

BARBICAN ESTATE RESIDENTS CONSULTATION COMMITTEE
Wednesday, 30 November 2022

Minutes of the meeting at Guildhall and Virtually at 6.30 pm

Present

Sandra Jenner – Chair	Adam Hogg - Chair, Barbican Association
Jim Durcan - Deputy Chair	Fiona Lean - Ben Jonson House
Gordon Griffiths - Bunyan Court	Rodney Jagelman - Thomas More House
David Graves - Seddon House	James Ball - Brandon Mews
Mary Bonar – Wallside	Tim Hollaway - Lambert Jones Mews
Ted Reilly - Shakespeare Tower	Guy Nisbett - Speed House
Graham Webb - Willoughby House	Graham Wallace- Andrewes House
David Lawrence - Lauderdale Tower	Ian Dixon - Gilbert House
Fred Rodgers – Breton House	Helen Hudson - Defoe House/John Trundle Court
	Monique Long - Mountjoy House

In Attendance:

Mark Wheatley	– Chair of the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC)
Anne Corbett	– Deputy Chair of the BRC
Helen Fentimen	– BRC Member and Deputy Chair of Community and Children’s Services

Officers:

Paul Murtagh	- Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, Department of Community and Children’s Services
Jason Hayes	- Head of Major Projects, Department of Community and Children’s Services (DCCS)
Anne Mason	- Service Charge and Revenues Manager, DCCS
Mark Jarvis	- Head of Finance, Chamberlains
Rosalind Ugwu	- Head of Barbican Estates, DCCS
Helen Davinson	- Resident Services Manager, DCCS
Graeme Low	- Head of Energy and Sustainability, City Surveyors
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerks

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Alan Budgen, Cromwell Tower, John Taysum, Bryer Court and Mark Bostock, Frobisher Crescent.

The following Members had submitted apologies but had sent representation:

Jane Smith – Seddon House (represented by David Graves)
Sandy Wilson – Shakespeare Tower (represented by Ted Reilly)
Petre Reid/Fionnuala Hogan – Willoughby House (represented by Graham Webb)
Andy Hope – Breton House (represented by Fred Rodgers)

Christopher Makin – Speed House (represented by Guy Nisbett)
Dave Taylor – Gilbert House (represented by Ian Dixon)
Helen Hudson is currently representing both Defoe and John Trundle Houses.

The Town Clerk advised that, whilst it is in order for Members sending apologies to send substitutes, in the event of a vote for the position of a second Deputy Chair, there would be a roll call to check that each House Group was represented by one Member.

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 meeting held on 20th September 2022 were approved.

Matters arising:

In response to query, the Head of Major Projects advised that the Savills Stock Condition Survey was emailed to all Members of the RCC, including the AMWP, on 20th August 2021. However, he agreed to circulate it again, and Members noted that the programme and output would be discussed at the Asset Maintenance Working Party on Monday 5th December 2022.

The Assistant Director advised that roof warranties are currently stored in hard copy but would be registered on the new Asset Maintenance database, which will flag when works are required. When works arising from the Stock Condition Survey are carried out, they will also be recorded on the database, and there would be due diligence checks for anything that might invalidate the warranties.

4. **APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY CHAIR**

Ahead of the meeting, a statement in support of Christopher Makin's candidature had been circulated to Members. The Town Clerk explained that Members could vote in person, or by email if joining virtually, and scrutineers would be invited to oversee the process.

The Brandon Mews House Officer advised that the Group would be abstaining in the event of a vote, as they felt that the role should not go to a past Chair of the Committee. The current Chair reminded Members that the composition and terms of reference of the RCC would be reviewed at the AGM in January 2023. There was a further view expressed in that the candidate had expressed a wish to serve for just one year, to ensure a smooth handover to the new RCC Chair, and to minimise the risk of losing institutional knowledge.

Being the only Member expressing a willingness to serve, it was RESOLVED, that - Christopher Makin be appointed as the Second Deputy Chair of the RCC for the ensuing year.

