

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 24 May 2023
7.30pm via zoom

Attendance: 20

Meeting started: 7.35pm

AGENDA

1. Service charge update on Fielders Crescent
2. Smells and correspondence from LBBD
3. Ward panel for Safer Neighbourhood Team
4. Walk-in GP sessions
5. Save the Warehouse campaign
6. AGM in June
7. Any other business

Minutes and matters arising

The residents association (RA) chair Pete Mason stated that minutes from the last residents meeting would be available at the next meeting. The agenda was agreed.

1. Service charge update on Fielders Crescent

Pete started the discussion on this item and said that Nadhir, a committee member and resident of Fielders Quarter, got together with a group of residents to go through the service charge budget and dispute it with Pinnacle Places, their managing agent. The company agreed that several items needed to be revised and that a new service charge budget would be issued to residents.

Venilia Amorim, the RA's secretary, added that there were no updates as yet as residents were still waiting for Pinnacle to get back to residents. She noted that it was very important to fight any amounts that don't make sense together as a group, especially since residents across the road from Fielders Quarter (Pedley House) managed to get £70,000 off their service charge bills with Pinnacle.

2. Smells and correspondence from LBBD

Pete noted the discussions on residents' social media groups about bad smells in the area. The local authority is aware of this since residents and the RA have continues reported bad smells over the past few years.

Pete has been in contact with local councillor Cameron Geddes about this and specifically about ReFood on Choats Road (see [addendum 1](#)). The council contacted the Environment Agency and is now expecting an update within 28 days.

Nevertheless, Pete said it was important for residents to continue to log the bad smells and communicate with the RA so we can continue to report back to the council.

On a separate note, Pete said that there is a new application for the site where McGrath Waste is based, on River Road. This company has had various complaints from residents on the smells they produced and the council was on the case.

With this new application, which was raised by a resident on Facebook, the advantage is that the site would be enclosed, but if residents were to oppose it via a consultation there would be a risk of an open-air waste management operation like it is now.

Pete emailed Cameron Geddes on this as well and he responded saying that the consultation is for de demolition and rebuild of the site where McGrath is now "to allow modernisation of the existing waste transfer station, site installation, new plants, machinery internally alongside the demolish, demolition and

replacement of Ripple Way Wharf, including upgrades". So it's not about a new company taking over, but the original one upgrading and in his view, Pete said that there is definitely an improvement as residents don't want to have industrial waste being processed so close to the estate.

3. Ward panel for Safer Neighbourhood Team

Venilia introduced this item. She said a meeting was held on 28 April with the police to form the ward panel for both wards (Thames View and Riverside). The ward panel is a group of residents that come together with the police and the local council and decide on how best the police should be patrolling both wards, highlighting areas for more patrolling and police attention.

At that meeting residents elected co-chairs – one for Thames View (Lucy Lee, secretary of the Thames View tenants Association) and one for Riverside (Zahra Awani, who is an RA committee member and resident of Riverside Phase 2). Meeting minutes are available [online](#).

The next meeting will be chaired by both of them. These meetings are held quarterly and open to any resident that wants to attend.

Additionally, Venilia announced that a Neighbourhood Watch group had already been formed for a few months by the RA with its own WhatsApp group, holding around 20 volunteers. Volunteer residents go on walks around the estate in groups of at least three people, taking note of any suspicious activity, broken or defaced property and so on. But if volunteers don't have the time or energy for walks, they can still join and help report things they see even through their windows for instance.

The group has had some funding from Barking Riverside Limited (BRL) to help buy materials such as high visibility vests, torches, whistles, and so on, and is in the process of planning a couple of events – one at The Wilds and another at the Rivergate Centre – to raise awareness of the group and recruit potential volunteers. Times and dates will be available soon.

4. Walk-in GP sessions

Pete introduced the item on the free GP walk-in sessions. BRL has been working with other local community groups and the local GP surgery to offer these walk-in sessions in various sites around both Thames View and Barking Riverside. The first one took place on 12 May and Pete attended but he said he still had to wait to be seen, but the wait was not very long. There is a leaflet with all available dates that has been circulated on paper and electronically.

Pete also informed the meeting that Dr Jagan John would be attending the RA's annual general meeting (AGM) as a speaker next month to talk to residents about health provision in the area. Dr John, who is very enthusiastic about these drop-in sessions, volunteers his time for these, along with his colleagues.

Pete said that these drop-in sessions are a temporary solution until the Health Hub gets built by January 2026.

5. Save the Warehouse campaign

Venilia informed residents that there was a meeting going on at the same time as the RA's meeting at the Warehouse. A resident group, The Ripple Effect, has come together with the help of Thames Life, which is a community group that has been working with residents in the area for a long time. This group has been trying to get the local councillors and Margaret Hodge MP on board with making sure that the Warehouse gets passed on to residents and it becomes an asset to an established group of residents, mainly because of all the equipment that the Warehouse holds.

There are 3D printers, an industrial kitchen, sewing machines, there are all sorts of motorised wood machinery, there's an oven for pottery, all sorts of things that, unfortunately, the council is looking to rehouse all over the borough in the next few months, Venilia added. By the end of the year, there will be no Warehouse, she continued, saying that it will be just an empty space that the council will rent to businesses.

Many residents who have been using the place don't want that to happen and have been suggesting that this group of residents takes hold of the management of the building and run it themselves, Venilia said. There's been a panel of residents that have been formed with the idea of forming some sort of a community trust where this asset will sit. But residents would still need the property deed to be passed over from the council, which Venilia wasn't sure it was going to happen.

