

BARBICAN ESTATE RESIDENTS CONSULTATION COMMITTEE
Monday, 25 June 2018

Minutes of the meeting of the Barbican Estate Residents Consultation Committee
(EGM) held at Guildhall at 6.30 pm

Present

Members:	Christopher Makin - Chairman	
	Jim Davies - Mountjoy House	Adrian Bastow - Defoe House
	(Deputy Chairman)	Prof Michael Swash - Willoughby House
	Graham Wallace - (Deputy Chairman)	David Lawrence - Lauderdale Tower
	Fiona Lean- Ben Jonson House	Mark Bostock - Frobisher Crescent
	Jane Smith - Barbican Association	Julia Braebook - Speed House
	Janet Wells - John Trundle House	James Wilson Undy - Gilbert House
	John Tomlinson - Cromwell Tower	Natalie Robinson - Andrewes House
	Fred Rodgers - Breton House	

In attendance:

Mary Durcan – BRC Member and Ward Member for Cripplegate

Officers:

Julie Mayer - Town Clerk's

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Gordon Griffiths (Bunyan Court), Sandy Wilson (Shakespeare Tower), John Taysum (Bryer Court) and Averil Baldwin (Thomas More House).

Members welcomed the following new Members:

- Helen Hulson – Ben Jonson House, and said farewell and thanks to Fiona Lean, who was attending her last meeting.
- Adam Hogg – Andrewes House (represented by Natalie Robinson for this meeting)
- Jane Samsworth – Defoe House (represented by Adrian Bastow for this meeting) and thanks and farewell to David Kirkby
- Heather Hawker – Speed House (represented by Julia Braebook for this meeting)

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

There were no declarations.

3. MINUTES

The minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 29 January 2018 were approved.

4. **REVIEW OF THE RCC'S TERMS OF REFERENCE**

Members considered the RCC's Terms and reference and, whilst there was a general consensus that they remained fit for purpose, it was also accepted that there was potential for further discussion about the role of the Committee in a wider context.

During the discussion, the following comments were noted:

- Whilst agreeing that the RCC was the 'main formal channel of communication', it was recognised that there were others that were effective and relevant.
- It was suggested that, sometimes, the RCC did not fully utilise its power to take resolutions to the BRC. However, later in the meeting it was noted that the recent alternative proposal in respect of Car Park Charges, from Lauderdale House Group, had been well received by the BRC and captured in their final decision.
- It was suggested that the Working Party reports should also go to the BRC and it would be helpful if they were more visible, and formed a separate part of the RCC/BRC agenda pack rather than being in the Update Report. The Town Clerk reminded Members that all RCC reports (including the AGM and this EGM) were on the public web site, as were the public reports and minutes of the BRC meetings.
- There was a challenge as to whether the Terms of Reference could also represent short term and sub tenants but it was noted that widening them to include these groups would involve extensive consultation. It was also noted that the Barbican Association and the House Groups represent short term and sub tenants but consultation on expenditure should be confined to the long leaseholders. Furthermore, a short term or sub tenant could effectively represent long lessees at House Group meetings.
- Members were also reminded that most of the Barbican House Groups have RTA status, which gives them enhanced rights in leaseholder matters.
- There was some discussion about the estate boundaries: i.e. the administrative boundary; is owned and managed by the City of London Corporation; the Listed Boundary of the Estate, the Registered Park and Garden Boundary and the Barbican Wildlife Garden. Members agreed that it would be helpful to have a map of the administrative area of the Estate.

5. **IMPROVING COMMUNICATION**

The Chairman referred to the BRC Minutes, which were available on the web site and the Town Clerk agreed to send an email notification to RCC Members once they had been published.

The Chairman had recently written an article for the quarterly BA Magazine, which had been well received.

Going forward, the Chairman suggested and Members agreed, to hold an annual all-Barbican Residents meeting, at Guildhall or at the conference facility at Frobisher Crescent, possibly in the Autumn. The Chairman of the Barbican Association advised that their annual meeting provided refreshments and the Town Clerk was asked to check if there was a budget for this.

6. **SERVICE CHARGES**

The Committee received a presentation from David Lawrence of the Service Charges Working Party (slides appended to these minutes) which provided a 7-year history of service charges and breakdown of staff costs.

During the discussion, the following points were noted:

Members thanked David Lawrence and the Working Party for the improved service charge letter.

It was noted that service charges had increased over time with repairs and maintenance charges having increased most.

The RCC would appreciate more consultation at an earlier stage in the budget process, and a better understanding on the rationale and consequences behind decisions. Members felt that even small suggestions/compromises could have an impact and Mr Lawrence agreed to take this request back to the Working Party. Members noted that the Revenue Outturn reports were due to be presented to the RCC/BRC in September.

There was an expectation that efficiency savings would ultimately reduce the service charge. Notwithstanding this, Members were mindful of the shared responsibility of the RCC, and the boundaries of the Working Parties, and were mindful of exposing individuals. Mr Lawrence did not want to discuss detail at this meeting but happy to take back suggestions in respect of efficiencies.

Some Members found the City Corporation Budget reports confusing and would welcome a change to the format; i.e. to showing how the position had changed on previous years. The Town Clerk reminded Members that the Chamberlain had delivered a presentation to all Members of RCC/BRC the on the budget reports in April this year, which had been well received.

Members noted that the Asset Maintenance and Stock Condition Surveys were likely to complete in June 2019, possibly sooner. This report would be very helpful in terms of future charges and issues such as the garchey maintenance. Members noted that there had been a 56% response to the recent Garchey survey. At least 400 garchey units are still in place, and some residents wished to retain them.

The Working Party had met initially, without any BEO staff present, and since then it had been working well with a BEO Chairman. Members noted that either the RCC Chairman or one of the two Deputy Chairmen served on the majority of Working Parties and, if an officer chaired them, they had responsibility for that area of work. The Working Party meetings were clerked by the Estate Office and the RCC's AGM approved all their Terms of Reference

7. A MORE STRATEGIC ROLE FOR THE RCC

Members briefly discussed the recent car park charges decision and the Girls School proposals and it was accepted that there had, at times, been some inappropriate language directed at officers and confrontational behaviours in public. The Chairman was keen to promote positive relationships with the Estate Office and to work as a strategic partnership and asked Members to refrain from generalisations that could taint good behaviour in meetings.

It was suggested that the House Groups and Working Parties could act as 'sounding boards' for the RCC and possibly have earlier conversations with the Estate Office and the City Corporation. Some House Groups would welcome the opportunity to convene special meetings, should a relevant SLA issue arise; for example.

There was concern that some residents, who are not active in the House Groups, might not understand how best to raise a complaint and it was suggested that the structure could be clearer. Members noted that the formal channel was the RCC but a matter should be raised with their House Officer and House Group in the first instance. The RCC also reserved the right to take a resolution to the BRC, as had happened with Lauderdale House's Car Park Charges proposal. Should the matter still not be resolved satisfactorily, then it could be escalated to a Ward Member. The Common Councilmen Members present asked if such complaints could be sent to one Councilman only alone in the first instant, and not copied into various other parties as this could impede progress. It was suggested that lack of clarity in respect of the Girls School had led to some Common Councilmen being bombarded and this had been unhelpful. Finally there was a right of appeal to the Local Government Ombudsman if the matter remained unresolved.

8. QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no further questions.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

Members noted the Children's Fortune Street Funday scheduled this Sunday, 1st July.

The meeting ended at 8pm

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