

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 21 February 2024
7.30pm via zoom

Attendance: 28

Meeting started: 7.35pm

AGENDA

1. Heating
2. Anti social behaviour
3. Handley Page Road
4. Update on Barking Riverside's masterplan
- 5 Any other business

Minutes and matters arising

Pete Mason, the chair of the Barking Reach Residents Association (BRRA), suggested that Matthew Lismore, the chair of the Weavers Quarter residents association, be a speaker at the next residents meeting to talk about the issues the residents have encountered while dealing with L&Q and the news about a balcony falling off from one of the buildings.

1. Heating

Pete introduced this item, by firstly referring to outrageous heating charges and maintenance costs for residents of John Miller and Leslie Hitchcok Houses, on Phase 1 of the estate. Charges were six times higher than the ones before. Admittedly, the ones before were low, but on the other hand, they don't have their usage metered. Costs are being charged in advance.

Pete said the heating was not properly maintained and the car park has been flooded for two years – has just today broken down or started flooding again – as a result of problems in the heating related water boost room. He believes it's an overflow situation, to which the management has been alerted to. Residents are being charged around £2,400 pa just for heating for a two-bedroom flat. He added that 40% of that is maintenance, and the rest is gas usage, which is still double what a two-bedroom flat is likely to be charged on average, according to British Gas.

Pete also mentioned that it was only in 2020 that new equipment was installed by the landlord (Adriatic) which should be under some sort of warranty, so the high charges were definitely not expected.

The gas bill was £105,000 last year for all of the blocks (within John Miller and Leslie Hitchcock). Several residents asked for a breakdown of what the maintenance charges are for but Adriatic (via its agent Homeground) provided no answers so far. Residents have suggested writing to Margaret Hodge MP so Pete drafted a letter, circulated it among residents and it was based on the points that residents were making. Sixty three residents signed, representing most of the dwellings and was sent off.

Pete said that the Landlord and Tenants act says in section 19, paragraph one, section b, that landlords are expected to provide a reasonable service, and if they don't, then the amount paid should be adjusted accordingly. The letter to Margaret Hodge highlighted that point. Pete said there is case law for this issue and now residents need to decide what the next steps are. Margaret replied to the letter asking if efforts were made to contact the landlord directly about this issue – which it was: Homeground replied with the standard response stating it would “endeavour to respond within three to five working days”.

Action: Pete will reply to Margaret Hodge stating Homeground's reply, as well as RMG's (the blocks' managing agent) response, which was vacuous, but will circulate to residents for feedback.

A resident asked what it would take for residents of Minter Road houses to change heating providers. Pete said that the RA also posed that question to Margaret Hodge.

Venilia suggested that Margaret should push for the houses to have individual heating/boilers set up independent from the two blocks' district/communal heating system.

On Phase 2 of the estate, in Fielders Quarter buildings, meanwhile, dwellings are not being heated properly. Pete has had communications with L&Q specifically regarding Bellway residents not having access to L&Q Energy customer services when their heating fails. He has had no response to the problem since 31 January. Pete mentioned the Landlord and Tenants act says in section 19, paragraph one, section b again, stating that no service was provided to affected Bellway residents. So they should be refunded for a portion of the heating, which might only be £0.50, but it's £0.50 a day for two years – 365 days is £182.5.

In addition to Bellway residents, L&Q residents have also suffered with inadequate heating. Several L&Q residents, including a committee member, kept careful records of temperatures so that there would be absolute proof that the rooms houses didn't meet the standards set by the National House Building Council (NHBC). L&Q had agreed to replace heaters and fix the problem, but several dwellings are still waiting for this to happen.

Action: Pete will request a response from L&Q to Bellway residents' access to customer services as well as a response on the schedule of planned works for fixing L&Q properties with adequate heating.

2. Anti social behaviour

Pete has contacted L&Q regarding a dangerous dog who has persistently found on the loose roaming the streets of Phase 1 of the estate, specifically Lawes Way, as reported last month. L&Q has responded saying they are investigating.

Venilia said that several residents on both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the estate have been complaining of anti-social behaviour specifically when some properties are rented out on Airbnb as 'party houses'. There have been reports of loud music, arguments, with both police and fire brigade involved.

Leaseholders are in breach of their leases as they have a clear clause stating that leaseholders can only rent a property for a minimum of six months under a contractual agreement with a tenant. These 'party houses' have been posing several problems for surrounding residents with noise, arguments, rubbish pileup/dumping and property damage to name a few, Venilia said.

It was discussed that some residents have reached out to BRL for help as they are the superior landlord on the estate, but ultimately, respective landlords, such as Adriatic and Bellway need to take responsibility. Pete said, in this case, RMG are the managing agent, and should be contacted after drawing up as comprehensive a list of dates and times as possible, with as much detail as possible of what happened.

Action: The RA agreed to draft a letter to RMG (Adriatic's agent), BRL and Tandem once residents provide further evidence of such behaviour and disruption.

3. Handley Page Road

Pete said that BRL has a proposal for parking on Handley Page Road. Sarah Phillips, BRL's head of estates, is leading this and is in close contact with the RA for feedback and discussions over such proposals.

The RA has sent BRL alternative proposals to BRL's, which the committee discussed at great length.

Hopefully there is an agreement reached and concrete plans are shared with the residents. The RA is still pushing for residents to have the ability to have visitors in the area, as well as two or four hours of parking. The Minter Road car park is also available during the night for residents but it's not signposted – this is another thing the RA has asked BRL to do.

4. Update on Barking Riverside's masterplan

Venilia kicked off the discussion about BRL, the estate developer, going through a revamp of the master plan for the area. There is a planning application in place to evolve and refresh the existing master plan – which includes elements which are now over 16 years old – to make sure it is flexible and sustainable, whilst delivering more vitally needed homes for the borough.

As part of this refresh, BRL is engaging with local residents by conducting a series of events – meeting in person and through online sessions. These sessions give residents the opportunity to talk about what the plans are for the local area for the future, with a chance to state what is most needed and what residents want to see and have on the estate.

The next resident engagement event is next Wednesday, a free dinner at the Rivergate centre at 7pm. There is a dedicated [website](#) for all the information regarding the application and the feedback from residents gathered so far, as well as any future events.

5 Any other business

Pete mentioned that by 2035 people will be forced to use only electric cars and that one of the RA's objections to BRL's plans for Handley Page Road was that there were no plans for electric vehicle charging points, something which the RA strongly supports.

The next meeting is on 20 March 2024.

Meeting ended 9.00pm