

**Barking Reach Residents Association
Annual General Meeting (AGM) Minutes
Wednesday 26 June 2019
7.30pm, Rivergate Centre**

Attendance: 46

Meeting started 7.40pm

Welcome to guests and apologies for absence

Shaun Murphy, solicitor from Edwards Duthie Shamash

Arnold Tarling, independent fire expert

Cameron Geddes, Councillor, **apologies** from Bill Turner and Josie Channer

Matt Scott from Thames Ward Community Project

Minutes and matters arising: minutes from last AGM were agreed.

Agenda: it was agreed that AGM matters, reports and elections of officers and committee are dealt with first so that the meeting can then focus on the fire.

Officers Reports

Chair's Report

Chair Pete Mason started his report by stating that the role of the residents association (RA) is to represent residents for the whole of Reach area in a multitude of issues and conflicts they face. He explained how the committee had worked hard as a great team and fully recommended that they all be re-elected.

Pete reviewed the RA's activity regarding the service charge, where we raised over £1,000 in a week to fund a legal challenge to Pinnacle, whereupon they immediately backed down.

On parking, at the end of last year residents saw the results of the parking campaign, with the implementation of the final parts of the extra 105 spaces won, a campaign where residents were consulted street by street by the RA to tailor their demands to what was required.

On heating and hot water, Pete reiterated the scandal of the loss of heating through the Adriatic-owned blocks on the estate, and then discussed the concerns residents had regarding safety, which residents had raised.

This led to the RA's Safety Summit, where the officers met with all the managers of the estate just to discuss the safety concerns, and where RA officers were assured that all the fire safety issues in the blocks had been rectified and the fire wardens would be removed. This would be dealt with in the next agenda item. The RA had an extremely busy year, with hundreds of emails sent on behalf of residents with the aim of speeding the proceedings.

Secretary's Report

Secretary Nuno Amorim started his report by stating that since Pete was elected chair at the last AGM, the RA had been working particularly close with the superior landlord, Barking Riverside Limited (BRL), on several issues brought forward to the RA by residents of the area. As Pete has mentioned, these issues included service charge, parking, heating and hot water, safer estate and most recently, health and fire safety.

The RA has not only engaged with BRL, but also with Pinnacle Places, L&Q, RMG, Southern Housing and the council almost on a monthly basis over the past year either via face to face meetings or via extensive email and phone communication to tackle these issues. He noted that if the committee is re-elected, the RA will make every effort to continue to have these monthly meetings with these stakeholders, which will

hopefully lead to positive outcomes for the residents. He said the RA will also make sure it starts regular engagement with Homeground/Adriatic going forward.

This will mean that the RA aims to campaign for a safer estate, to make sure residents have their basic needs met by their landlords by simply providing adequate heating and hot water, and most importantly, to massively campaign for a resident-led housing inquiry on fire and risk assessments throughout the whole of the estate. The RA has massively supported residents affected by the fire and will continue to do so in the best interest of those affected, but also for the wider community. The RA will continue to engage with law firms to get the appropriate advice for residents, but also with other groups and organisations, such as the Thames Ward Community Project (TWCP) and Architects Sans Frontiers (ASF) that can provide information and extra support.

The RA also strongly supports the idea of a majority resident-led community interest company, which will seek to manage the whole of the estate once the construction for the whole area is completed. It may be a few years away, but the RA believes this is the key stepping stone for residents, who will then be in control of which companies to pick for building or block management and estate management, with overall control on how to manage or run open spaces and other community areas. It is of the utmost importance that the RA supports this going forward because a majority resident-led board will always strive to have the residents' best interest at heart.

Nuno recognized that the RA still has a long way to go in resolving several of the issues highlighted, but it is only just getting started. The RA is looking forward to working together, with the residents and with all other stakeholders on this estate in the most efficient way possible, for the benefit of all residents.

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Venilia Amorim reported that the RA registered with the council at the end of 2017 and the Tenants & Residents Federation in early 2018, being eligible to a yearly grant worth £200. The RA has had a bank account with Metro Bank since March 2018.

Since the last AGM last October, the RA has paid a £5 monthly account maintenance fee, totalling £35 up to today. There was also a transaction charge of £0.60 on 28 April and printing costs worth £34 on 4 March. That would make a total expenditure of £69.60 since the last AGM in October 2018 until today. That would bring a total of assets in the RA's bank account worth £127.21 as of today.

