

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 22 October 2025

7pm via zoom

<https://bit.ly/BRRAMeets2025>

Meeting ID: 881 4907 6288

Passcode: 731647

Attendance: 219

Meeting started: 7.00pm

Guest speaker: Nesil Caliskan, MP

Agenda:

1. Service charges
2. AOB

Minutes and matters arising

Pete Mason, the chair of the Barking Reach Residents Association (BRRA), opened the meeting, noting that the minutes and recording for the previous meeting had been posted on the Barking Reach Residents Association (BRRA) website for residents to view. He introduced Nesil Caliskan, MP for Barking, to start the conversation on service charges.

1. Service charges

Several local residents put forward their frustrations regarding the recent dramatic service charge increases.

Estate service charges (also known as superior landlord charges) surged from £24,000 to £244,000 for properties within Stage 2 of the estate (Northgate Neighbourhood), more specifically, Fielders Quarter. This is significantly affecting residents' affordability.

Issues with invoicing were also noted – Pinnacle, the estate manager for Fielders Quarter blocks, often delays invoices, hindering accountability, with charges arriving months late and are often poorly documented. Some invoices include charges with irrelevant or duplicated fees such as window cleaning for townhouses, for example, while others show £342 for 10 minutes of CCTV data and £1,000 monthly cleaning for minimal service, indicating poor value for money.

Management fees have increased sixfold since 2023, while concierge fees rose by 13% since 2022. Residents reported invoices stored in disorganised folders, making financial scrutiny nearly impossible. Belway admitted to subsidising service charges historically, now withdrawn, causing the sudden spikes in service charge bills.

Residents also acknowledged the misleading marketing practices conducted by Bellway when selling properties. The builder uses outdated service charge figures for new buyers, misrepresenting actual costs, contributing to residents' financial distress.

Some residents believe this practice could potentially be fraudulent and urged investigation by consumer protection bodies.

It was also noted that residents who bought under shared ownership or affordable housing schemes are now unable to meet the new costs, contradicting original affordability checks. Many residents expressed fears of homelessness and the inability to sell their homes in the future due to escalating charges.

Pete said that the spike in service charges accounts for 80% of the total increase in service charges. The usual suspects, including Pinnacle (Fielders Crescent estate manager), Bellway (property developer and freeholder), and Priem (the estate's manager), blamed each other for under-budgeting and poor forecasting.

For the past couple of months, residents faced contradictory explanations with no single party taking responsibility.

Pete added that the impact is severe: service charges for some are now equal to mortgage payments, threatening residents' ability to keep up with payments. The lack of clear, timely invoicing and accounting transparency worsens the situation.

He described the complexity of ownership and billing arrangements within the estate as deliberately opaque. Many residents expressed frustration with the absence of proper consultation or Section 20 notices required by law for contracts exceeding £100.

Venilia Amorim, BRRA's secretary and resident director at the Barking Riverside Community Interest Company (BR CIC), the non-profit body that oversees Preim's contract (the estate manager for Barking Riverside estate's public realm), made clear that resident directors are on the board to fully scrutinise the estate service charge. She confirmed that there had been no increases in the estate service charge this year.

Nesil's campaign

MP Nesil is leading a campaign for legal action against unfair practices, emphasising residents' experiences for support. She noted that there is an urgent need for transparency and is calling for clear communication and consultation on service charges, targeting issues of accountability and mismanagement.

She pledged to hold companies accountable through political and legal channels.

She has already written to key companies and requested meetings, including a forthcoming one with Barking Riverside Limited's new managing director.

The campaign aims to expose tax haven ownership structures and irresponsible landlords like L&Q, which has poor records per the government ombudsman. Nesil emphasised residents' testimonies as crucial for ministerial support and parliamentary pressure.

Legal avenues like the First Tier Tribunal were discussed but seen as problematic as legal costs can often be passed back onto residents, despite the tribunal's no-cost intention. Nesil committed to investigating and challenging this issue to prevent residents from being punished for seeking fairness.

Nesil advised residents not to withhold payments outright due to legal risks but to negotiate monthly instalments. This approach aims to avoid court proceedings while the wider campaign progresses. She urged residents to sign up for her newsletter to maintain communication and coordinate efforts.

Resolutions

A local resident proposed a resolution to instruct Pinnacle to provide all contracts from the last five years to the BRRA – it received strong resident support.

This move targets breaches of consultation laws and the use of rolling contracts to avoid resident scrutiny. See resolution in Appendix 1.

The BRRA also proposed a resolution for Bellway to continue to subsidise the estate service charge and, upon consultation with residents, to be gradually added to service charge bills.

See resolution in Appendix 2.

Both resolutions were passed unanimously.

Council tax

Residents voiced frustration over paying double via council tax and service charges, many asking for clarity on overlapping services funded by council tax and estate charges. The council tax covers wider social services, but residents feel they pay twice for some estate maintenance. It was agreed that the BRRA seek official responses from local council representatives on this.

Actions:

1. Nesil will seek meetings with all parties, asking for more transparency and payment plans. She will also follow up on false advertisements regarding service charges for new flats sold.
2. The RA will follow up on the two motions
 - a) asking for five years of contracts to check for Section 20 breaches,
 - b) asking for service charge subsidies from the developer to be taken off service charge bills for now and discussed with residents before being phased in.
3. A resident from Hamilton Mansions is going to follow up on schedule 3 clause 2 of the lease that states that head lease costs should not be transferred to tenants with Nesil.
4. There has been a suggestion on whether residents can 'protest' outside Bellway's sales suites and keep people from buying new flats unless the service charge situation improves.
5. The RA to follow up with the council on council tax charges overlapping with estate service charges.

2. Any other business

None declared.

Meeting ended 8.35pm

Appendix 1

Resolution passed unanimously

"This meeting resolves to instruct Pinnacle to send copies of all current and past contracts relevant to the last 5 years of services charge demands to residents in the Fielders Quarter, as served by the Fielders Crescent Management Company Limited."

Proposed by Jana Hock

Seconded by Pete Mason

Appendix 2

Resolution passed unanimously

BRRA demands that the superior landlord, Barking Riverside Limited (BRL), adopts a policy of selling land only to developers who commit to delivering homes under a commonhold ownership structure.

Leasehold arrangements have proven unreliable, with freeholders frequently unresponsive to resident concerns, failing in their duties and lacking accountability.

Managing agents appointed under leasehold models operate with minimal transparency and often impose excessive or unjustified costs on residents. Attempts to challenge service charges or poor service are typically obstructed.

The commonhold system offers a fairer, more democratic model of ownership, enabling residents to directly manage their building and shared spaces through a company they collectively own.

It removes the incentive for freeholders and managing agents to exploit leaseholders for profit.

BRRA believes that BRL, as the master developer with accountability to the local community, has a duty to prioritise long-term community wellbeing over short-term developer returns.

Proposed by our treasurer Michael Kassa

Seconded by Pete Mason and passed unanimously