

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes
Wednesday 26 February 2020
7.30pm, Rivergate Centre

Attendance: 46

Meeting started: 7.35pm

Guests: **Roger McElroy** of Canonbury Management; **Esther Johnson** of TfL; **Chris Dransfield** of Morgan Sindall & Volker Fitzpatrick (MSVF); **Pam Ross** of Barking Riverside Limited (BRL)

The agenda was agreed.

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

Right to Manage (RTM)

The chair, Pete Mason, introduced Roger McElroy, director of Canonbury Management. Pete added that several blocks of flats around the estate have been contemplating changing to RTM for a while, after facing extreme dissatisfaction with the current managing agent RMG.

Roger said that Canonbury have a 98% track record of successfully removing problematic management companies using the RTM process. He said that such a process will not necessarily bring savings immediately, depending on whether the management company have inflated expenses like building insurance, but it will allow lessees to form a limited company with the specific purpose of taking over management responsibilities from the freeholder. He added that these responsibilities included the setting of service charge levels, agreeing and undertaking large scale 'Section 20' works, and of particular importance, the arrangement of buildings insurance.

Roger noted that at least 50% of the flat owners within a particular block of flats must sign up to go through the process, and that, within a block of 100 flats, he quoted a cost of £30-40 per flat. He added that lessees will also be liable to pay the reasonable legal costs of the freeholder. He warned residents that these costs are claimed in most cases, so residents need to ensure they are prepared for the possibility of additional costs during the RTM set up process, which might be an additional £30-40 per household typically.

He noted that in most cases, an RTM process would take for five months to compete, unless it is contested by the freeholder.

Pete mentioned that several residents are worried about their district heating systems specifically from L&Q Energy, and wondered whether residents could also change suppliers of heating once an RTM is established. Roger said he would have to see the contracts between energy supplier and current management company.

Pam Ross said that she can obtain L&Q Energy's contract on behalf of residents in the name of transparency.

Roger then said that the next step would be for the interested blocks to provide him with a spreadsheet logging residents' interests for each block.

Rail Extension

Pete introduced Esther Johnson, major projects consultation team manager at TfL, and Chris Dransfield of MSVF, the site developer.

Chris said that good progress had been made on the new Barking Riverside Extension station and elevated platform. He said that most of the concrete and steel core structure of the station had been installed and is now approximately 75% complete. The planning and preparations for the station's next stage, including the installation of the steel frame, glazing and cladding, are ongoing.

Chris also said that the foundations for the elevated platform (viaduct) were over 80% completed. Some underground foundation support structures, called piles, have been driven to a depth of 45m underground. The concrete structures for the viaduct had been built on 27 of the 57 required locations. He noted that completion has been reached of the piles but constructing the two piers on Choats Road would need temporary traffic measures until at least September 2020.

Chris also mentioned that MSVF is working with local people having put in place 20 apprenticeships, and is supporting several community projects locally, such as sponsoring the Rugby Club's schools' programme 'Emerging Talent', and the Thames View SHED life project. It is also very involved with the Riverside school, having presented an overview of the project to its 1,300 students and cleaned the exterior of Riverside School. MSVF is also planning to host more work experience placements from March.

Heating and hot water

Pete said that many residents were now prepared to protest and contact the press due to the multiple issues surrounding lack of heating on several blocks of flats on the estate. The RA conducted a Google survey in which 26 residents expressed dissatisfaction with their heating provision.

A resident and member of the RA's committee said that the NHBC has certain room standards for temperature and that residents may have a claim against L&Q or Bellway if they don't meet these standards. The process is that residents will have to formally complain to Bellway/L&Q that they are not meeting the NHBC standards. Then if the issue is not rectified, within a reasonable time frame, residents need to make a claim directly to NHBC. This may be a good bet to get them moving. Unfortunately, this process has to be done on an individual basis, resident by resident, flat per flat.

Resident-led Inquiry

Venilia Amorim, the RA's treasurer, gave an update on the resident-led inquiry into the Samuel Garside House fire. The committee will meet on 3 March and then with the report's commissioners on 4 March.

Most of face-to-face interviews, to collect resident testimony, have now been completed, through the aid of James at Eastside Community Heritage and a website is under construction where all information regarding the fire, including findings, testimonials (videos and photos), as well as submissions and demands will be posted. A meeting with all relevant stakeholders (Bellway, Mace, BRL, council, Ministry for Housing, Southern Housing, Fire Brigade, MP) will all be presented with the report. This has been set for Wednesday 10 June, to mark the first anniversary since the fire.

Any other Business

Pam Ross of BRL gave a few updates. She said the Pinnacle Places contract as estate manager was being retendered through an independent consultant. A decision would be made soon. She also mentioned that Andy Schofield and John Swinney were appointed as the independent chairs for Community Interest Company's (CIC) learning forum and that soon they would be getting in touch with residents that have shown an interest in participating.

Next residents meeting was scheduled for 18 March.

Meeting closed at 9.15pm