

BARBICAN ESTATE RESIDENTS CONSULTATION COMMITTEE

Monday, 27 November 2023

Minutes of the meeting held at Guildhall at 6.30 pm

Members

Sandra Jenner - Defoe House (Chair)	Andrew Tong - Brandon Mews
Jim Durcan - Andrewes House (Deputy Chair)	Helen Hudson - Defoe House
Christopher Makin (Alderman) (Deputy Chair)	Andy Hope - Breton House
Gordon Griffiths - Bunyan Court	Dave Taylor - Gilbert House
Jane Smith - Seddon House	Monique Long - Mountjoy House
John Taysum - Bryer Court	Petre Reid - Willoughby House
Mary Bonar - Wallside	Miranda Quinney - John Trundle House
Sandy Wilson - Shakespeare Tower	Graham Wallace - Andrewes House
David Lawrence - Lauderdale Tower	Alan Budgen - Cromwell Tower
Adam Hogg - Chair, Barbican Association	
Fiona Lean - Ben Jonson House	
Sally Spensley – Frobisher Crescent	
Fritz van Kempen – Speed House	

In Attendance

Officers:

Judith Finlay	- Executive Director, Community and Children's Services
Pam Wharfe	- Interim Assistant Director, Housing and Barbican
Helen Davinson	- Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services
Anne Mason	- Community and Children's Services
David Blaine	- Community and Children's Services
Michael Gwyther-Jones	- Community and Children's Services
Rosalind Ugwu	- Community and Children's Services
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerk's Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mark Wheatley, Chair of the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC), Claire Hersey – Lambert Mews House, Rodney Jagelman – Thomas More House and Alan Budgen – Cromwell Tower (represented by Lucy Sisman).

The Chair welcomed Fritz van Kempen (Speed House) and Sally Spensley (Frobisher Crescent) to their first meetings, together with Pam Wharfe (Interim Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services).

2. **MEMBERS DECLARATIONS UNDER THE CODE OF CONDUCT IN RESPECT OF ITEMS ON THE AGENDA**

There were no declarations.

3. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that – the minutes of the meeting held on 4th September 2023 be approved.

Matters arising

The Chair noted that all the matters arising had been included in the action tracker or were the subject of reports on this agenda.

There was query in respect of the remit of the Car Park Working Group and Members noted that the Terms of Reference appeared later on this agenda. It was suggested that the minute be corrected by substituting the word '*arrangements*' with '*charges*'.

4. **ACTION TRACKER**

The Committee received the Action Tracker for the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC) and Residents Consultation Committee (RCC). The Chair advised that a meeting had been arranged for later in the week to review the format of the action tracker.

Members noted the following updates:

Barbican Highwalk additional funding allocation. There had been some initial suggestions for repointing, redecorations and cleaning. The Director agreed to provide an update to the BRC in January.

Energy Audit and the 21/22/23 discrepancies. An update was imminent and the officer would continue to work with the nominated residents to finalise the specification. Once resolved, this would feed into future billing. Officers apologised for the delay as it had been difficult to source an appropriate auditing service.

Lambert Jones Mews. Two of the main roofs were pooling water and the Chair was aware of other outstanding works, which she would send to the officer after the meeting. Residents would not be liable for any abortive works following the change of contractor.

Brandon Mews Canopy. There had been some initial work, which should have resulted in an options appraisal, but the matter had been outstanding for the past year. It was noted that turnover of staff had contributed to the delay. The Director agreed to progress this after the meeting, noting that the options appraisal would still be pursued.

5. **BARBICAN ESTATE OFFICE TRANSFORMATION UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of recent progress made in delivering the actions set out within the Transformation Programme Action Plan.

In response to a question about the overall objectives and KPIs of the project the Director advised that a service improvement officer had been appointed and was working through the various work streams each of which would have its own objective(s). Concern was expressed that having objectives for work streams did not equate to having clear overall objectives and KPIs. The Director responded that the objective is to provide an effective value for money service for residents and to meet all of our landlord responsibilities. Members were assured that, at the next meeting; a more substantive report, with an action plan and objectives, would be brought forward. Members were informed that there would be an action plan within each area of development, with its own set of objectives, which would then be scoped with the residents and the Transformation Board, depending on the issue.

The Director also advised that recent changes in key officers had resulted in some of the delay, but this was being addressed, and the Transformation Board had been dealing with a range of operational issues. Members noted that the cost of the service charge audit would be absorbed by the CoLC.

RESOLVED, that – the contents of the report and the Direction of Travel be noted.