As for the RA's service charge legal fund, donations have been coming in for a little bit more than past 12 months and are worth a total of £1,450.50, with a deductible Paypal fee worth £57.29. A lot of the work that the RA has been conducting with the lawyers on pursuing matters regarding the service charge have been on a pro bono basis, so no expenses have been made yet.

In light of recent events, the RA has also set up a separate Fire Safety Campaign fund in order to assist Barking Riverside residents on fire safety issues within the estate. Funds will be used to campaign for particular causes, such as pushing for the removal of wooden cladding and other flammable materials from building structures all around the estate, legal support for those affected residents, and campaigning for the reallocation of such residents. This particular fund has had donations in the value of £460, with a deductible Paypal fee worth £7.74. This includes a donation from the Redbridge Trades Union Council, and there is still to confirm within the next few days an additional £200 donation from Unite Housing branch.

Venilia also confirmed a donation of £45 From Christie's towards the RA's website domain fee for the next two years.

Elections

Officers – the chair announced that no other nominations have been received.

Chair: Pete Mason, nominated by Venilia Amorim, seconded by Nuno Amorim. Pete Mason was elected unopposed.

Secretary: Nuno Amorim, nominated by Pete Mason, seconded by Habib Qazi, was elected unopposed.

Treasurer: Venilia Amorim, nominated by Pete Mason, seconded by Fran Mitchell, was elected unopposed.

Committee

The chair commended the excellent work of the RA committee, especially during times of great stress such as was seen during and after the fire, and proposed the re-election of the existing committee within no changes. Seconded by Venilia Amorim. The RA can co-opt residents and would look to do so as the new Verde development becomes occupied, and in the Caspian quarter blocks where the RA did not have representation.

This was agreed unanimously.

Fire Safety Campaign and Enquiry

Pete started off by mentioning all three resolutions amended and passed at the emergency meeting of 13 June 2019, a few days after the fire on Samuel Garside House. He noted that stakeholders are now forcing residents to move back into their homes, where they still don't feel safe. The building is still a building site, with cladding being removed daily, scaffolding everywhere, dust and noise, and most importantly, the flammable cladding is still there. Can insurance companies stop payment to temporary accommodation? This is what several residents have been told in order to move back to their apartments.

RMG has informed residents that Osterna, an RMG affiliate company, has conducted a risk assessment which has deemed the properties habitable. Residents refute such assessments, especially coming from a company that shares the same directorship as RMG: Hugh McGeever.

Shaun Murphy spoke about the Housing Act 2004 and how the local authority should be exercising its powers upon it, by acting as an independent assessor. He also said that residents should be given accommodation that is convenient and suitable to their independent needs. He stated that accommodation needs to be provided until the council conducts their own risk assessments under the housing Act 2004. Shaun has written a letter to the council's building control department and to Southern Housing on behalf of a resident making such demands.

Shaun stated that residents could file a group litigation order in which a group of residents go against the stakeholders, but only if court proceedings are necessary. Meanwhile, each affected resident should make an individual claim under their own name for their respective households.

Arnold Tarling advised that government regulations should be reviewed with regards to all combustible materials. He mentioned that RMG should be taken into account for their previous assessments, but that Pinnacle Places could not be left out of the equation since the previous risk assessments were reported by them. He also noted that a structural survey of SGH should be done and that, before residents move back in, a full level 4 risk assessment should be conducted.

Shaun said that Osterna can conduct their own assessments, but the council should also conduct theirs. He mentioned that there has been a loss of value to residents' properties. Tenants are anxious because they are living in fire-risk properties while the flammable cladding is still on the balconies. In response to a resident, he also mentioned that residents of EWH should also request that the council conducts assessments to the block.

Nuno mentioned that there are also houses on the estate with the same flammable cladding and that Mace as well as Bellway need to be approached regarding these.

Action: RA to contact BRL to act as mediator between the two builders to address the houses' cladding.

The RA also needs to request the Fire Brigade report and come to an agreement with all stakeholders that Arnold is the preferred expert for such assessments, but this will require funding.

Pete also mentioned that several residents are pressing for RTM (right to manage) and that SGH residents are keen to remove RMG. This should be discussed at greater length, and perhaps invite another expert to give residents more information.

Residents are also willing to organise protests outside BRL's sales office to demand that:

1. flammable cladding is removed all around the estate;
2. that displaced residents are not forced back into properties that are still under construction;
3. that Arnold is a trusted expert to conduct all necessary assessments.

Meeting ended at 9.15pm