5. **ACTIONS TRACKER**

Members received the action tracker, which had previously been referred to as '*You Said: We Did*'. The Chair welcomed the new format and invited comments. During the discussion on this item, the following points were noted:

1. Members expressed frustration in respect of the Highwalks Maintenance, noting its journey through the City Corporation's decision-making process since 2019. The Corporate Asset Sub Committee (CASC) had met in September 2021 and resolved to support a bid for an additional £125,000, for a planned programme of inspection and maintenance, but there had been no progress since. Members were also concerned that the condition of the walkways had deteriorated further.
2. The Assistant Director explained that there had been some delay due to the pandemic and, whilst CASC had agreed to support a bid, no additional funding source had been identified and, no formal decision had been taken. However, an in-principle agreement had been reached with the Chamberlain to identify funding from existing landlord budgets. Members noted that this budget fall under 'City Fund' and it is not recoverable from leaseholders. The Assistant Director advised that the intention is to find £50,000 to start the process, liaising with residents to ensure their expectations are met. However, Members felt strongly that the works should progress as quickly as possible. Members noted that the Beech Gardens waterproofing project, and maintenance of the new areas, would be subject to separate funding. The Chair asked for a report at the next meeting, giving further explanation and an update.
3. Members sought an explanation about the failure to read meters at the end of the year, which had significantly impacted Gilbert and other houses. The Head of Energy and Sustainability (HE&S) advised that there had been progress since the last meeting, with 83% of issues being resolved. Members were reminded that there had been an issue with communications, when the meter operations contract moved, and this had affected some of the blocks on the Barbican Estate. However, there had also been progress; with 17 meters having been corrected. The HE&S advised that an update on the remaining meters; i.e. – Andrewes, Defoe and Thomas More, was expected on 2nd December 2022, and there would be a further meeting with the supplier and meter operator next week, to seek a swift resolution. The HE&S advised that the team were also investigating capacity charges and the longer term benefits to residents.
4. The HE&S further advised that the meetings in early December, referred to above, would provide an opportunity to consider lessons learnt, and the Chair asked for an update to residents before the next RCC meeting. The Chair was also given reassurance that the cost of the reconciliations would not be charged to Barbican Residents, and that refunds would be given where appropriate.

6. **WORKING PARTY UPDATES**

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

1. The Head of Major Projects (HoMP) agreed to investigate a lack of consultation on the redecorations project and provide feedback to Members.
2. The HoMP also agreed to investigate the alleged lack of preparation to the works at Breton House and asked for similar issues to be brought to his attention.
3. The representative from Ben Jonson House agreed to forward complaints about a lack of supervision to their works.

7. **ELECTRICITY PRICE FORECAST UPDATE**

The Committee received a report of the City Surveyor, which presented the view of expected electricity costs for Barbican Estate. Members noted that prices were yet to be finalised for the full year.

1. The HE&S advised that the PPA is now connected to the grid and would start generating commercial electricity from 1st January 2023. Members noted that this would provide up to 63% of energy across the Corporation, including the Barbican Estate, at a 30% reduction on the unit rate. Work was also underway in respect of flexibility and services, and a feasibility study had received grant funding from GLA, which might contribute to revenue streams in the future and be of benefit to residents.
2. In response to a question, Members noted that the Estate Office estimate is based on consumption over five years. For underfloor heating, this is an average of 19.3m kwh. The Service Charge and Revenues Manager explained that this is higher than the consumption quoted by the Energy Team, which was based on one year's data, and the 2023/24 estimate does not include potential savings. The service charge estimate for leaseholders for 2023/24 will not be finalised until May 2023, by which time there should be more information available in respect of pricing.
3. Members noted that a webinar for residents would take place on 1st December 2022 held by the Underfloor Heating Working Party. This would cover the rationale for switching on & off outside of the proscribed heating season, the potential of individual controls as well as the City of London Corporation's Green Agenda. The webinar would include a breakdown of carbon and energy savings associated with proposed measures, together with the flexibility services referred to earlier. Members noted the zero carbon target for the City Corporation and that surveys had been commissioned in landlord areas; i.e. lighting and lifts, and there would be consultations with residents as they progressed.
4. A Member suggested that there should be a clear message about financial implications to residents, and clarity in terms of the Net Zero Housing Action Plan's interaction with the stock condition survey. The HE&S advised that the grid had been decarbonised, and the PPA would take this further, making the Estate 80% carbon free. Whilst the initial focus would

be in areas where there could be more impact, there would be opportunities for further initiatives on the Barbican Estate.