6. **WORKING PARTY UPDATES**

The Committee received updates on the various Working Parties and noted the following:

- a) Further to a recent survey by an RICS qualified Chartered Surveyor, there is no aerated concrete on the Barbican Estate.
- b) The Terms of Reference of the Car Park Charges Working Party are succinct but clear in that they are about charging policy.
- c) Members had noted that the Barbican Gardens are Grade II* listed and asked officers to provide a high-level strategy paper on the future of the private gardens, including the need, costs and provision of: (1) a stock condition survey of the Barbican Gardens; and (2) how they might be maintained over the next 10 years; to be presented in either the March or June 2024 meeting of the Committee. Officers agreed to seek the advice of the City Gardeners on this.
- d) Members had asked for a proposal on a deferred payment scheme for residents in financial difficulties and a monthly direct debit option. The Director noted the cost of living implications and advised that this request would be progressed at pace. The Director also agreed to follow up progress with the scoping document for the Service Charge Audit.

- e) The Service Level Agreement Working Party had noted that Civica computers system was still not providing reliable data on KPI's. The new Interim Assistant Director had sourced an experienced software engineer to resolve the issues with Civica.
- f) A recent webinar hosted by the Climate Action Team had generated a lot of interest. The Chair of the Underfloor Heating Working Party suggested recruiting a new pool of Members, from those who had expressed an interest; to work closer with the CoLC's Climate Action Team, who had offered to pay for some of the consultancy work. There was also an appetite to consider the wider objectives around Climate Change and move away from the rolling 'Working Party' format, to a task/objectives based approach. There was a further suggestion in that the name should also change to '*Climate and Zero Carbon Working Party*', as a reduction in heating costs would, in turn, have a positive effect on Climate Action. The Committee agreed to the above requests.
- g) Progress had halted on a recent pilot study of heating controls, following the departure of two key officers, but it might be possible for the Energy Team to assist.

7. MAJOR WORKS UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of progress made on major works on the Barbican Estate and issues affecting progress on individual schemes.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

Window Repairs/Replacement

The successful installation of the vacuum glazed unit at Crescent House on Golden lane was discussed and members would be invited to visit the pilot site.

- a. Following an inspection from an experienced Architect and Surveyor, Members noted that some of the windows could be repaired, rather than replaced. Officers are aware of other areas where there is water ingress and these too would be repaired.
- b. The officer agreed to share the link to the K&M window survey results from the top floors and the separate results from the lower floors, and to investigate if any detail is available in addition to the diagrams. The officer also advised that a 10 year warranty would be available.

Internal/External Redecoration

- c. The survey responses on the redecorations project would be progressed with the Project Manager.
- d. The officer would follow up Cromwell Tower's concerns with the Clerk of Works.

- e. There would be snagging on the issues raised by residents of Willoughby House, in respect of the quality of work to the fire doors, noting they had submitted a formal complaint on this matter. This was reported to last meeting of the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC) but the Officer agreed to include all live complaints in future reports.
- f. There was a query as to why Brandon Mews has a redecoration costing when the other smaller houses do not.
- g. The Officer agreed to provide an interim report on management charges, noting that the total costs will not be available until the end of the project.
- h. The officer agreed to check that the Ben Jonson works had been signed off on 13th November.

Barbican Future Works Programme

- i. Draft Terms of Reference and Membership of the Programme Board would be provided to the AMWP for consideration, in the first instance. The Officer confirmed that resident stakeholders would be Members; the first meeting was expected to take place in January 2024 and 'Programme Governance' would be on the agenda.

Staffing Resources

- j. Following a successful round of interviews, three new Project Managers would be appointed to support the Barbican and HRA Estates.

Tower Lift Replacements

- k. In terms of the lift works, there was an appetite amongst residents for one of the Towers to relax the rules in respect of working hours in order to expedite the project and encourage more contractor interest in tendering for the work. The Officer agreed to feed this back to the contractor and the two other Tower Block representatives were asked to canvass their house groups. There was a further suggestion in that porters and concierges be included in discussions about managing lift outage. The officer thanked residents for their co-operation in this matter and advised that improved efficiency and noise reduction would feature in the new installation.
- l. There was a request that any changes in working hours should be treated as a single dispensation and not become common practice on other works across the Estate.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted

8. **BEN JONSON HOUSE SURVEY RESPONSE**

The Director thanked the residents for the report and advised that the information requested would be provided on 7th December. The House Group representative asked if some of the matters could be responded to before the meeting, if possible.

9. **EXTENSION TO REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE CONTRACTS**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, in a redacted format, in respect of the extension to the repairs and maintenance contracts. Members noted that there are two agreements for the provision of Housing Responsive Repairs, Maintenance and Voids Services; their terms began on 1 April 2019 and are due to expire on 31 March 2024:

1. Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Estates with Wates Living Space; and
2. Barbican Estate with Metwin.