Venilia added that the RA has written an email to local councillors and Margaret Hodge putting on the RA's weight as a resident voice on the importance of this asset for the community. She also mentioned that for those residents who have not yet been to the Warehouse, there is a party on Saturday 27 May, International Culture Day, with music, entertainment, food and drink.

6. AGM in June

Pete announced that the next meeting is the RA's annual general meeting (AGM) at the Wilds and online on Wednesday 21 June at 7.30pm. He noted that most likely the RA's whole committee would stand again as volunteers for another year.

Pete also said that Dr Jagan John will attend as guest speaker to talk about the current lack of health services in the area.

7. Any other business

Residents raised the fact that the weather was starting to warm up and there had been mosquitoes and flies (more than usual) around already. Venilia suggested getting in touch with Tandem to find out if it is possible to install water fountains in the other water bodies around the estate like the one on Swan Pond.

Bledar, a resident of Billington House and an RA committee member, said that many residents complained about school kids at the Co-op and outside the bus stop near The Wilds. They have complained to the school and local councillors for their rude and anti-social behaviour but little was done.

Venilia suggested speaking to the school's headteacher and the police at the next ward panel meeting. Bledar also proposed inviting the school's headteacher to speak at a residents' meeting.

Ruxandra, a resident of Fielders Quarter and an RA committee member, brought up the pick up/drop off of children in the school. She said traffic has improved a lot but wanted an update on how things were left with the RA previously because she still sees a lot of parents stopping by the zebra crossing dropping off kids, opening doors, putting many in danger.

Venilia said that from September, the plan will be that the Riverside Campus – which hosts three different schools, plus a nursery – will have its special needs school move to its Thames Road location. At the moment the whole school has close to 2,000 children coming to the site but with the move of the special educational needs school traffic congestion will most likely ease off quite a bit. The main problem with traffic in that area is because of the special educational needs' children and their transportation to school (buses and special vehicles) dropping them off and picking them up.

Meeting ended 9.10pm

Appendix

Addendum 1

On the 26th March I [Pete Mason] wrote the following email to councillor Cameron Geddes about disguising smell coming from ReFood on Choats Road, that invades the estate. I've just had a kind of interim official response which just says it's officially under investigation, so I'll put that underneath-- I'm a little disappointed so I'm going to ask what the process of investigation entails, time frame etc. Fortunately (for them) it's not been very hot and I'm sure the rain damps down the smell.

Dear Cameron,

I hope you are well.

A thread on our Facebook group started by a potential home buyer on Barking Riverside, has addressed the problem of a nasty smell on the estate. (Excerpts from original post below). It has got a significant response. The smell has been traced by a number of residents independently to a very large site that recycles food into bioenergy, called Refood Ltd.

Refood Ltd, Choats Rd, Barking, Dagenham RM9 6LF, is accessed via Hitch Street, and online at <https://refood.co.uk/>.

Their contact details are:

Tel: 01302 390 968

Email: office@refood.co.uk

There have been 57 comments on this thread so far, and it is not the first time the issue has been raised in respect of the smell from Refood. It has been brought to the attention of the Residents Association a number of times before over the last year or possibly two, but without specific information about the source beyond it being from Choats Road, not River Road, the winds being from the east at the time. This is now, we believe, positively identified by residents.

11 residents have condemned the smell on this day-old thread so far with a number noticing it more or less daily, and others less frequently. I'm sure they are speaking for the other residents in the area.

For example, a resident in Kings Hill says that the smell is "bad". When she moved in it was noticeable almost every day so that she had to shut the windows, but that it is "on and off". Those affected by the smell live around the Fielders Crescent, Northgate Road area. It is described as "really bad", "terrible", "really strong" and worse in the summer. Some say it's "pretty permanent". It is not something one can ignore or get used to, residents say.

The potential buyer says that the constant mentions of a bad smell in comments from residents is the main thing that might put him off from buying.

Residents appreciate the idea of recycling food into energy in the way Refood does, but we must insist our environment is not polluted.

I'm glad to say that as yet we've had no recent complaints from the other perpetrator, McGrath's, which the council's environmental health successfully addressed previously, and which affected the westernmost side of the estate. We now need them to do a similar job on Refood. It's essential they are required to put preparations in place to avoid the smell becoming worse and more persistent over the summer months.

Yours sincerely

Pete Mason

Chair

Barking Reach Residents Association

Original post:-

"Hi all, I am moving to the area in a couple months. The only real thing that has raised concerns for me were reports of a really bad smell from the sounding facilities...

"I see some amazing feedback from residents about riverside, but the negative reports make it sound like the area is constantly experiencing this odor issue..."

Later added:

"... I have a reservation meeting to secure my plot, and this is one of the main cons on my mind.

"It is hard to have positive impression of an area when there are a lot of reports that the summer smell is horrible."

Ends

Response:-

Dear Pete,

Please see below the response I have had concerning Refood Ltd. I hope the work being taken by the council will improve the situation for residents soon.

Best wishes,

Cameron

Dear Councillor Geddes,

Re: 28631397 – Smell – Refood LTD, Choats Road, Barking.

Thank you for your correspondence received 28 March 2023. I understand that your enquiry has been made on behalf of your constituent Pete Mason, regarding an issue with a smell on the Barking Riverside Estate. I can confirm that your enquiry was allocated to the Environmental Protection team to investigate. A case has been logged for an Officer to investigate the issues raised in your enquiry.

As this is part of an ongoing investigation, at present I am unable to provide you with any further information. I can however assure you that appropriate action will be taken in response to the outcome of the investigation.

I hope that this response clarifies the situation for you and if I can be of any further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

J.Kanji

Julia Kanji

Head of Service – Law and Governance