

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 28 April 2021
7.30pm via zoom

Attendance: 32

Meeting started: 7.30pm

The agenda: was agreed.

AGENDA

1. Bellway protest (fire safety)
2. Heating & hot water
3. Service charge
4. Parking
5. AOB

Minutes and matters arising

To add to Any Other Business: access to doctors' surgery.

1. Bellway protest (fire safety)

Joanna, committee member and resident of Caspian Quarter (CQ), said the CQ subcommittee was organising a Bellway protest opposite the local sales office on Fielders Crescent. The main demand is that Bellway pays for fire remediation (replacement of balcony decking) for all CQ buildings (6 in total). It will be held on Saturday at 11am. There has been engagement from the media – ITV has approached the RA to cover the protest as they have been following the cladding scandal in the past few weeks. Joanna said that for those residents attending to please observe COVID restrictions.

Chloe, committee member and resident of CQ, thanked all residents that donated to a fund organised to finance the protest. Almost £500 were raised in just a few days which will cover for flyers, banners and other protest-related costs.

Pete Mason, chair of the residents association (RA) said the matter of recognition should also be discussed. The RA representatives for CQ had a meeting with Encore's managing director Joaquim Fillola and estates manager Claire Lawlor. Cleaning was raised during the meeting and the RA reps asked for the cleaning company to be reviewed and/or replaced.

Pete also mentioned that Margaret Hodge MP organised a meeting with Encore, Bellway and Adriatic with BRL and the RA reps for Friday 30 April, the eve of the protest, to discuss fire safety.

Chloe said Encore emailed reps back today with dates for next meetings and plans for works on the balconies (see Addendum 1). This was a great success as many CQ residents kept sending the same emails to Encore requesting a timeframe for works to be carried out, in addition to Encore agreeing to meet with the RA.

Pete said that so far 191 CQ residents have signed the online recognition form. He added that the constitution will need to be amended because the law says that each leaseholder counts as one vote. The RA is open to all but needs to abide by the Landlord and Tenant Act 1995 to obtain full recognition.

2. Heating & hot water

Adam, committee member and resident of Rhodes Mansion, said that on 16 April L&Q and Bellway properties on phase 2 lost water at 8am without any prior notice and services only returned at 1.30am the

next day. No alternative provision was given by L&Q. The same issue occurred again the following Monday for a shorter period of time.

With regards to compensation, Adam said L&Q is looking into it as several residents have complained. They promised to answer within 2/3 weeks' time. Today residents received £100 credit for loss of all water, Adam said.

Pete said this is no coincidence happening on the day of the residents' meeting when surely L&Q staff know these issues would be discussed and a plan of action put in place. He added that this victory was only possible with the hard work lead by Adam and all residents that kept emailing L&Q customer services, mainly estates manager Laura Kravitz.

Adam said that there was a pressing concern for Bellway residents who had bigger issues into resolving lack of heating, water and hot water because they have no direct contact with L&Q. This is the case for residents of Pedley House.

Phill, committee member and resident of Pedley House, said this is because residents of Pedley House or any other Bellway property on phase 2 are not considered to be L&Q residents – L&Q does not hold records on residents of Pedley House.

Action – Pete to email John Joannou, L&Q director, demanding clarification and holding responsibility for services for Bellway residents.

Pete called on Ernest Websdale House (EWH) and Samuel Garside House (SGH) residents. Chika, committee member and resident of EWH, said that issues with heating persist and that there is a clear break down in communication between managing agent RMG and affected residents. Most residents are not getting heating or hot water and many are relying on their emersion system, which digs into electricity bills. RMG has told residents to use the immersion system until something is done. But nothing has been done so far.

Pete gathered a list of all people who didn't have hot water – more than a quarter of residents don't have hot water since the beginning of December 2020. He said it's important to also gain recognition on EWH. Pete said the committee needs to plan the next course of action.

Action: Pete to follow up on the previous email to RMG regarding lack of hot water.

3. Service charge

Pete mentioned that VAT was wrongly added to several service charge invoices – this was discussed in last residents meeting. One of the committee members originally spotted this in a previous invoice, raised it with Pinnacle, who said it was fine. The RA pursued this with the developer BRL (Pam Ross) who said that Pinnacle would credit those residents' accounts that were initially charged with VAT and a letter explaining this would go out to residents.

