

**Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes**  
**Wednesday 24 March 2021**  
**7.30pm, Google Meet**

**Attendance:** 48

**Meeting started:** 7.30pm

**The agenda:** was agreed.

**AGENDA**

1. Recognition
2. Cladding/Fire Safety
3. Service charge
4. The by-election
5. Heating and hot water
6. AOB

**Minutes and matters arising**

Minutes from last meeting agreed.

No matters arising.

Add mice infestation to the agenda under 'any other business'.

**1. Recognition**

Joanna, Caspian Quarter resident and member of the Residents' Association (RA) committee, gave an update on the RA's recognition process. There is an ongoing drive to have the RA recognised specifically for Caspian Quarter (CQ) as six blocks of flats share the same leaseholder (Adriatic Land 9). The RA is very close to the required minimum of residents signing up for RA membership for the recognition process to go ahead and the committee is still pushing for a few more residents to join.

She added that Encore, the managing agent, is aware of it as they are willing to cooperate with the RA. The RA has nominated three block reps (Joanna, Zara and Chloe) who will correspond with Encore on behalf of the residents and RA.

Pete mentioned that the RA's drive for recognition immediately drove Encore to be ready to communicate with the RA directly.

Pete Mason, RA's chair, gave an update on Right to Manage (RTM) processes around the estate. Samuel Garside House (SGH) has achieved the necessary number of leaseholders signed up for RTM to proceed. Leslie Hitchcock House (LHH) and John Miller House (JMH) also have 50% of leaseholders signed up for RTM, including the houses in the surrounding area.

Ernest Websdale House (EWH) doesn't have a majority of leaseholders signed up because the majority of households are owned by Southern Housing. It may be legally impossible to proceed with RTM. The freeholder is Adriatic Land 3.

Pete added that it is important then to pursue recognition in other areas of the estate, including houses and blocks that cannot qualify for RTM, just as the CQ recognition process is established.

**2. Cladding/Fire Safety**

Pete mentioned an Encore meeting for CQ held recently and residents on all six blocks have been debating about what should be done with regards to the remedial works needed.

The RA has set several demands from Encore with regards to the blocks' flammable balconies and cladding and missing cavity barriers:

\* Force a response from NHBC/Bellway on clear timeframe to rectify what is needed;

- \* Encore/Homeground is intending to meet with Bellway, so the RA is requesting designs and quotes for balcony replacement to be presented to residents, in addition to a timeframe as well;
- \* The RA expects at least two different quotes are supplied and would like to review the companies supplying the quotes;
- \* Buildings insurance quote timeframe. Would contracts be renewed with the same insurer?

Pete suggested maybe a CQ meeting would be suitable for further discussion, and asked comments from residents.

Joanna mentioned that Claire Lawlor, Encore's estate manager, is on holiday until after Easter, and in the meantime, residents contacting Encore should contact the managing director directly (Joaquim Fillola).

A resident talked about the recent fire safety report and stated that the priority should be changing the balcony flooring.

Pete agreed that many residents are faced with escalating mortgage costs and the RA needs to impress on Encore the urgency of this matter. However, he stressed that a decision should not be rushed as some residents don't want to or cannot afford to pay the £2,600 estimated as a minimum for remedial works.

Another resident said that even if residents end up paying for it via service charges, Bellway should pay it back. Pete agreed and said the RA is prepared to back residents that don't want to pay with a protest outside Bellway's sales office.

Venilia Amorim, the RA's treasurer, said that even though the circumstances were different with what happened at SGH because of the fire a couple of years ago, BRL has pushed the builders (Bellway mainly) to change the cladding on both SGH and EWH but also on the town houses at no cost to residents, so that sets a precedent.

Pete agreed that pressure should be put on the developer BRL as well to force Bellway to be held responsible.

**Action: Pete agreed to write to Matt Carpen, managing director of Barking Riverside Limited, cc press, MP, councillors, Encore, regarding putting pressure on Bellway to abide by its promise to make safe all the homes on Barking Riverside which it built, with no cost to residents.**

On the wooden cladding around properties of phase 1, Pete mentioned that the deadline for residents to apply for replacement with hardie plank had long passed (28 February). The pilot houses are not yet ready to be inspected. In a meeting with Pam Ross, BRL's estates manager, Pete asked that the deadline should be extended so that the pilot homes could be viewed as planned but she did not accept this.

