

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 20th June 2018

7:30pm, Rivergate Centre

Committee: Pete Mason (chair), Venilia Amorim (Treasurer)

Apologies: Nuno Amorim (Secretary)

Attendance: 36 residents present.

Guests: Craig Stevens, Managing Director of Warwick Estates; Matt Scott and Jamie Keston of Thames Ward Community Project (TWCP)

Meeting started at 7.40pm

Agenda

Agenda agreed.

Minutes and Matters arising

Minutes of last meeting agreed as a true record. Matters arising to be covered in the relevant agenda items.

Right to Manage

Guest speaker Craig Stevens, Managing Director of Warwick Estates, spoke on how residents can go about setting up their right to manage their block. A “block” can be a block of flats or a continuous terrace of houses, but each block must act separately, which must get 50% of leaseholders signed up legally to win the Right to Manage.

The Right to Manage (RTM) was introduced through the Commonhold and Leasehold Reform Act 2002. It gives leaseholders the statutory right to take over the management of their property from the landlord by setting up a special company - a right to manage company. Each person in the company buys one share for £1. That’s their total liability, because it is a limited company.

Pinnacle would still levy the estate-wide charge for managing the common areas shared between the blocks. The BRRRA Chair pointed out that he had written to the landlords, Barking Riverside Limited (BRL), to ask to put on the agenda of the next meeting in early July a discussion about the removal of Pinnacle Places, since residents associations are supposed to be invited to participate in the decisions to appoint or reappoint a managing agent. Craig said that once a few blocks break away from Pinnacle, it would be absurd for the landlord not to recognise that the managing agent was not doing a good job and remove Pinnacle.

Craig suggested that once a block gets to 50% of residents they should collect the information and Warwick Estates will do the legal paperwork to sign everyone up to fulfil the legislation.

Residents who rent from Southern Housing can ask Southern Housing, as the leaseholder, to participate and in Craig’s experience, they will willingly do so.

Residents asked what the service charge will be. Craig said that will be determined by the residents. What services they want, what they do not want. As an example, he said that if residents want marble flooring, they will be paying more for their flats.

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The Chair pointed to the numerous issues afflicting the flats. That they needed one manager per block, not, as with Pinnacle, one manager for the entire estate. A resident asked about service charge arrears. Craig said that the new managing company had no responsibility over old debts. Whether they are still chased by the old managing company is up to that company.

Residents asked for the possible down side. Craig said that the directors of the block, which is made up of residents, can fall away as people move on over time, or there is nothing bad happening so no one is motivated to put in the time, but when this has happened in the past, Warwick Estates has stepped in with personnel to fill the posts.

Pinnacle – public meetings, service charge and funding

Treasurer Venilia Amorim introduced the discussion. Pinnacle has organised two meetings, dated Wednesday 27th June and Monday 16th July. Very few details are available. Service charge will be discussed. Meanwhile, the committee has been in discussions with a number of solicitors after the decision at the last meeting to raise funds for legal advice on the service charge issues. We have raised £1,200 so far.

The Chair then introduced the email correspondence with Pinnacle. After we raised £1,000 in the ten days after the last residents' meeting, Priya Rawal of Pinnacle appeared to agree to our request to see the accounts, merely asking who was attending and what information was required. However, when the Pinnacle Places head office Property Accountant, Minu Pal, responded, she suggested instead that she discuss only our secretary's personal service charge bill, additionally asserting that Pinnacle cannot discuss accounts with anyone who is not a Barking riverside Leaseholder.

In the discussion that then opened up, residents first discussed the Pinnacle meetings. The voice of the residents must be heard in these meetings and several suggestions were made as to which questions to ask and who would ask them.

Residents then discussed the service charge and proposed that the association asks a solicitor to intervene.

Road works

The Chair reported that after the meeting convened by Thames View Tenants and Residents Association on 24th May attended by leading council, BRL and Thames Water officials, the council has agreed to reinstate the ban of right turns into Bastable Avenue from Renwick Road during morning rush hour. This will stop the rat run from the A13 as before, which brings pollution and endangers the health and safety of residents, particularly of the children at the schools and nurseries.

But after an intervention from the BRRA Chair at the end of that meeting, the council has not rescinded the decision to allow the left turn into Bastable Avenue from Renwick Road, while the roadworks are on, which Riverside residents use to take their children to school and the sick to the health centre, at this time, to which the residents on Thames View have no objection.

Parking – BRL Application for more parking spaces and Link Parking

The Barking Riverside Limited (BRL) application for 104 extra parking spaces has gone through the council planning stage with approval and just needs signing off by the officers.

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The Chair reported that we were still campaigning for improvements in the restrictions even as the planning application was going through, particularly the new single yellow line restrictions that were originally from 7am to 7pm, seven days a week. We hear the council has agreed to “relax” these restrictions but we have no further information.

In respect of Link Parking, the Chair reported that he had emailed a letter of complaint to the landlord (BRL) about Link Parking giving out tickets just when the parking application had gone through. This was unjust. The email is published in our newsletter and on social media.

Heating

The Chair reported that BRRA has just yesterday had a report from HomeGround on the heating situation forwarded from Margaret Hodge's office. Further questions are being asked on our behalf. The report admits multiple failures in the past. Pinnacle Power has recently produced a schedule of recommended remedial works, which are being considered by HomeGround. However, the question of compensation, that the costs not be passed on to residents, and precisely what the nature of the failures were, was not addressed by the report. The Chair has asked Margaret Hodge's office to enquire about this. Meanwhile, the costs of the temporary heating for John Miller/Leslie Hitchcock houses are mounting each week it is there.

AOB

Residents reported that key fobs in Samuel Garside are not working and heating usage monitor devices have stopped displaying any readings. Several residents have been told that Pinnacle Power has only been contracted to supply heat and hot water; it has not been contracted to deal with anything regarding maintenance of systems, particularly inside residents' homes.

Meeting closed 9:10pm