

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 23 October 2019
7.30pm, Rivergate Centre

Attendance: 14

Guest: Emma Dent Coad, MP for Kensington (Grenfell's constituency)

Meeting started: 7.40pm

The agenda was agreed.

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

1. Right to Manage (RTM) and service charge

A resident has been documenting through photos and videos the lack of or poor service that RMG has been providing on John Miller House. He is disputing the service charge and has been making partial payments under protest. He mentioned that reviews of RMG on trust pilot have been worse than for Pinnacle and that he is fed up with the state of neglect and disrepair that certain areas like the underground garage have fallen into. He proposed that the process for RTM at least for John Miller House is started.

A resident explained that she requested to see the service provider invoices from RMG and prior to that, from Pinnacle, before paying her service charge, as is her legal right, and that at no point had Pinnacle or RMG fulfilled these obligations. Once they do, she will pay, but has seven years of service charge saved up for now in her own bank account. Currently Pinnacle say RMG have their records and RMG deny this, so she has asked them to sort it out between them as this does not extract them from their legal obligations.

Chair Pete Mason explained that the Residents Association (RA) supports residents requesting to examine all the service charge supplier invoices so that residents can examine the costs that go on the service charge. The RA has begun doing this prior to the fire regarding the estate service charge.

The RA supports going for Right to Manage in each block and will work with residents to achieve this. There is interest from Samuel Garside House residents but the process is delayed due to the fire.

Action: The RA will help draw up sign up sheets in which the resident can start collecting signature and contacts of those residents that are showing interest in RTM in John Miller House.

2. Fire inquiry: flammable cladding removal

Pete announced that the protest organised by the RA against Bellway outside their sales jamboree in the Hilton London Tower Bridge hotel on 19 October on Tooley Street, central London, was successful, having the support of Social Housing Action Campaign (SHAC), the National Leasehold Campaign and the Socialist Party. The BBC produced a three-minute segment on the news and interviewed several of the affected residents on site. The RA also had the support of James King from Eastside Community Heritage (ECH) and Andrew Brown who recorded and photographed the event for the purposes of the resident-led housing inquiry the RA is conducting.

Emma Dent Coad MP then addressed the meeting. She stated that she is supporting the Grenfell Action Group, which had been raising safety questions before the fire, who she knew well, and one of whom had died in the fire. She mentioned that after a little over two years, some residents are still in temporary accommodation. She also said that BRL is very well funded and that residents should stand together for what they think is right and fair. She warned that developers/builders will try to destroy unity, and suggested that bad publicity would help the Barking Riverside residents' cause, which is to make homes safe. She also advised the RA to have a dedicated resident or committee member looking in detail through the council's planning applications as a lot of the estate changes are 'hidden' from public knowledge.

Emma also noted that it would be important to raise residents' concerns directly with the Greater London Authority (GLA) since they partly own BRL (49% share holding) so it's partly their money being spent, and

since area regeneration and building more homes is one of the Mayor's main focuses. She is helping organise a conference in the Spring, funded by Unite and the Fire Brigade Union (FBU), that will help deliver residents' top six demands around building safety. A standards setting committee is being set up by professionals all around the country and she hopes she can tap into their expertise and for them to attend the conference as well. She plans a morning session for them and an afternoon session for campaigning groups and residents and tenants associations. She invited the RA to also attend the conference. Date and place will be determined at a later stage.

On the resident-led inquiry, Venilia Amorim, treasurer, said James King has already started one to one video and audio interviews and that both him and Andrew Brown were also looking to contact residents that have now moved back into Samuel Garside House in order to record the conditions the interior of the building and their respective homes are in. There has also been progress on the website and the plan is to have a time line documenting all that happened before the fire (when several residents, including the RA, contacted builders, landlords and managing agents with fire safety concerns), during the fire (in which photos and videos show the tragedy of the fire), and after the fire (documenting how and where affected residents have been treated by the responsible stakeholders, progress of rebuilding Samuel Garside House, protest, and residents demands to remove all flammable cladding from the whole estate). Several people of influence will shortly receive an invitation to become commissioners on the RA's inquiry, including Emma Dent Coad.

3. Any Other Business

Date of next meeting is 20 November 2019.

Meeting closed at 9.15pm