**ACTION: Nuno Amorim to write to Matt Carpen (BRL) for an update on cladding removal on Phase 1**

A resident asked which other buildings within Barking Riverside needed to consider action regarding cladding issues. She lives in LHH and is not sure if she needs to be concerned about cladding too as the building is mainly constructed of brick but there is also material used on the walls that is orange in colour and not sure if that is classed as flammable cladding.

Venilia said Margaret Hodge MP had been contacted and she was due to write to the landlord asking for an update.

Joanna noted that on legal action, residents should pursue a claim against the builder as individuals or a group of residents but not via the RA.

### **3. Service charge**

Pete said that a resident on SGH following the RA's advice received three years' worth of invoices from Pinnacle Places. More than 600 invoices were supplied. The resident found that many invoices were not concerning her block, SGH, several invoices were missing and Pinnacle could not prove that services were undertaken. There were also invoices issued for services immediately after the fire, at a time when most

residents were displaced and residing elsewhere. Many invoices looked like they were related to the fire and should have been passed on to the insurer and not residents. The resident is disputing these.

Pete spoke to the Leaseholder Advisory Service (LAS) and was advised that managing agents should not be using the excuse that accounts are not yet finalised to avoid sending invoices to residents as requested. Also, Pete said that in relation to missing s20 notices, the LAS advised that if the managing agents don't provide those within the 18-month period since the costs arose, it would make a good case for the First Tier Tribunal.

A resident asked about arrears based on service charge disputes – Pete said that the LAS advised to pay but under protest as otherwise a leaseholder would be breaking their lease. Residents can always recuperate their money after if they win through the First Tier Tribunal, which costs around £100.

Another resident mentioned the costs passed on to residents on JMH and LHH regarding heating maintenance. Pete said the LAS advised that a joint application (multiple residents) can be made for this via the First Tier Tribunal.

#### **4. The by-election**

Venilia noted that there is a by-election happening on 6 May, due to one of the councillors within Thames Ward (Bill Turner) stepping down. She said many residents including RA committee members have been pushing Pete to stand as councillor. In fact, the RA had been discussing elections for the past two or three years, and this is a great opportunity to support Pete as he has been a resident of the area for many years and, as chair of the residents association, has always been very engaged with the community, in Barking Riverside, Thames View and Scrattons Farm.

Pete thanked the committee for its endorsement and stressed that having someone in the council supporting residents' voices would be a tremendous achievement. He is a member of the Socialist Party, which is in an electoral coalition with the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition. With the SGH fire, for instance, the RA called an emergency meeting, forcing the council to take up some responsibility for pushing BRL to do the right thing and by also conducting their own investigation. This proves that the council can be influential even on private estates.

Taking the discussion on the cladding scandal – on how to force Encore to move forward – Pete as councillor would have more influence to force them to do the right thing. He would not resign as chair of the association and would not have to tend to matters outside the ward. Pete said an election committee would be started and he would need residents willing to volunteer to campaign and put in the work (knocking on doors, talking to people).

Residents will need to register to vote if not registered, and George Carey School will most likely be a polling station.

Pete's views include:

- \* Make all homes fire safe – builders and developers must cover the costs
- \* Provide adequate heating and hot water to residents
- \* Opposes CPZ scheme affecting Thames View

*For more info see appendix 1 – Pete's initial statement*

Nuno Amorim, the RA's secretary, stated there was another councillor candidate, Andrew Boff, who was invited to speak.

Andrew said that the problem in Barking and Dagenham is that there has been a Labour government of the council for too long with no opposition, with no one challenging them. He added that people should be thinking about a vote that empowers residents. For Barking Riverside, he said he would request monthly meetings with BRL and holding them to account on issues raised by residents.

Pete challenged Andrew's points.

Residents called for moving on to the next item.

## **5. Heating and hot water**

Pete said Robert Lewis House (RLH) had heating and hot water failure tonight, the third time this year. A resident said the heating was definitely out today and received a text message from L&Q regarding a £4 credit.

Venilia mentioned that the text message was mistakenly sent to Rhodes Mansions residents, who unfortunately have also been suffering from lack of heating. Rhodes Mansions residents subsequently received another message from L&Q explaining that it was a mistake.

