House**

**23. What's happening with rent and service charge payments?**

We have suspended collections of these charges. We took the step of cancelling direct debits for those who had them set up. If residents pay by other methods, they are free to cancel arrangements they have in place.

**24. Do residents need to carry on paying their mortgage to their mortgage provider?**

Residents will need to speak directly to their mortgage lender about this.

**25. Are residents' homes insured and what is covered?**

Metropolitan Thames Valley has buildings insurance in place. We have informed our insurers (Zurich) and will be making a claim.

If residents have their own contents insurance to cover their personal belongings they will need to contact your insurer as soon as possible who will be able to advise them on their policy cover.

**26. How are claims made for any damage to cars that were in the carpark?**

Residents will need to contact their car insurance provider to make a claim. Providers will be able to advise on cover and next steps.

**27. What are residents' longer term housing options?**

We will provide advice and support with this, reviewing options on a one to one basis taking into account individual circumstances.

**Support for residents: Crayton House**

**28. How long will residents be in temporary accommodation?**

We are working to ensure residents of Crayton House can move back into their homes as soon as possible.

During the initial evacuation a number of fire doors were intentionally broken by the London Fire Brigade to support residents make a quicker exit. These will need to be replaced before it is safe for residents to move back to their homes.

We are also working closely with the fire service to ascertain when it will be safe to return to their homes. We will let residents know as soon as the building is released back to us.

**29. Do residents get a refund on their rent?**

We are working to return residents to their homes as soon as possible. We will pick up all charges relating to the period during which they are in temporary accommodation.

**30. Can residents pick up more of their belongings?**

We need to co-ordinate access with the Fire Brigade, but we ask residents to let us know if they need to collect anything from their homes and we will let them know what the arrangements are.