5. The Deputy Chair of the BRC, who was in attendance at this meeting, set out the criteria for the '*Green Doctors' Scheme*', which would capture some of the Barbican residents; i.e. – those of state pension age, on benefits, with a health condition or disability, would qualify for a free heating consultation.
6. A Member also referred to a scheme whereby residents could swap fan heaters for oil heaters, which are safer, and suggested that it would be helpful to join up such initiatives.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

8. VERBAL UPDATES

8.1 Stock Condition Survey

The Head of Major Projects (HoMP) was heard in respect of the Stock Condition Survey, further to Savills presentation in November 2022. Members noted that the next steps would include an internal review of programmes by block and component. This was due to finish next week, and an internal review would follow in terms of prioritising. The Asset Maintenance Working Party (AMWP) would be consulted before this is developed further, and there would be an overarching consultation with residents. The HoMP advised that the programme would dictate the necessary skills and resources required; noting that some components are 50 years old. The project would also draw on the experience of Housing Revenue Account (HRA) projects and lessons learnt. Members noted that next week's AMWP would consider an action plan, and an early programme would be presented to the RCC meeting in March 2023. The Chair asked whether the programme would be subject to the rigours of formal Programme Management and enquired as to who would be the Programme Director. The Assistant Director advised that the AMWP was currently steering the programme.

8.2 Barbican Estate Office Review

The Head of Barbican Estates was heard in respect of this review, which was now live, following a 2-3 week phase of information sharing with the Consultant. Members noted that a well-attended drop-in session had taken place on 29th November 2022. A meeting of the Project Board was scheduled for 1st December and there had been some 129 survey responses, from staff and residents. Members were also invited to submit comments via email, and any received would be forwarded to the Consultant. There had also been a staff day, run by the Consultant, and interviews with all stakeholders, including the Energy Team and Chamberlains. Members noted that the Board would be meeting every 2 weeks, with a final report expected in February 2023.

In response to an alleged perception of staff not being able to speak candidly, the Assistant Director strongly refuted this. Members noted that all staff and residents had received communications ahead of the review, and the Assistant Director had been meeting staff on a 1-1 basis to alleviate any concerns they might have about the review and its implications for their roles. The Assistant Director also agreed that the RCC could be provided with anonymised staff feedback, as well as residents' comments.

9. **RESIDENTS' SURVEY**

Members received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, which provided the results of the Residents' Satisfaction Survey which was undertaken in October 2022.

The Resident Services Manager advised that the data had been shared with service providers, and an action plan would be produced and rolled out over the next couple of months. Members of the RCC would receive the action plan ahead of the next scheduled meeting in March 2023. The Chair highlighted that the conclusion was less favourable than previous surveys.

The officer confirmed that a coordinated action plan would be produced in response to the survey, including those actions already acted upon. This would be considered as part of the BEO Review, and provided to RCC Members as soon as it was produced

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

10. **SERVICE CHARGE EXPENDITURE AND INCOME ACCOUNT - ORIGINAL BUDGET 2022/23 AND ORIGINAL BUDGET 2023/24**

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain and the Executive Director of Community and Children's Services, which set out the original budget for 2022/23 and 2023/24 for revenue expenditure within the service charge in respect of dwellings.

During the discussion on this report, the following points were noted:

1. The Service Charge and Revenues Manager explained that employee costs and repair and maintenance budgets had been uplifted and, by the end of the year, there will be more accuracy in terms of the window replacement programme. This report was indicative and reflected information currently available.
2. It was suggested that the process itself should be shared with residents, ahead of the budgets being set and works being agreed. The Chair confirmed that this is an aspiration of the RCC and would be pursued in early 2023, when more and better information becomes available for building the 2023/24 base budget.
3. In respect of the window cleaning contract, Members noted that the specification is very similar to the last one and residents would be consulted. TUPE regulations would apply to the new contract, and there

will a stronger emphasis on quality and performance management, in order to hold the approved contractor to account. Concerns had been raised about the cleaning method to the sub podium flats and this would be included in the revised specification.

