

Two rescued from fifth-floor blaze

A fifth-floor flat suffered smoke damage after fire broke out in the early hours of Saturday.

Three fire engines, one from Richmond and two from Kingston, were sent to Peldon Court, off Sheen Road, Richmond,

after the alarm was raised at 4.40am on November 29.

Two people were in the flat were rescued by firefighters.

A firefighter said the fire was likely to have been caused by a candle or cigarette.



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College 'bans strike fiction'

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A former Richmond College lecturer has criticised his old employer for trying to force him to withdraw his novel about strike action at a corrupt school.

Stephen Grant, 51, was a philosophy lecturer at the college for 14 years, and while there wrote *A Moment More Sublime*, based loosely on his experiences as a union secretary involved in a labour dispute about job cuts.

He approached the school's human resources director to inform her when the novel was picked up by an American publisher, but was told to withdraw the book and that he would be put through the college's disciplinary process.

He said the work of fiction was not intended to be about Richmond specifically, and offered to edit the book's British version and remove all mention of his time at the college from his website, but was told there would be no compromise.

He said: "Though there are

some similarities – for example, the fictional college is set near a rugby ground and some characters share initials with people at the school – the disputes in the book are nothing like the ones we had at the college.

"They made it clear that even if I stopped publishing the book they would still take me through this disciplinary process. I thought it was a huge overreaction from them, and quite sinister trying to oppress a work of literature."

Mr Grant eventually resigned in mid-October due to ill-health. He said: "It was incredibly stressful. I lost a lot of weight and became very anxious."

Richmond College was not willing to provide any comment and said it was an internal matter bound by confidentiality.

The controversy surrounding the book was covered in the *Times Educational Supplement* and by the *Guardian* in November, which led to an increase in sales.

Mr Grant said: "The college was worried about possible reputational damage, but the national and local coverage of their reaction has meant any



New book: Ex-Richmond College lecturer and author Stephen Grant

damage caused will be far greater than what would have happened if they had simply ignored the book."

□ *A Moment More Sublime* is set for a UK release in time for Christmas.

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Opportunity to work at gallery

Orleans House Gallery is offering a six-month traineeship to someone interested in a career within the arts sector.

An open day to find out more takes place at the gallery on Wednesday, December 17.

The traineeship is funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

For more details on how to apply, email alice.le-page@richmond.gov.uk or call 020 8831 6445.

Great news for private business

MP Zac Goldsmith has welcomed new figures showing an increase in the number of private sector businesses in London.

At the start of this year, there were more than 5m private sector businesses in the UK – an increase of 7 per cent since the start of 2013.

Mr Goldsmith said the growth shows people have increased confidence in the economy and future of the country.

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Calls may be monitored for training purposes

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