Pete insisted that VAT should not be added to residents' invoices. He also mentioned that this VAT charge was on estate service charge invoices and wasn't clear if VAT was also charged to residents living in blocks of flats.

Action: Pete to inquire about VAT charge added to block service charges

Pete also mentioned that several residents have requested invoices from respective managing agents, namely RMG and Encore. Some of these seem erroneous as residents have been charged for invoices that don't even pertain to the block they live in or costs/charges don't add up.

A committee member has decided to take his managing agent to a tribunal for erroneous invoices. It is a long and complicated process that requires a lot of research and preparation, but he has won a previous case against Pinnacle in a tribunal. If he wins, he would set a precedent for other residents willing to do the same.

4. Parking

Pete said he initiated a discussion on phase 2 and also on the RA's committee regarding visitor parking. He said there are two proposals for some solutions.

Pete said he has been writing about the environment for two decades and he thinks public transport should be one of the solutions to the pollution problem, however, the transition to clean/green energy is more complicated than that.

Pete said that putting extra parking spaces along Fielders Crescent would not be feasible because it is a main busy road that because too narrow if cars were to park on one side. Also, on the pavement, there is a cycling lane and it would be too dangerous to have cars parked where cycling go by. There are also swales along the road that act as a drainage system.

During the discussion it was proposed that the L&Q sales office staff car park (which has around 15 parking spaces) be made available to residents in the evenings and weekend at the very least.

Another suggestion was that on phase 1 the school staff car park was made available to residents in the evenings and weekends for a small charge. So maybe the Riverside School on phase 2 can also be approached for residents to make use of its staff car park during evenings and weekends.

Residents' visitors find it extremely difficult to find parking spaces, so these proposals would put pressure on L&Q at least for the staff car park.

A resident on phase 2 said when she bought a 1-bed flat she was never given the possibility of purchasing a parking bay. The L&Q sales office had told her that eventually bays would be available to buy and there would be parking on Fielders Crescent but this has turned out to be false information. When the resident followed up, L&Q then told her she would not be able to buy a space. The resident lives alone and relies on family visiting her. She added that it is ridiculous that there are only eight visitor bays for 400 properties on phase 2 currently. Not being able to purchase a parking bay with L&Q excludes 1-bed properties and with the opening of the station being pushed back a year, it makes it even harder to travel or commute in and out of the estate.

Pete asked the resident if she could be a part of a parking sub-committee to start the process of contacting L&Q about this.

Action: Pete to set up a parking sub-committee / speak to L&Q about staff car park and BRL about parking on the school's car park.

To elaborate, Adam said that the swales are situated on Fielders Crescent. The swales (green areas where the trees are) are smaller than a general carparking space. If these were to be turned into parking spaces, the cycle path would have to be encroached along with the addition of doors opening onto the cycle route – planning would not allow for this due to the health and safety issues. He said the cycle path would have to be removed or alternatively push the cycle path further into the pedestrian walkway.

Also, the double lines on the road prevent the whole road from turning into chaos with school parking, construction workers and presumably the train station and clipper. Whilst Adam agrees parking is an issue, he can't see how it will be retrospectively corrected now buildings are in place. Space has to be reallocated or repurposed from the under the viaduct or from the sales office.

Venilia Amorim, treasurer, added that these visitor parking proposals would be a temporary fix until transport links are more established on the estate.

5. AOB

Venilia said that there had been a lot of discussion between residents about the doctor's surgery in Thames View and how little availability there is for booking an appointment. She explained that there are plans for a health hub near the Riverside School. It was being designed with residents input along with the Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) and the council, led by the developer BRL.

Venilia was on the resident panel which was meeting quarterly until the 1st lockdown last year. The last time the panel met virtually was in June last year - nothing had been changed since then. The original plan was to have it ready in 2024/2025 (likely delayed unfortunately) built opposite the Riverside School in which students will have direct access to the hub's facilities as well.

It has been suggested that a walk-in type of clinic with GPs and nurses should be on site, along with a pharmacy and more specialised units such as blood testing, x-rays, physiotherapy, etc. It will be a 4/5 storey building with a pool and other communal areas such as a (suggested) roof garden, spaces of worship, meeting spaces, a coffee shop and an area for pop up businesses promoting healthy living, like for example a pop-up healthy smoothies shop - again, all still at planning/ideas/suggestions stage.

Action: Pete to write to Healthwatch raising the concern about the difficulties about booking a GP appointment.

Meeting ended 8.53pm

Addendum 1

