

**Meeting between Barking Reach Residents Association, Barking Riverside Limited
(BRL) and Pinnacle Places
17th October 2018, at BRL offices, Fielders Crescent, Barking, 7pm**

Present from BRL: Matt Carpen, Pat Lee

Present from Pinnacle Places: Jonathan Cooke (head of operations in London)

Present from BRRA: Pete Mason, Nuno Amorim, Venilia Amorim

Meeting started 7pm

Jonathan introduced himself and stated that he wants to help mend the current impasse because Pinnacle are dedicated to building the community, so was very happy to meet the residents association to help do this. He asked the association what would be the main points of discussion that would be most pressing for this particular meeting.

Pete explained why the relationship between residents and Pinnacle had broken down on the estate, starting with the double yellow lines issues which Pinnacle fronted. That issue had been resolved by the association going direct to BRL, hopefully to the satisfaction of the residents. But from the first days of the residents association, the service charge was the other big issue that residents questioned.

It was agreed that the RA and Pinnacle would meet monthly for the next three months to go over specific issues which Matt Carpen and Pat Lee want to be involved in. In this process Jonathan would introduce the contracts manager who deals with Pinnacle's East London contracts and who Ben reports to. After that, the RA would meet the contracts manager monthly and Jonathan quarterly. Jonathan talked about having a different structure and not necessarily requiring an estate manager situated on the estate.

Jonathan invited the RA to visit the Pinnacle head office in London to view the accounts. The RA agreed to send him two or three dates and he would fix it up. 14th November was one possible date. Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday are Jonathan's only evenings availability.

Pete raised the situation which is currently causing such upset, which is the £90+ late payment charge. Pete asked; if a resident is in dispute over an issue with their bill, until it's resolved there should be no late payment charge. Jonathan said that a late payment charge would be levied because the service charge should be paid while the bill is being disputed and if there is found to be an error with the bill, any over payment will be refunded.

Pete noted that the RA is getting legal advice about the legality of the s20bs for 2014-15 and Venilia said that they had not been sent out. Pete said that they are sent to people if they ask for a copy but that when they see them they say they definitely did not receive them when they were supposed to be delivered. Jonathan thought that this could be resolved by checking records.

Pete asked whether the 2014-15 final balancing charge was calculated at the same square footage basis despite that by 2017 when the final balancing charge came out, Pinnacle had moved to habitable rooms. Jonathan said that the final bill should respect the same metric that it was initially calculated on.

The RA asked about the zones and percentages used in the service charge calculations. Jonathan said that the zone information could be provided and that the plot percentage is based on information provided by the developer as they have no way of knowing otherwise what the square footage or number of habitable rooms there are.

The RA raised that one resident has their service charge made out to Ernest Websdale House when they live on Galleons Drive and have not been able to get the bill sorted for at least three years. He said he would personally look into this issue if we could provide the names and he would get their permission directly to sort it out.

The RA also noted that some residents had moved in to their property in 2017, and then been told money was owing from previous years, despite their solicitors saying that Pinnacle had confirmed there was nothing owed. Jonathan responded that Pinnacle would have said that x amount was due or that a certain amount should be put aside in the case of accounting years where the balancing charge had not been done. We could only assert that residents tell us this was not the case.

Pete stated that these two extreme examples indicated what was causing upset on the estate, but that the main thing was not knowing how the bills were calculated and whether the work invoiced had been done. For this the RA needed to see the supplier invoices, and that this had now been granted by Jonathan. It was the apparent refusal by Pinnacle previously to allow the RA to see the accounts that caused upset and made residents become suspicious of how bills were being calculated.

Jonathan noted that the RA would need to show that the residents whose invoices are to be investigated had given their consent. But beyond that there were no stipulations.

Jonathan raised that these days managing agents needed to allow residents access to this information and also to contracting information, such as, would it be cheaper to get a different lift maintenance service contract and what would be the advantages, or suppose residents want the block cleaned only three times a week instead of five. Jonathan said Pinnacle is prepared to adopt such a system and monitor how things progress.

To this end Jonathan said that Pinnacle welcomed Resident Advisory Groups, whose job would be to discuss through the individual issues on the estate and advise the estate manager. However, he said that the final decision on all matters would rest with the managing agent.

The RA welcomed this approach and expected to play a central role in such an advisory group.

Pete stated that many of the service charge issues arose from the blocks and that Pinnacle would possibly be glad to see the back of them - shutters, lifts, heating, security doors, poor quality being a factor in many cases of continual breakdowns. Jonathan said that a change in managing agent might have been the best thing in the circumstances in the case of these four blocks so that things could start afresh.

The RA discussed that Pinnacle issued their own budget and bills within a few days of residents of the four blocks affected by the change in managing agent being told Pinnacle were being removed and that this caused great confusion and upset, since it appeared that Pinnacle was trying to charge the residents prior to its contract termination.

Jonathan stated that Homeground had not discussed the issuing of the letter about the new managing agent with them and that this resulted in the two letters coming out on top of each other and that this was to be regretted. He restated what Homeground has confirmed that all funds received are put in a bank account and both monies and debts will be passed on to RMG. He stressed that bills had been incurred for the maintenance of the blocks and they needed to be paid.

Venilia raised about the poor quality materials residents had had to put up with, to the extent that British Gas had said to several residents they are not prepared to insure or take out service contracts on the estate because of the number of problems and call outs due to the quality of the materials used.

Matt Carpen said that going forward BRL had specifically undertaken to get higher quality building materials used and to build the whole estate to last. They have set out to use more expensive materials such as bricks, lifts and boilers that last longer even if it reduces the profit to BRL and L&Q who are the main builder in the new phase. He explained that neither BRL, which is partly funded by the Mayor of London, nor L&Q, which is a not-for-profit organisation, have profit as their objective, but to provide housing and community.

Venilia raised that there are many complaints about the poor maintenance of the estate, which for instance led to all the fish dying in the lake, dog bins not being emptied, broken fences. She said that there is too much work for one person and that despite Ben's hard work there was too much to do on the estate for one person - there should be three. Jonathan said Ben had worked very hard.

Jonathan proposed a walk around the estate to look at these issues and apologised that the estate had not been kept in a fit state. He said that plans are in place to improve this.

A second meeting was agreed, along with a separate meeting looking at the accounts, and a walk around the estate. Jonathan said he would be in touch tomorrow on the issues raised.

Meeting ended 8pm