

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 22 March 2023
7.30pm via zoom

Attendance: 18

Guests:

John Jones, senior partner at Tandem, Barking Riverside estate manager

Gemma Houghton, property manager at Tandem

Sarah Phillips, estate director at Barking Riverside Limited (BRL)

Meeting started: 7.35pm

The agenda: the agenda as amended was agreed.

AGENDA

1. Tandem with guest speaker John Jones
2. GP Services
3. Police/security
4. Fire safety
5. BRL CIC update
6. Resolution
7. Any other business

Minutes and matters arising

Residents association (RA) chair Pete Mason opened the meeting and minutes of the last meeting were agreed as a true record.

Chris Salvage, a resident director for Pedley House, said the directors agreed a £78k reduction to the service charge estimated budget with Pinnacle and revised lower demands were issued this week.

1. Tandem with guest speaker John Jones

Sarah Phillips introduced herself as head of estates at Barking Riverside Limited (BRL). She's relatively new in her role, having joined recently.

John Jones of Tandem gave a brief introduction of when Tandem was appointed last July to replace Pinnacle Places as Barking Riverside estate.

He said that the team on site is now more established and also noted that it is important for residents to use the service desk to report issues directly to Tandem so it can track data. This can inform them of how many times incidents happened and therefore becomes a good source of ongoing information for Tandem to work from.

He said that there is a group of teams that Tandem works with, including estate manager, property manager, two Facilities managers, community staff and security based both at the Wilds and the Rivergate Centre.

He also reported that there are seven or eight people on site now, which includes litter collection and a number of other contractors in place, including regular pest control contractors. There is a gritting team in place that come out automatically in winter and lighting specialists on a proper maintenance contract.

The issue of pests has been raised regularly, John said. Where there have been reports of rodents or rats or mice, Tandem can tailor the responses a bit more carefully and they have been doing that with more contracted pest control, a more regular pest control, John said. Bait boxes are put down in areas where there are concerns.

On dangerous dogs, John was very sympathetic to the fact that it can and could become more of a concern and so he also encourages people to report it to both Tandem and police. He said Tandem has reiterated the procedures as much as possible with block managers, site staff, the helpdesk and residents to notify LBB and the police around any incidents involving dangerous dogs.

He said he has specifically contacted L&Q to raise concerns about specific homes under their management where dangerous dogs have been reported to be housed. L&Q has only very recently taken over properties previously managed by Southern Housing so L&Q may not be quite up to speed yet on the issue, but Gemma Houghton, property manager at Tandem, will follow this up again to encourage L&Q to take whatever action they can in this case.

Pete said that the residents association sent an email to Mark Kyle, estate manager at L&Q, about the dangerous dogs, updating him of the situation and requesting action. A reply was received very quickly assuring the RA that the issue was being addressed.

For works around the area, John mentioned that BRL is funding some of the updates to the Phase One infrastructure, for instance areas of paving, hard standing landscaping, some of which needed to be refreshed and upgraded paths, crossovers on some of the open areas.

On parking control, John said the team at BRL continue to review action required in relation to Handley Page Road. Sarah would most likely follow up on any of the next steps, particularly as that next phase of works on the site and the bridge from Crossness Road is completed and Handley Page Road is opened up as a bus route.

Sarah said that BRL is also engaging with the George Carey School regarding on how to safely drop off and pick up children from/to the school. She said BRL will soon pull together a programme with clear indication of what the likely timelines are going to be for any of those changes that are looking to take place and look to engage with residents on that as well.

John acknowledged that there are some important safety issues around access and the crossover from the Rivergate Square to play areas. He also highlighted that some of the curbs there have been damaged and are often blocked off due people parking. There are also fire hydrants that also need to be kept clear. There are some original planning issues because the area was designated for a bus route so there are certain restrictions that will have to be taken into account. John said that the changes to Handley Page Road will trigger other changes and these will happen within the next 12 months.

A resident asked about the parking enforcement companies patrolling the area and whether their contracts were up for review with residents' input. They should be in place to protect residents' spaces, not make money out of them.

