

## **Barking Reach Residents Association Meeting Minutes**

Wednesday 24th October 2018

7:30pm, Rivergate Centre

Attendance: 24 residents present.

Apologies from guest speaker Simon Wasser of Sustrans.

### **Agenda**

The Agenda was agreed

### **Minutes of last meeting**

The last meeting was the AGM and the minutes of that meeting will be placed for approval at the next AGM. The July minutes were agreed.

### **Pinnacle, RMG and Service charge**

The Chair opened the discussion.

Pinnacle have now agreed to meet with the RA, allow it to view the accounts and agreed to monthly meetings to resolve issues, and resident involvement in budget and supplier contractual issues. The association had already begun a dialogue with Jonathan Cooke, Pinnacle head of operations in London, and he had agreed that we can visit their HQ to inspect the accounts. A walk around was being arranged, and follow up meetings.

However, Pinnacle have also begun imposing £90+ surcharges for late payment so there are gains and losses for residents in the actions of the new management.

Only a few weeks ago the chair was actually banned from attending a Pinnacle meeting on entirely spurious ground of data protection and previously Pinnacle had tried to set up their own 'forum' which enraged residents.

Adriatic, which own four blocks of flats, have ejected Pinnacle Places as managing agent because of serial failures. The chair read to the meeting what Homeground wrote to all Adriatic residents: "There has been a general review of Pinnacle and we have noted there has been a lot of change but do not feel these have all proven to be as positive as we had been advised to expect."

This is an open admission of Pinnacle's failure. The second reason given is "an element of discontent" leading leaseholders to seek "a change of agent". Again, this is because of serial failures of the managing agent. Samuel Garside House had already got a slim majority of leaseholders unofficially signed up to replace Pinnacle when RMG were imposed.

Pinnacle claim in an email received by the RA today, that they "saved the day" in the heating fiasco but in the view of the residents' association it was only when legal action was threatened, that Pinnacle ended up sorting out the heating. And this was after as much as 40 days of loss of heating in the buildings, as the failure to maintain the heating systems led them to fail.

This suggests that ultimately, in a legal battle, the superior landlord might well have been seen as ultimately responsible for the situation, if not actually negligent, and since Pinnacle

was their managing agent, their actions might well have been seen as reprehensible in a court of law.

Since Pinnacle dispute this view, the RA agreed to send Pinnacle a copy of the Open Letter to Zing written at the time and endorsed by the most residents in the subsequent residents' association meeting.

The RA, therefore, has a responsibility to engage with Pinnacle. The first meeting took place on the 17th October. The meeting endorsed the committee's agreement to engage with Pinnacle and see what can be gained from negotiations and visits to see the accounts.

Residents asked the RA to urgently raise with Pinnacle about the seven-day notices and accompanying threat of surcharge.

A resident reported that he had just moved in, has not received a bill from pinnacle, yet has suddenly received a demand for nearly £1,000 with a £90+ surcharge if he doesn't pay within seven days. He doesn't have that kind of money to hand at such short notice and was very angry.

Several residents reported having set up, jointly with Pinnacle, standing orders at an agreed amount, and were very aggrieved to receive seven-day notices to pay with the same threatened surcharge. Other residents who have never been in arrears also got the letters and there is general resentment at the shortness of the notice.

Another resident reported that she had spoken to Angela in Pinnacle credit control, who had said the surcharge was not £90 but £45 (plus VAT). It seemed to residents that insufficient consideration had been given to the different situations and circumstances of residents which was causing distress.

Residents raised about the s20b legitimacy and the urgency of getting legal advice on this and the legitimacy of the surcharges for late payment.

**It was agreed** that the RA will undertake to urgently use the existing funds to seek legal advice on the surcharges and the legitimacy of the s20b notices.

## **Heating**

The chair reported that Margaret Hodge MP had written to Adriatic, Homeground, Pinnacle and BRL to insist on further information regarding the questions residents were asking, namely, that the cost of the temporary heating and repairs would not be passed on to the residents, that they would get compensation for the loss of heating during the winter months, that residents required clarity on the statement from Homeground that residents had not been charged since Pinnacle Power took over – does this mean that in lieu of compensation, residents will have their heating charges annulled and if so for how long?

Pinnacle had replied and their reply was read out to the meeting. Margaret Hodge had subsequently met with Homeground, Pinnacle and BRL in Parliament last Wednesday midday, but none of the officers were able to get time off work to attend and are seeking a report of the outcome.

## **Sustrans**

Treasurer Venilia Amorim introduced the topic in the absence of Simon Wasser of Sustrans. Sustrans work with the council and BRL and have £500,000 to spend on improving the environment for walking and cycling. Residents were encouraged to suggest what Sustrans could do.

The following suggestions were made:

- To fix the loss of street lighting in Estuary Close, Puffin Close, Shearwater Close to make them safe to walk in at night.
- Resident management, through the offices of the RA, of the Ripple Nature Reserve at the corner of Thames Road and Renwick Road.
- Keeping down the mosquitoes by establishing fountains in the water works off Galleons Drive, e.g. on McAlister Grove and in the children's park at the junction with Crossness Road.
- The bike cabin on Handley Page Road looks like an abandoned shipping container and is an eyesore. If it is to be permanent can it be given a simple timber finish.
- We understand there are already plans for a skateboard park where the bus depot is on Mallards Road but how about an adventure park where mountain bikes can be ridden by children.

It was agreed to send these suggestions to Sustrans and invite Sustrans to attend a committee meeting and to a future RA meeting.

### **Parking**

Residents raised no concerns about the works being carried out to improve parking facilities but those living around Handley Page Road raised that they were without sufficient parking. The Chair made clear that if residents wished to campaign for more parking as the residents did on the older part of the Riverside estate, the RA would back them.

### **Any Other Business**

There is a protest meeting about the closure of Cedar Ward at King George Hospital, which looks like management there are still silently executing the closure of the Accident and Emergency – which was rescued due to a decades long campaign - through a thousand cuts which runs down the hospital.

**Meeting closed 9:10pm**