

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 27 January 2021
7.30pm, online video conference

Attendance: 29

Meeting started: 7.30pm

The agenda: was agreed.

Agenda

1. Heating & Hot Water
2. Cladding & Council's Fire Enquiry
3. Campaign for Residents' Association Recognition
4. Any Other Business

Minutes and matters arising

Minutes from the last meeting were not circulated, but Pete Mason (chair) went through each item. Governance of CIC – Pete explained the motion put forward at the last meeting. It had been agreed without amendment. The next meeting for the CIC Learning Forum is on 11 February.

Pete noted that it had been a busy month for the residents' association (RA): the RA has sent 19 items of correspondence since the last meeting and received more than 50 emails.

Matters arising

Pete mentioned the annual general meeting (AGM). He noted that the AGM was due in June, and that last year's meeting was cancelled in June due to the first lockdown. He reported that the RA committee discussed the prospect of being forced to cancel the forthcoming one, or plan for either a social distanced or online one. Last June the RA had undertaken to hold an AGM "only when residents consider it safe to do so" and the committee decided it must still abide by that. He stated that the committee sought feedback on this position, and asked residents to feedback if they have any views. There were no objections.

1. Heating & Hot Water

Barking Reach Resident Association (RA) committee member Adam reported that 60% of properties on Rhodes Mansion had their radiators replaced – 7 properties still had heating issues, and a number of properties also had hot water issues. He is going through a litigation process against L&Q for not providing heating and is also claiming potential compensation, but L&Q has not offered anything as yet. He spends around £100 a month on heating (1 person on a 2-bed flat). He has requested that L&Q carry out thermal readings and air tightness tests and an independent heating survey.

Another resident from Northgate Road said his radiators had been changed but is finding it difficult to keep his house warm – he is spending almost £200 per month on heating. No heating on ground floor.

A resident who is about to move to a Northgate Road property asked what could be done going forward to avoid all these problems she is hearing about even before she has signed her lease. She also mentioned that she is prepared to challenge L&Q before she signs her contract.

It was agreed that residents had been far too patient with L&Q on matters of lack of heating provision since these same problems have been happening for at least 4 years in other building on the estate. It was agreed that the MP, councillors and the press should be informed of this and that a new independent heating survey is carried out on the flats in the buildings that are still suffering from loss of heating.

Adam reported that L&Q had carried out a survey since the substantial complaint sent by the RA in March 2020, but a new one was indeed necessary. The chair reported that the March email was cc'd to the press

and MP, and resulted in an agreement to replace all the radiators across phase two, but this was delayed into the winter. So the RA wrote again on 8 December 2020 complaining about heating and hot water failing across the Barking Riverside estate, cc to press, MP, councillors, and entered into a long correspondence with Laura Cravitz subsequently. This accelerated the radiator replacement scheme, but as reported, a number of flats were still poorly heated.

For a resident on Rhodes Mansion, there has been intermittent hot water since 31 December. The resident has made a formal complaint about L&Q but has gone nowhere so far.

ACTION: RA to draft further correspondence with the MP, BRL, council and media demanding a new independent heating survey of flats that are still without adequate heating.

A resident from Pedley House created an excel table for each of his property rooms to prove that the time it takes for his property to heat up and the level of temperature is not acceptable to NHBC standards. He has filed a report with NHBC since Bellway is non responsive. He will send the excel document with his findings to NHBC and wait until the beginning of February for a response.

The chair reported that half of Dalston House (Caspian Quarter) had their heating supply cut off today because of an intermittent gas supply. Several residents contacted National Grid after their communications with Encore reporting the issue with the gas supply led to nothing. National Grid treated the fault as an emergency, arrived within an hour, cut the gas and provided heaters and hot plates to residents. A resident from Dalston House reported that a gas engineer had been onsite today and that the issue had been reported to Bellway two and a half years ago.

2. Cladding & Council's Fire Enquiry

Venilia Amorim, treasurer, updated residents on cladding replacement for phase 1 properties: one pilot property on Galleons Drive had scaffolding put up in preparation for cladding replacement, but nothing more had happened until now. The deadline for residents to comment, accept or reject the cladding proposal is 28 February, which is also the date in which the pilot homes should be completed.

Regarding Caspian Quarter's ACM cladding Pete said that residents were still waiting for the survey's report from Encore. Committee member Joanna said Bellway had confirmed that the cladding used is B2 rated, not A2 rated as previously stated – which means the report must say that remedial works are necessary.

Pete said that the government's building safety fund doesn't cover all expenses. He proposed the following resolution:

Government building fund shortfall should not be paid by leaseholders

If the Caspian Quarter requires remediation, huge costs will likely be involved in the works to remove unsafe materials.

Encore have indicated they will apply to the government building fund and have registered with the NHBC.

This residents' association has already voted that, failing these options, Bellway should pay.

We reaffirm that residents must not be made to pay.

We reaffirm that if the government building fund does not cover the costs fully, the NHBC should cover the costs, and in any case, Bellway and Adriatic should make clear that they will ensure that residents do not pay.

They are the ones profiting from putting people's lives at risk. They should pledge to underwrite the works if there is any shortfall.

Resolution passed.

Pete mentioned that the council had concluded and published their own inquiry into the fire at Samuel Garside House. He said that time now prevented a fuller statement on the council report, which he had

posted to the residents Facebook page and group, but could only briefly say that the residents-led investigation looked at the causes and called Bellway and the landlord Adriatic to account, whereas the council report states that these bodies complained that residents were interfering with their work by pursuing investigations into causes, which he thought outrageous.

The council report focuses on the aftermath of the fire, and in that sense compliments the residents report. The council did immediately step in, and provide support for residents. However, it concludes that there needs to be more community engagement, yet does not even acknowledge the residents' in-depth inquiry, with its website, 20 or so interviews with residents and lengthy detailed report on the events running up to the fire and the fire itself. The council leader and councillors were well aware of the inquiry, as the council leader was going to attend a resident-led report presentation in June 2020 but pulled out at the last minute. This had angered residents.

3. Campaign for Residents' Association Recognition

Pete suggested that the RA should start the recognition process for Caspian Quarter. He noted that the RA can win recognition if 50% of leaseholders confirm they want to become members of the RA, stating full name and address. A recognition sub-committee had been formed with the view to organising a recognition campaign. All volunteers are welcomed.

Residents agreed.

4. Any Other Business

Pete mentioned that there were no updates yet on Caspian Quarter balconies.

A resident was concerned that the floor outside the bin storage room at Beach House was sinking. Because of that, the balconies on the ground-floor were showing cracks. Pete mentioned that the cracks could be a sign of subsidence affecting the outer fabric or brick facade of the building but not the concrete skeleton, and is not an indication of structural damage. The resident had reported the subsidence to Encore, and Encore had said was just outside so it was Pinnacle that was responsible, yet Pinnacle has done nothing.

Meeting ended 9.01pm