

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 24th July 2019

7:30pm, Rivergate Centre

Attendance: 29

Guests: Paul Kershaw, Grenfell Campaigner
Shaun Murphy, Solicitor (gave apologies for absence)

Meeting started 7.40pm

The agenda was agreed.

Minutes and matters arising: the minutes from the previous meeting were agreed.

1. Paul Kershaw, Grenfell Campaigner, Social Housing Action Campaign (Shac)

Paul started off by highlighting the importance of residents working together to demand what they need from the developer and builders after the fire. Looking back at Grenfell, there are still some residents living in temporary and inappropriate accommodation and residents are still waiting for the full report from the inquiry and the Fire Brigade on the specific causes of the fire, two years on. 150 tower blocks still have flammable cladding of the 500 originally identified after the Grenfell fire.

Paul also mentioned the need to change legislation, for instance on sprinklers. 90% of buildings in England that need them, don't have them because builders argue that it's simply not profitable for them to install and maintain. Recommendations to install sprinklers in high-rises date back to the inquiry into the 2009 Lakanal House fire in South London have been widely ignored by landlords and politicians. For minimal savings, most builders will opt for cheaper, quite often flammable, materials. This is where the industry needs to be properly regulated. Paul highlighted the way that deregulation had impacted fire safety under recent governments. For instance, fire risk assessment inspection could now legally be completed in 30-45 minutes whereas in the past they needed to take hours.

Paul noted the importance of unity and using a sense of urgency to address all these safety issues with the right companies and people. He mentioned that Shac has influenced the newly elected MP in the Grenfell area to support or help organise a conference where local community groups will start their own inquiry into the Grenfell fire.

Following questions from residents, Paul said that residents were supposed to have access to all relevant fire/risk assessment documentation. These should be circulated by housing associations and managing agents/landlords to all residents. Landlords and housing associations are resistant to this, saying that residents would not understand them, when in fact they understand them all too well. Residents should also draw up a list of simple demands that can make a difference. Chair Pete Mason confirmed this and stated that the RA's initial demands were for the removal of all flammable cladding materials around the estate and a full fire/risk assessment type 4 be conducted to several properties around the estate.

2. Shaun Murphy, Solicitor

He sent his apologies and was not present at the meeting. He had attended the earlier Samuel Garside House meeting on the 18th July.

3. SGH & EWH updates

Mainly SGH residents noted that their date for leaving their current temporary accommodation was nearing and suggested another protest for Saturday 27th July. Residents agreed to a 'camping' protest on Patrick Park by SGH. Residents should mount their tents up in protest at the issue at hand, which is the likes of Southern Housing and Homeground forcing residents into properties that are not fit for purpose. Residents currently in

temporary accommodation have seen their stay postponed from 13th July to 27th July, but with very little progress in terms of works being carried out in the damaged flats or even credible fire/risk assessments. It was agreed to produce more banners, leaflets and for the media to be contacted for coverage.

4. Cladding Estate-Wide

Secretary Nuno Amorim shared that the RA has written a letter to BRL demanding an up date on the estate-wide cladding, as things seem to have stagnated since the fire. Matt Carpen, director of BRL, replied to the RA stating that independent fire engineers had been appointed and instructed to review external timbers on houses within the estate. He also mentioned that once that work had been fully completed (likely to take around three weeks) then the findings will be shared with home owners. Matt's correspondence with the RA was not clear as to how residents will be informed though.

5. Other Safety Issues

This point was not addressed at this meeting.

6. Any Other Business

None declared.

Date of next meeting is 21st August 2019.

Meeting closed at 9.15pm.