Pete sent an email to John Joannou, L&Q managing director, for an update.

## **6. Any Other Business**

On mice contamination, in CQ, a resident said he heard mice crawling on walls and ceiling. He suggested that insulation might not been done correctly.

Another resident said she hired an independent pest controller who could not identify where the mice were coming from, but mentioned the mice were inside the cavity walls.

Pete said the managing agent handles a pest control fund which should be spent treating the blocks accordingly. Pete mentioned this should be brought directly to Encore.

A resident mentioned the Ripple Nature Reserve which is closed due to contamination for several years. She volunteers with the group Roding Rubbish and asked for more information on when that will open to residents. Venilia suggested contacting Thames Ward Community Project (TWCP), which has been active on green spaces.

**Meeting ended 9.01pm**

## Appendix 1

Pete's initial statement about him standing for Councillor of Thames Ward

Dear residents,

**I will be standing for the council in the by-election on 6th May.**

-- A message from the chair of the residents association, Pete Mason

*The Barking Reach Residents Association committee have unanimously nominated me to stand in the by-election in our ward.*

**The election will take place on the 6th May...**

As chair of the residents association, I have campaigned on countless issues on the Barking Riverside estate, and won a few too.

We believe it is time to elect someone who truly represents our estate.

That is why residents have asked me to stand.

## **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

*Who are you and when and where is the election?*

My name is Pete Mason and I was elected chair of the residents association four years ago. The election is on the 6th May 2021. The area south of the A13, called Thames Ward. The Barking Riverside estate and Thames View are the two biggest estates in this very large ward.

*Would you have to resign as chair?*

No, on the contrary, that would be the last thing I'd do.

*Would you have to attend to matters beyond the ward?*

No. Within the ward, Cameron and Josie will almost certainly concentrate on Thames View, but if a serious issue comes up that affects residents there we will discuss involvement there, as we have before on several occasions.

*Would you work full time for the council?*

No, most councillors are not full time. Like me they hold down a job, and do council work outside working hours.

*Chances of success?*

That's a big question. An important part of this depends on our campaign. The Labour party have held the ward for decades and will have residues of support, although that support is continually ebbing away. Andrew Boff, a long-standing opponent of ours, is a GLA councillor and is a serious and experienced opponent who has already issued a leaflet.

If we want to win, we must convince our neighbours and friends – everyone – to vote for me on May 6th, and if they are not registered to vote, to do that now.

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*What are your policies?*

- Cladding scandal: make all homes fire safe!
- Builders and developers must cover the cost!
- Fix the heating and hot water!
- End unfair service charges!
- Residents across the Barking Riverside estate still live in fear of fire, and while the wooden cladding is being replaced at the builders and developers cost, in the Caspian Quarter we demand that Bellway remediate the balconies and defective cavity barriers at no cost to residents.

These are our central demands, but they are not limited to these and I invite you to submit your thoughts on demands that we should raise on this estate. We will form a committee of residents to discuss our campaign and take it forward.

Beyond our estate, across Thames ward, parking schemes are threatening or have happened already.

I campaigned for years against a scheme on our estate which left residents furious at the loss of parking spaces that they had a right to. Immediately I was elected chair, we won back the right of residents to park exclusively in their own bay, which had been taken away. Then after a long campaign, we won 106 parking spaces.

I say that the CPZ scheme in Thames View estate is just a money-making scheme!

Newlands Park redevelopment- we want public housing with gardens not private housing. Genuinely affordable housing for people not for profiteers.

- Abolish leasehold sales of all new dwellings and allow existing leaseholders to become full owners (freehold or commonhold) with a transparent process and no fees.
- Remove Adriatic!
- Safe and robust housing for all at affordable prices!
- Developers and landlords to:-
- Increase security across the estate.
- Improve community engagement, particularly more support for youth activities and facilities.

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*What are your wider views?*

I condemn the 4.99% rise in council tax when people are struggling to make ends meet in the lockdown. I condemn the appalling failure of our government to deal effectively with the Covid epidemic, causing many thousand extra lives to be lost.

I support the nurses' demand for 15% and the RCN's 12.5% claim at the least. It's a disgrace that the Labour party is not supporting that and suggesting an insulting 2%. The Conservative government is offering an even more insulting 1%.