Given the results of the recent audit the Chair asked for assurance in terms of Metwin being an appropriate and trusted contractor to the CoLC and as a service provider to residents. The Director provided the assurance and confirmed that there would be more robust contract management over the next 12 months.

Members noted the following collective Resolution from the Working Parties

Resident Members of the RCC's Working Parties are working constructively with the New Developments & Special Projects Team on the development a new contract for Repairs and Maintenance (R&M) of the Barbican Residential Estate. These residents are concerned that there may be a mismatch between the scope and timing of the R&M contract and that of the Major Projects programme. The resident members of the RCC request an urgent meeting with the Head of the New Developments & Special Projects team, the Head of the Major Projects and Asst Director Housing and Barbican to ensure that any mismatch is identified and remedied and all works are properly aligned.

The Director agreed to this request and the following points were noted:

- The option to do nothing was not deemed viable by the Procurement Office as the CoLC have a responsibility to residents to maintain housing services. It was noted that contract renewals of this size can take a year in Local Authorities, given the levels of procurement and due diligence required, and allowing time for mobilisation. It was accepted that, in this case, the process had not started in sufficient time for the contract renewal but that this predated the current team.
- There was some challenge to the governance process in terms of this being the same for leaseholders, who pay for the service, as it is for HRA tenants, where the City pays. It was also suggested that the report's passage through the Court of Common Council was overly bureaucratic. The Officer advised that the Programme Board would provide an opportunity to feedback on

governance issues, noting that an officer from the CoLC Programme Office would be on the Board.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

10. **FIRE SAFETY UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of compliance with current health and safety legislation, best practice, and regulatory standards relating to fire safety. The report also provided an update progress since the last report March 2023.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

- a) In respect of the plans to replace entrance doors to flats, there had been some objections from Shakespeare Tower residents about letterboxes being external to the flats. A Member referred to Home Office Guidance in this matter and the officer agreed that a compromise should be possible.
- b) The presence of the hall porters should be factored into the security aspects.
- c) Despite there being asbestos in some of the service cupboards, the officer advised that it was possible to instal smart meters.
- d) The Fire Officer advised that mobility scooters and other devices should be charged during waking hours, rather than overnight, using the approved leads and chargers. However, scooters should not be charged in communal areas, nor block means of escape from flats.
- e) In respect of works to the balconies, the officer advised that the 'cold pour' trial had been successful but, as costs can vary, officers would need to look at the schedule of rates in detail. The use of hot works was now discouraged but in the absence of an alternative, it would be a matter for the City Corporation and its insurers. The officer agreed to investigate this with the Fire Safety Team and provide an update in the next Fire Safety report. Members were concerned about delays to the programme of work required to repair some 50 balconies, where water penetration into residents' homes had been identified, and sought assurance in terms of cost implications.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

11. **LEASE PROTOCOL**

Officer advised that this would be subject to a report to the next meeting of this Committee. There was some frustration at the time it had taken but the work was running alongside a live case, which had to conclude first.

12. **BLAKE TOWER**

The Town Clerk had requested a meeting with Redrow to express concern on behalf of residents. The Director and new Interim Assistant Director had also met with the BT residents last Friday and would continue to offer support.

13. **PROGRESS OF SALES AND LETTINGS**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

14. **QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE**

A Member asked about an update, in a recent Barbican Estate Bulletin, in respect of the use of gardens, which had asked that: '*young children be supervised*' and expressed a preference in that '*large numbers of teenagers should not play in the gardens*'. The Member felt that this was inappropriate and offensive to young people living in the Barbican. The officer advised that the text had been lifted from the web site and agreed to revise future wording. It was suggested that this might have wider implications in terms of noise nuisance and, whilst seeking a balance is necessary, respectful wording should always be used.

15. **ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT**

The Town Clerk advised that the BRC Meeting scheduled for 11th December 2023 had been rescheduled to 22nd January 2024, as this would allow for better agenda management in terms of including the budget reports and an update on the restructure. The Chamberlain had advised that the reports would be ready in early January, to align with the financial year-end. However, Members noted that the Service Charge report would be subject to revision before the charges are set.

Concern was expressed at the lack of opportunity for the RCC to consider the reports. The Town Clerk advised that they would be available one week and day ahead of the BRC meeting, in accordance with Access to Information. However, Members felt that this wasn't in the spirit of the relationship with RCC and residents and suggested that further consideration should be given to how the process can be improved, together with the Chair, Deputy Chair and any other RCC Member that would like to contribute to the discussion. *NB Subsequent to this meeting a Special Meeting of the RCC, to consider the Budget, was scheduled for 17th January 2024 at 6pm.*

The meeting ended at 8.15 pm

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