

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 22nd November 2017 at the Rivergate Centre, 7:30pm

Committee: Pete Mason, Nuno Amorim, Venilia Amorim, Marta Varesi, Nabila Sherkhan, Habib Qazi, Fatuma Ssesemba, Syed Islam, Siarul Islam
Apologies: Fran Mitchell, Rumina Sultana, Shabana Qazi, Pat Short
47 residents were present.

Meeting started at 7:40pm

Minutes from previous meeting on 18th October 2017 were agreed.

Parking Update

Chairperson Pete Mason stated that the Association has won from the developer, Barking Riverside Limited (BRL), an agreement that residents living on Drake Close and Galleons Drive, who have bays a long way from their homes and who have long campaigned for them to be relocated, would get their bays reallocated closer to their homes where there are new bays. BRL asked the Association to come up with proposals and get them agreed with residents. No existing bays which residents are happy with can or will be moved. A map was circulated indicating the proposals. The previous meeting of the Association on Wednesday 18th October had agreed the new bays on the proviso of additional issues including the reallocation of bays.

Pete reported that the Drake Close residents who the Association had suggested be allocated the new bays were very pleased with the Association's proposals. Their old bays are proposed to become visitors' bays. No disagreements were raised with the proposals circulated.

It was proposed to have an additional meeting on the 13 December to give residents time to consider these plans and vote to agree on the reallocated bays on Drake Close and Galleons Drive. It was stressed that the extra spaces on BRL's latest parking plans would be marked as visitors' bays, but that residents can park in visitors' bays. Residents are still keeping their one parking space as per their lease/tenancy agreements, but residents now hope that the new bays will be enough for those who bought their houses or flats before the parking restrictions were introduced and had parked a second or third car on the street without impediment.

BRL have also proposed that the double yellow lines at Gatward Place and Middleton Road will be turned into single yellow lines as they would not offer extra parking spaces there due to the expense.

A resident has informed the meeting that parking restrictions in Cornelius House have started as bay numbers have been painted. Another resident has noted that there are several vehicles blocking access to the building's underground carp park. Committee members agreed on a walk to see the severity of the claim.

Guest Speaker Matt Scott and the Thames Ward Community Project

Matt started in October and will hire a community event organiser to help with the building blocks of the project: health (physical and mental), environmental, cohesion and employability.

Matt said that a 2015 feasibility study showed that the Thames Ward area was a 'cold spot' for funding and that this project should bring sustainability to the area. This can be achieved through a community development trust or a building, which can generate future flowing income. There is a lot of construction in the area, so there are a lot of possibilities.

Matt also said that there is a lot of pressure on services and infrastructure, so the project will help by investing in community groups by aligning interests in whole different areas of the ward. An advisory board will meet regularly to implement a strategic plan for various projects.

On answering questions from residents, Matt said that there is no formal way to bring people together – it's all about collaboration and basic communication. He plans to bring in the relevant stakeholders together for issues such as mosquitoes, walkways, gardening and clean-up projects and further grants/funding.

Treasurer Venilia Amorim informed residents that, in reference to the closure of the access road on Renwick Road to the Riverside School, a meeting was organised with the help of Matt, with MP Margaret Hodge, BRL, TFL and the council. The closure of the access road gave rise to several issues to parents/residents with children in the school and their daily trips, adding a further 20 minutes to their school journey, and exposing children to several road dangers such as speeding traffic. A plan for a shuttle service (2 buses in the morning and 2 in the afternoon) for primary school children and their parents is expected to start from January, once finer details are worked out between TFL, BRL and the council. (For a full report, see our website, Facebook page or newsletter.)

Link Parking

Secretary Nuno Amorim explained that all fines issued to residents can be fought, mainly on the grounds of easement (for residents that have moved in before the yellow lines and parking restrictions were implemented). There are various ways to challenge parking fines, such as using BRL/Pinnacle letters explaining the parking restrictions, which have been contradictory on yellow lines and parking permits.

Several court cases and further information has been uploaded onto the associations' website (www.brra.org.uk).

Pinnacle Service Charge

Treasurer Venilia said that several residents have now been receiving 'red letters' from Pinnacle requesting payment for unpaid service charges. She stressed that the Association cannot advise residents not to pay up service charges, but they can certainly challenge Pinnacle's statements and request a full breakdown of their bills.

Residents have the right to seek a breakdown of the service charge accounts. The request must be in writing and can be sent directly to Pinnacle, the management company. Where Pinnacle has received such demand, it must provide the summary within one month (or within 6 months of the end of the 12-month accounting period, whichever is later). Pinnacle, however, has still failed to provide such breakdowns for financial years 2014/2015 and 2015/2016. Pinnacle say that the accounts have still not been edited.

Since Pinnacle has failed, without reasonable excuse, to comply with a request for a breakdown, Pinnacle may be committing an offence, under Sections 21 and 22 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985 and on conviction is liable for a fine of up to £2,500 per household. The Association is gathering information on any residents that want to take part on an initial class action against Pinnacle for failure to provide said service charge breakdowns.

Poor Craftsmanship and Excessive Utility Bills

Communications Officer Marta Varesi said that several residents have been victims of excessive utility bills and expenses in household repairs due to poor craftsmanship around the estate. There are residents that have had water and gas bills in excess of £5,000 and have been subjected to paying for repairs of water valves, pipework and taps. Some residents have even been turned down for insurance cover by British Gas due to the poor workmanship on the Riverside estate and others claim they have been told by the water company SSE that the water pressure within the estate is too high.

The association is now gathering information from residents on all the issues they have faced over the past 4 or 5 years so that a joint complaint can be made against the building developers. Marta has requested all residents that want to participate to share their details.

Any Other Business

Henry Dodds has reported that operating times at the Thames View Health Centre will be extended to 7am to 8pm. There has been an issue with residents trying to register with either Dr. Kalkat or Dr. John, claiming that clinics have no capacity, but that is not true. Residents who have been told that and have not been able to register should contact the Patient Participation Group and report the issue. There are plans for a new GP building close to the new station in 2021.

In response to a resident's question particularly focusing on issues relating to the Riverside Estate, Treasurer Venilia has said that the Barking Riverside Residents Association had been turned into a subcommittee of the Barking Reach Residents Association and deals with all matters regarding just the Riverside Estate. Another resident has asked for names of committee members to be disclosed and Chairperson Pete gave the names of all committee members, stating around 15 names.

Meeting closed 9.10pm