I stand for a minimum wage of £15 an hour and a 35 hour week without loss of pay (overtime consolidated into the hours).

Beyond that, I stand for public ownership rather than privatisation of our health, housing, education and transport, which is a hugely popular demand with the population.

The only electoral coalition that supports all this is the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition (TUSC), which my party, the Socialist Party, is part of. My party has already endorsed me to stand and offered to come and help in any way required, as they always have.

TUSC is against all cuts in services, and does not accept that the council had a choice only between massive rate rises and massive cuts. Here in east London, in the past Poplar council famously campaigned for more money for their borough, which led to a substantial and permanent improvement to the lives of the people living there. In Liverpool, now wrecked by the current Labour administration, in the past my party led the council, campaigned for a massive improvement in housing, and won £60million in extra funds.

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*What advantage would it give us?*

There is considerable prestige to a councillor, so the main advantage would be giving us a louder voice. I would propose motions to the council and inform the media. The media give extra coverage to an elected councillor, and this would highlight our campaigns.

So it would raise the prestige of the residents association. It opens doors, and presumably I would have the right to access information that we otherwise have to press councillors to get us. Council officers are in general accountable to councillors.

The Labour party controls the council exclusively, and will likely shut me out of all committees and very possibly none of them would dare second a motion I moved for fear, quite literally, of expulsion. But that won't stop the media from reporting on motions I will insist on moving, and this might shame Labour to move their own motion in similar terms.

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*Is this a new departure for the Residents Association?*

Not at all. The residents association has discussed standing in each council election as they have come up, met and debated within councillors on the question, forced them to retreat in the face of elections, formed sub committees before for elections, and in 2015 I sought and won the support of the residents association committee for Joseph Mambuliya, London underground cleaner and candidate for TUSC against Margaret Hodge, who was supported by his trade union and all but two of the trade unions representing council workers.

The residents association organised a hustings in the general election at the Rivergate centre, where I spoke as both secretary of the residents association and election agent for Joseph.

*If elected what responsibilities would you have?*

To attend around 8 council meetings a year, is the minimum I believe. Very likely nothing beyond that. The Labour party is a dictatorship these days and it's likely that most councillors will be frightened even to be seen talking to me, let alone invite me to sit on committees.

*What party do you stand for?*

As stated above, the Socialist Party is part of the Trade Unionist and Socialist Coalition, which was the sixth biggest party contesting the 2015 elections. I have always made clear that this is my party, especially at election times. This will be on the description on the ballot sheet under my name, and the logo should be on election material, but need not be prominent. Find out more at [www.tusc.org.uk](http://www.tusc.org.uk)

*If you won, what would you do with the £10,000 remuneration?*

Apart from legitimate compensation from any lost earnings due to attending council meetings, and legitimate expenses, I would donate the rest to supporting campaigns on the estate, across the ward, and in the wider area, and I would present an account to each residents' association meeting of expenses. My party and I believe that representatives should not be on a higher wage than those they represent, and should not make financial gains from being a representative – that's how people get out of touch, and get bought off.

*My election agent*

I am very grateful to Shabana Qazi for agreeing to be my election agent. Habib and Shabana Qazi have been fighting with me for six or seven years, ever since residents in phase one suddenly found there were double yellow lines all round where they parked, removing their legal "right of easement", and I led a subcommittee to battle against them.

Habib and Shaban attended that committee, gathered essential petition information with others that enabled us to prove the support we had, and how much residents were suffering, organised their own residents meeting, got a barristers opinion that was crucial to us, and ensured the residents association got the leadership it deserved, by organising my election as chair and my first committee.

And it was during that battle on parking, we told the councillors that we would stand against them in 2018 unless they reversed their support for the landlord and backed us. So they did, undermining the landlord. Unfortunately, since then, the Labour-led Council ignored our independent residents inquiry into the Samuel Garside House fire when they did their own enquiry, allowed the landlords and builders to blame residents in that report without placing the blame where it lay, has had to be led by the nose to oppose the landlords on every issue, and nationally has driven out the remaining good socialists, failed to back the teachers and now the nurses. On this estate, we need new leadership.

In accordance with local election law, I state that this notice is promoted by my election agent Shabana Qazi, 34 Lawes Way, Barking, IG11 0PD, on behalf of Pete Mason, 29 Riverdale Close, Barking IG11 0GQ.