4. Further comments on the window cleaning tender should be forwarded to Rosalind.ugwu@cityoflondon.gov.uk.
5. In respect of the programme of lift works in the 3 towers, no decision had been taken on priority, as it would be part of the consultation but the poorest performing ones would take priority. The Service Charge and Revenues Manager explained that the City's accounting would not show figures on projects until they moved to an 'approved programme'.
6. The Assistant Director advised of a separate survey underway in respect of the most exposed windows in the various blocks, in order to determine whether to replace them now or in the near future. Members noted that this would fall outside of the Stock Condition Survey and be completed by the end of December 2022. A tender process would follow, for those needing replacement, on a Schedule of Rates basis, which should ensure economies of scale in future works. However, Members expressed concerns that this exercise had taken so long.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

11. REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGETS - ORIGINAL BUDGET 2022/23 AND ORIGINAL 2023/24 - EXCLUDING DWELLINGS SERVICE CHARGE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

The Committee received a report of the Chamberlain and the Executive Director of Community and Children's Services, which presented the annual submission of the revenue and capital budgets overseen by the Barbican Residential Committee. Members asked if the information in these reports could be simplified in future in respect of capital works and if leaseholders could have an early steer as to what the re-forecast would look like.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

12. BLAKE TOWER UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services and noted that the Assistant Director had written to Redrow's, in legal terms, expressing serious concerns about fire compartmentation. The Assistant Director had also met with Members and the Residents' Association to update them. Members noted that the Estate Office was still not in a position to taken over the building, for the reasons set out in the report.

RESOLVED, that - the report be noted.

13. UPDATE REPORT

The Committee received the update report.

In respect of Brandon Mews, the Assistant Director had met with the House Group on 1st November 2023, and agreed to continue with research, assisted by the residents. Members noted that the next step would be an options appraisal, and this would be shared with the House Committee. Whilst the approach was commended, there was a request for a timeline, and for the RCC to receive both this and the outline options, at the next meeting of the RCC.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

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

There were no questions.

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

The Chair agreed to admit the following items of urgent business :

SPRINKLERS

The Cromwell Tower House Group held its Annual General Meeting on Tuesday, 29th November 2022 and considered whether sprinklers are an appropriate response to a perceived fire safety risk was discussed. The AGM's had concluded that this was unnecessary, impractical and misconceived and asked for the following points to be recorded in these minutes:

1. The fire risk across the estate is low based on the number of fires that there have been across the estate in 50 years plus.
2. Such as there have been fires, no fire has ever breached a floor and has been exclusively contained within the dwelling, suggesting that the existing fabric does not need any additional protection to maintain compartmentation
3. While accepting that the Towers only have one fire staircase, the Arup report fails to appreciate that every room has access to the fire escape balcony and therefore residents have a means to egress to at least the floor below (or two floors below) by two routes (and this is notwithstanding the fact that the Towers maintain a stay put policy). Accordingly, at best the Arup report is incomplete, and at worst misleading.
4. In any event, the Arup report only suggests that sprinklers should be "considered". It is not a recommendation and therefore the Cromwell House Group wants the RCC to make sure that this "consideration" is scotched before it gains any momentum.
5. The Cromwell Tower residents are not satisfied at the standard of the retrofitted sprinklers on another City of London Corporation Estate and will not accept them'. *NB. At present, the City of London Corporation has no right to respond in this matter.*

HOMELESSNESS AND ROUGH SLEEPING STRATEGY

The Deputy Chair of the CCS Committee, also a BRC Member, was in attendance and advised the Committee of a new Strategy in respect of Homelessness and Rough Sleeping, which would be issued for a 3-month consultation period on 12th December 2022. Members were asked to discuss this at their respective House Groups and to encourage feedback from residents.

PLAY AREAS

The Resident Services Manager advised that as previously agreed with the Barbican Association, the Thomas More Garden Play Area was available for use until 8pm throughout the year. Members noted that the uplighters on the pillars below Seddon house provide illumination but were not used last Winter. However, a number of users would like to see them switched back on. The Estate Office proposed that this be 7.45pm and, as there were no comments or objections from the RCC Members present, this would be publicised in the bulletin.

The meeting ended at 8.40 pm

Chairman

Contact Officer: Julie.Mayer@cityoflondon.gov.uk