John said that the review has been shelved for the moment because Tandem doesn't want to replace one parking enforcement company using a certain finance raising model (via tickets) with another that is using the exact same model and the result is, no difference in ticketing operation happens. The current enforcers (Link Parking on Phase One and PCM on Phase Two) will be looked at as the whole parking enforcement model and reviewed for the whole estate. There will be a consultation that will take place with residents, but there are also costs and other implications involved.

2. GP Services

Pete told the meeting of a walk-in session that occurred on Friday at Thames View's Thames Community Hub on Bastable Avenue, which was well attended.

Following an inquiry into the matter by the residents association (RA), Sarah McCready of BRL, said that: *BRL hadn't been directly involved in this initiative, bar the fact that we provide some funding for the Health Outreach Worker who is in post at Thames Life.*

When myself and David Harley attended the last RA meeting, I noted that the Estates Team at the CCG (now the ICS I believe) had mentioned to me that they would be keen to run some pop-up surgeries at the Rivergate Centre. This was during our discussions about a temporary GP facility but, as I noted in the meeting, I felt it was important that they confirm this directly.

I've put Cameron [Geddes, councillor] in touch with Louise Phillips at the NHS, who is now leading the ICS involvement in the Health Hub. I have asked Louise directly whether I can pass on her email to you so you can invite her to the next RA meeting, but sadly she hasn't replied to me yet.

I have a board meeting on Thursday, which Louise should be attending. I will make sure I raise liaison with yourselves at the meeting.

Venilia Amorim, the RA's secretary, also reported the health session that BRL is organising tomorrow at the Rivergate Centre from 6-8pm where a discussion on health provision will be held.

3. Police/security

Venilia informed the meeting that the RA had formed a neighbourhood watch group in December which has had confirmation from BRL that they would fund the project in terms of buying high visibility vests, whistles, torches, and so on. The RA is also pushing for an awareness campaign for residents to join as volunteers.

A WhatsApp group has been created where information of the area is shared with existing resident volunteers and the group usually alerts BRL and Tandem of anything unusual during patrols. In more serious cases, then it is reported to the police.

Venilia said the RA aware of antisocial behaviour at the Wilds car park and John is also aware of that, including the police's Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT), which continue to host the 'coffee with a coppa' sessions at The Wilds and at the Rivergate Centre.

Venilia said that at a recent 'coffee with a coppa' session she attended with another committee member, the police said they are patrolling but they usually go around in an unmarked vehicle every week around the estate. They have recently been more present at the Coop shop on Phase Two because there's been a couple of theft incidents around school times where kids go in groups and are a bit disruptive.

There was also a recent meeting with the SNT as part of a national programme by the Met Commissioner on improving the credibility of the Met police in London. PC Gary who patrols the whole of Thames View and Barking Riverside gave a presentation on how the police plan to "make things better". Venilia reported that he wasn't very optimistic, though as crime rates continue to increase and the force is still understaffed. He has plans for a ward panel to get more involved with the police on giving feedback and reviewing what the police should be taking more notice of in the area. He has and suggested two boards (one for each ward) are formed to get this started and meet at least quarterly.

Pete also said that Argent House is the hottest spot for car theft at the moment unfortunately because there is easy access to the car park. The RA has been pushing for a gate and CCTV so another email to Mark Kyle of L&Q needs to be sent out.

Shamar, a resident of Argent House and committee member, said that she has asked Mark for quotes for CCTV and the gate. She will need to follow up with him tomorrow as he returns from annual leave. She added that there had been some discussion around who owned the land where the gate is to be installed, that still needs to be clarified, but in the meantime L&Q will go ahead with the CCTV costing and installation.

4. Fire safety

Pete noted the sad news of the fire on Stern Close a couple of weeks ago and said the RA is pushing for more robust fire safety measures around the estate, including the retro-fitting of sprinklers and replacement of flammable cladding/materials in balconies by large landlords on the estate.

Zara, a resident of Caspian Quarter and a committee member, said that remediation works are continuing, with likely about 30% of balconies completed so far, based on a visual estimate.

Zara also reported that lately the Fire Brigade has been responding to emergency calls coming to the blocks but not knowing where the fire/emergency panels are. The RA has engaged with block manager Encore to acquire Premise Information Boxes (PIBs) and after a great deal of pressure, three will now be installed at a small cost to residents, following advice from the Fire Brigade. Residents are still asking for another three boxes so that each building of Caspian Quarter has one.

