

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 30th January 2019

7:30pm, Rivergate Centre

Attendance: 31

Speakers: Michelle Ivemy from RMG, Simon Wasser from Sustrans; Matt Scott from TWCP

Meeting started 7.40pm

The agenda was agreed.

Minutes and matters arising: the minutes were agreed.

1. Michelle Ivemy from RMG

Michelle introduced herself and also Zoe Pickering, and clarified to residents the areas that RMG is responsible for (Ernest Websdale House, Samuel Garside House, John Miller House, Leslie Hitchcock House and Stephen Tuckwell House, and the houses that are in the squares that these flats border on or are adjacent to, such as Chillworth Place, Drake Close and some sections of Galleons Drive). She also noted that both her and Zoe are on site every Monday and Thursday.

Michelle noted that she would like to start steering groups for each of the blocks of flats she manages. These groups will be able to represent the residents in discussions on the budget for next year's service charge so that the right level of service is agreed, such as cleaning. Michelle explained that certain items of expenditure are not negotiable, such as health and safety. This will mean communication will be faster and more efficient between RMG and the residents. Michelle noted that RMG presented its first resident meeting the week before and said minutes of the meeting would be available to both residents and the RA soon.

Michelle also noted that the handover from Pinnacle is still incomplete and the company's 2017/2018 accounts has not yet been finalised. Financially speaking, that would impact on how RMG will bill residents. She explained that under Adriatic's leases, the company owns blocks of flats but also some rows of houses within various zones. At the moment, only residents from flats will be billed for their service charge, while house residents will see their bills come at a later stage, once RMG receives all due information from Pinnacle.

Michelle wants to maintain a close relationship with Pinnacle and will organise a walk with Pinnacle staff to show them where parts of the estate she is in charge or need improvement.

Residents argued that the cleaning standard was not good enough on Samuel Garside House and asked if residents would be reimbursed for the poor service during the takeover from Pinnacle. Michelle noted that this would not be possible and informed residents that new contracts with cleaners would start in February.

Michelle also informed residents that because the accounts from Pinnacle are delayed, this has caused RMG to see a shortfall in its own accounts. RMG is considering asking for a loan to Homeground/Adriatic. Once that is sorted, there will be scope for regular maintenance projects. RMG is just performing basic maintenance and running repairs at the moment.

Residents asked about heating and hot water, but Michelle confirmed that RMG is not responsible for providing heat/hot water or maintaining the systems in place in any of the houses/blocks it manages.

2. Simon Wasser from Sustrans

Simon talked to residents about Sustrans' latest project: Thames Ward Greenway. He gave a brief presentation on what the project will entail and is asking for all residents who are willing to participate to volunteer their thoughts and ideas for the project.

Simon also shared the findings of Sustran's online survey for this specific project, which showed so far that:
- 93.6% are very or extremely interested in a better path surface to improve access for people with pushchairs, people on bicycles, wheelchair users, etc:

- 78.7% are very or extremely interested in educational activities for children;
- 78.3% are very or extremely interested in information and education boards;
- 69.5% are very or extremely interested in children's play facilities.

Sustrans is still receiving submissions for the online survey.

Sustrans will also continue to run public co-design sessions for this project, with the next one on Wednesday 20th February from 3pm-7pm at George Carey School. This is during half term, and he would love to hear from as many children/families/residents as possible. All views can contribute towards the design of the space.

Residents from Estuary Close mentioned the lack of lighting in the area. Simon confirmed that Sustrans will be providing new lighting to Estuary Close, but is waiting for a sign off from the Council. Other residents also complained about flytipping/cleaning and asked who is responsible for clearing the surrounding areas near Estuary Close. Treasurer Venilia Amorim suggested it may be L&Q since the people committing flytipping reside on the new blocks of flats and houses on Minden Gardens.

Action: RA will contact L&Q regarding flytipping between Estuary Close and Minden Gardens.

3. Heating & Hot Water

Residents expressed their anguish and frustration regarding the lack of heating and hot water, especially at Robert Lewis House for the past few days. Some flats are experiencing, one or the other or both, with L&Q engineers claiming that the problem could be from individual flats.

Action: RA to write to Laura Cravitz from L&Q for an update on the maintenance of the heating system at Robert Lewis House. It will also claim for some sort of compensation to those residents affected.

Chair Pete Mason also mentioned that residents on several houses (Samuel Garside House, Ernest Websdale House, Leslie Hitchcock House and John Miller House) are still not being billed for their heating and fears that the landlord could ask for back dated payments.

Action: The RA is to write to Margaret Hodge MP, including Adriatic and BRL, asking for residents not to be charged with heating for the past year.

Some residents from Robert Lewis House also complained of an out of order lift, which has not been repaired/services for more than 8 weeks now. Residents also mentioned if a reduction on their service charge could be made for the period that the lift was not operational.

4. Service Charge

The RA has finally managed to schedule a meeting to go to Pinnacle Places' offices on 6th February to inspect the company's financial accounts for 2014/2015. Chair Pete Mason noted that the officers already have a list of questions to ask and several examples of residents' invoices and statements that would need clarifying.

Pete also mentioned writing to the RA's solicitor for information on how to proceed with class action if indeed the RA finds that S20b notices are invalid or full statements have been incorrectly sent to residents.

5. Safety & Security

Treasurer Venilia Amorim noted that a wave of recent attempted burglaries on Samuel Garside House has triggered the police to patrol the area more frequently. Residents have received such letters. There has also been a serious incident outside the Rivergate Centre, in which a couple of residents were assaulted and the police was involved. Venilia noted that BRL should ultimately be responsible for monitoring the centre when the halls are hired, especially when guest numbers are high and there is a possibility for anti-social behaviour to develop. Residents asked for CCTV cameras and more lighting.

Action: RA to address this issue with BRL at their next meeting.

6. Parking

Chair Pete Mason announced that extra visitor parking spaces have almost been delivered, with only a few to be finalised. Residents should have received a visitor permit by now, from Link Parking, which allows any resident's visitor to park on a visitor bay. The permit will need to be exposed between 12pm and 2pm Monday to Friday.

The chair read out correspondence from Pat Lee of L&Q and Matt Carpen of BRL regarding the single yellow lines on Gatward Place, McAllister Grove and Middleton Close, where parking is allowed outside the restricted hours but where, in order to park, cars must park half or fully on the pavement in order to allow vehicles to pass. The area is part pedestrianised, with very shallow curbs to allow residents to move into the road if needs be, and parking had always taken place in this way. The chair asked the meeting if this was acceptable – the RA had proposed taking a metre or so off the greenery to allow the cars to park without parking on the pavement but some residents had objected. Residents offered no objection to the current arrangements of half or fully on the pavement when forced to do so. No one should get a ticket for parking partly or wholly on the pavement on these three streets and the chair read out Pat Lee's request to let him know of which residents had received tickets for parking in such a way.

Robert Lewis House residents find it hard to find visitor parking close to the block. Pete mentioned the school car park, which can be used overnight and during the weekend for a small charge.

7. Any Other Business

Matt Scott from Thames Ward Community Project (TWCP) announced the Growth Summit happening the following day at the Rivergate Centre. He invited all residents to come along, since this could be an opportunity to talk to BRL and the council about all the changes affecting residents within Thames Ward. There will be performances from children from the Riverside School, as well as presentations from BRL, the council and the Bishop of Barking, including a speech from Chair Pete Mason.

Matt also mentioned the importance of the BRL Community Interest Company (CIC) and urged residents' involvement in the new refreshed governance plan. The RA along with TWCP's steering group is planning to meet with BRL on how to shape that plan.

Meeting closed at 9.15pm