

Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes

Wednesday 29th May 2019

7:30pm, Rivergate Centre

Attendance: 23

Guests: Andy Walker, NHS Campaigner, Tim and AJ from Participatory City

Meeting started 7.40pm

The agenda was agreed.

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

Under matters arising, a resident asked about the fire wardens established in the blocks managed by RMG. The officers reported that at the March *security summit* meeting with BRL, L&Q, Pinnacle Places RMG, the following was minuted:

“Fire wardens/marshal

Michelle [Ivemy of RMG] reported that fire wardens would be withdrawn from the blocks where they had been installed because the remedial work required to meet fire safety standards had been completed.”

The officers noted that these minutes had been agreed with RMG. The chair remarked that he had raised it since residents had stated that they had seen no improvements. Residents noted that the fire marshals were still in place two months later.

A resident mentioned that there were still fire marshals on John Miller/Leslie Hitchcock House and quite often they would sleep during their shift, mentioning that one of them had brought in an armchair for the corridor to sit. The RA will contact BRL/L&Q about that as it is a fire hazard and health and safety risk.

1. Andy Walker, NHS Campaigner

Andy spoke about his campaign against the closure of King George’s A&E. He pointed some facts that he thought residents should know:

- 160 beds have been cut
- There are some rehabilitation beds opening up but this still puts a strain on A&E
- The hospital’s A&E has had its worst performance yet
- The A&E unit needs to be expanded
- Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust (BHRUT), the body that manages King George’s hospital, needs to be scrutinised.

Andy noted that there is no transparency in the hospital’s strategy – the management is reconfiguring its plan and eliminating the A&E department in the process, by turning it into a treatment centre instead. This plan was agreed in 2016 but not shared with the public. In November 2017 there was a review, with a £49 million support from Havering Council to expand Queen’s Hospital’s A&E instead.

Treasurer Venilia Amorim stressed that with Barking Riverside’s development growing and increasing resident numbers, the existing A&E department at King George’s should remain, In fact, a new hospital or medical centre in the area should be considered.

Andy proposed that residents of Barking & Dagenham should get councillors to agree on a new ward at King George’s and bid for a £25 million capital plan resubmission. He proposed that the RA email BHRUT asking about capital plan resubmission.

Chair Pete Mason put the proposal to the meeting, and proposed that residents protest about the transformation of the King George A&E into a service only for the elderly.

Action: the RA to email BHRUT writing protest and asking about capital plan resubmission.

2. Participatory City

Venilia introduced the two guests, which showed a video on the nature of this organisation, its aim to increase participation of residents in society and their achievements in the borough so far.

AJ and Tim told residents about the organisation's collaborative business workshops and other sessions that are ongoing. They also explained that there is a newspaper listing all the dates of the events until the end of June. A new summer programme is being drafted and will be available shortly through website, Facebook and Instagram.

3. Service Charge

Pete reported that the RA has had correspondence from the solicitor, who has stated that the S20Bs are dubious. He also mentioned that the committee had met the previous week and officers came to the conclusion upon reading their leases that a balancing charge incurred during the first two years of occupancy should not have been charged to those residents whose lease specifies that the service charge is capped at £425 per year.

Action: the RA to email Pinnacle Places to clarify this issue.

The chair also noted residents' disappointment with RMG's services compared with Pinnacle, particularly in the block Samuel Garside House. Residents suggested that in order to keep a record of this dissatisfaction that photographic evidence should be taken to prove that certain services are not being provided, for example hoovering/sweeping corridors, window cleaning, rubbish collection, and so on. The chair mentioned that this was accomplished in another part of the estate, in Victoria Court, where a log of photos was kept about the non-collection of rubbish.

Several residents mentioned the need for RTM (right to manage) as the quality of service provided for both Samuel Garside House and Ernest Websdale House was very poor. Nuno Amorim, the secretary, also stressed the importance of residents taking control of Barking Riverside's Community Interest Company (CIC) to handle estate management.

4. Heating & Hot Water

Pete announced that a list of several residents with constant problems with heating and hot water at Robert Lewis House was passed on to Pat Lee, L&Q director. He noted that Pat was due to contact each resident individually to tackle their issues.

Any Other Business

Regarding late bin collections, Pete reported that an email was drafted to be sent out to councillors and Margaret Hodge MP, stating that it is completely unacceptable that the council has made a complete shambles of the new contract it signed off with the new rubbish collection company.

A resident mentioned mosquitoes are back and asked what could be done. The RA will enquire with Pinnacle if more water fountains can be installed in other areas of the estate.

Date of next meeting is 26th June 2019, which is the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

Meeting closed at 9.10pm.