5. BRL CIC update

Venilia gave an update on the Barking Riverside Limited Community Interest Company (BRL CIC). There was an inaugural board meeting a couple of weeks ago (beginning of March), and all residents have now been appointed as directors for the board.

The initial model that was agreed with the Learning Forum was five residents and three directors from other stakeholders. The director from BRL is Matt Carpen, the council director is councillor Cameron Geddes, and Paul Miller would represent L&Q.

The five resident directors include Venilia, and Dean, who's a resident on Phase Two – both have been director observers for about a year and a half now. And the three other residents who have been appointed include RA committee member Nadine, and Phase One resident Serena and Phase Two resident Rebecca. Venilia said there had been some slight delays with registering the CIC with Companies House, unfortunately. It's the third time that BRL is putting the application forms through for registration as previously there were some technical questions that weren't answered properly.

The CIC is looking to appoint an independent chair sometime in May and then in July is when the old CIC, as it stands, will adopt the new board, once the application with Companies House is approved. Venilia said that the plan is then from June/ July that the new resident-majority board is then able to scrutinise the budget that will be presented by Tandem.

Venilia also mentioned the charity that is being established, but this is further down the line, towards October/November, possibly December time. The charity will take care of events for the community once it is registered with the Charities Commission.

6. Resolution

Pete said that on International Workers Day the Socialist newspaper prints various messages for May Day, where people exchange solidarity for the various struggles that they've been part of. The RA always places an advert on residents' battles on the estate, and wants to participate this year by sending a message mostly focused, first of all, demanding a GP service for Barking Riverside as a 'healthy new town', abolish leasehold owned by big landlords, abolish tax-haven landlords who are grabbing ground rent for hedge funds, and nationalise the top 10 home builders profiteering from building.

Pete also said the committee had discussed the inability of social housing companies like Southern Housing and L&Q to respond to tenants' queries (Pete informed the meeting he had spent over 90 minutes trying to contact Southern Housing to sort out an issue in the area) and in terms of planning regulation, which resulted in unsafe homes being built all around the estate.

Therefore, the RA committee believes such companies should engage in a mass home building programme of generally affordable, safe and secure, good quality homes and residents must hold them to account.

Regarding recent service charge increases due to energy bills and the insurance shooting up, the RA is also calling on building companies to be nationalised and push for greener solutions for energy.

The resolution (see appendix) was agreed with no objections. Pete reported that the RA had raised funds to proceed with posting it in the newspaper on May Day.

7. Any other business

A resident said she is having problems with Encore on Caspian Quarter (Farsby House) because of pest control, since her tenant has said they saw a mouse in the property. Encore maintains that it is not responsible for individual dwellings, and just community spaces. Pete suggested she gets in touch with the Farsby House resident representative as the RA may be able to help.

The next residents meeting is on Wednesday 26 April 2023 at 7.30pm

Meeting ended 9.10pm

Appendix

Resolution put to meeting to send an international workers day greeting to the Socialist Newspaper:-

Proposal to celebrate International Workers' Day, 1st May

May Day Greeting from Barking Reach Residents Association to the Socialist newspaper

The Barking Reach Residents Association sends May Day greetings to the Socialist newspaper, which has always supported and reported on our campaigns over the years.

- * We demand a walk-in GP service for our Healthy New Town.
- * Government to abolish leasehold for all homes leased by the big landlords, granting freehold (or commonhold for flats) to the leasehold owners without charge.
- * Abolish tax haven-based landlords who are grabbing ground rent for hedge funds.
- * Nationalise the top ten homebuilders profiteering from building unsafe and poorly finished properties;
- * Housing Associations to end the 30-60 minute call centre wait times and fix issues swiftly.
- * Councils have failed to stop the decades-long drift to deregulation and unsafe homes. They must engage in a mass home building programme of genuinely affordable, safe and secure, good quality homes. Residents must hold them to account.
- * Nationalise the insurance and energy industry to provide greener solutions for energy that in turn impact an affordable service charge to residents.
- * Sprinklers to be retrofitted into all blocks owned by large landlords such as Adriatic/Bellway, at the landlord's or builder's expense.