

BARBICAN ESTATE RESIDENTS' CONSULTATION COMMITTEE
Monday, 25 November 2024

Minutes of the meeting of the Barbican Estate Residents Consultation Committee
held at Committee Rooms, 2nd Floor, West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 25
November 2024 at 6.30 pm

Present

Members:

Sandra Jenner - (Chair)	Fred Rogers - Breton House
Jim Durcan - (Deputy Chair)	Helen Hudson - Defoe House
Lucy Sisman - (Deputy Chair)	Dave Taylor - Gilbert House
Jane Smith - Seddon House	Rodney Jagelman -Thomas More House
David Lawrence - Lauderdale Tower	Stuart Lynas - Mountjoy House
Adam Hogg - Chair, Barbican Association	Petre Reid – Willoughby House
Fiona Lean - Ben Jonson House	Claire Hersey – Lambert Jones Mews
Fritz van Kempen – Speed House	Graham Wallace – Andrewes House
Andrew Tong – Brandon Mews	Sandy Wilson – Shakespeare Tower
	Sally Spensley – Frobisher Crescent

In attendance

Anne Corbett – Deputy Chair, Barbican Residential Committee
Helen Fentimen – Aldersgate Ward Member
Michael Gwyther-Jones – Head of Services, Community and Children’s Services
Tam Pollard – Chair, Asset Maintenance Working Party
Ted Reilly – Chair, Net Zero and Sustainability Working Party

Officers:

Judith Finlay	- Executive Director, Community and Children’s Services
Dan Sanders	- Assistant Director, Barbican Residential Estate
Michael Gwyther-Jones	- Head of Services, Community and Children’s Services
Emma Bushell	- City Surveyor’s Department
Anna Donoghue	- Department of Community and Children’s Services
Rachel Pye	- Environment Department
Rhys Campbell	- Town Clerk’s Department

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Monique Long and Andy Hope in advance of this meeting. However, Stuart Lynas attended as alternate for Mountjoy House and Fred Rogers for Breton House. John Taysum also sent apologies.

Pauline Fasoli became the RCC representative for John Trundle Court, replacing Miranda Quinney.

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 of the Barbican Residents Consultation Committee (RCC) held on 2 September 2024 be approved as a correct record.

Matters arising

- The following shall feature as standard agenda items at every RCC meeting in future:
 - Transformation Programme Report
 - Barbican Estate Office (BEO) Reporting Committee Report
 - Major Works Programme Board Report
- The review of redecorations programme to be included in the action tracker.
- The status of the Barbican App to be included in the action tracker also and further details regarding the number of residents on the mailing list to be incorporated.
- A question was raised concerning redecoration work undertaken at Willoughby House. The Assistant Director confirmed that talks were still ongoing in relation to funding options and he would update Members at the next meeting.

4. WORKING PARTY UPDATES

The Committee received the following working party updates:

4a. Garden Advisory Group

- Members voted in favour of the proposal for a comprehensive survey and production of plans for the residents' private gardens to be included in the budget planning for 2025/26 at a cost of £20,000. The total project cost would be £40,000 spread over 2 years. An application for a grant from the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund (CILNF) was to be made to help defray these costs.

4b. Service Charge Working Party

- The Chair reminded the Committee that a “root and branch” review of the budget process for 2025/26 with assistance from the Chamberlain's Department had been committed to but there had been significant delay.

However, there had been a recent, welcome change of approach with responsibility and accountability for the budget production and justification passing to the Assistant Director of the BRE. The Assistant Director advised the Committee that the budget had historically ran concurrently with the City Fund risk but the City Fund budget and risk had now been separated from the local risk and service charge contributions. Officers would continue to review, change and monitor the service charge budget for the following year and a report was expected to be submitted to the RCC at its first meeting of 2025 following consultation with the working party to finalise figures.

4c. Asset Maintenance

- A Member asked how projects were going to be overseen and how costs would be shared. The Assistant Director confirmed that this would be addressed in a further report.
- A Member asked if the hiring of an in-house painter and decorator was contrary to the Repairs and Maintenance Contract. The Assistant Director confirmed that the contract contained more broader features and a specific breakdown could be provided to RCC members detailing what percentages of costs were spent on decorative repairs. The Member expressed concern that responsibility for assessing the quality of works was being passed to residents. The Assistant Director stressed that the contract would be actively managed by BEO management but that leaseholders were also being given the opportunity to provide their view on the standard of works.
- The Deputy Chair then asked if leaseholders would see the invoice for repairs undertaken. The Assistant Director said that he would review whether this would be possible.

5. OUTSTANDING ACTIONS

Reporting on the Action Tracker, the Assistant Director highlighted a typo under item 3; '22/23 outturn' should be replaced with '23/24 outturn'.

During the discussion the following points were raised:

1. Regarding the Barbican Podium Project, a Member asked officers for a further update and officers confirmed that a report providing further information shall be submitted to the RCC in 2025.
2. In respect of the Repairs and Maintenance Contract, a Member raised a concern that the Barbican Estate and Golden Lane contracts were to be managed by a single member of the BEO staff. The Assistant Director confirmed unequivocally that these contracts would be managed separately and no resource from the BEO would be involved in the management of the contracts for Golden Lane or HRA estates.

3. The Deputy Chair highlighted under potential breach of lease protocol a case that seemed to be taking an inordinate time to deal with in Andrewes House. It was believed that a small business was operating out of an apartment and the noise emanating from the apartment caused disturbance to the residents living below. Officers agreed to investigate further and to report to the next Service Level Working Party (SLWP) with an update before updating the RCC.

A Member mentioned that there was a similar of delay to the handling of a potential breach of lease at Lauderdale Tower and asked whether the use of the protocol could be reported. Officers advised that a redacted report could be submitted to the RCC following the report to the SLWP.

4. The Assistant Director advised the Committee that Avanti (An Architectural Practice) had undertaken options appraisal and a feasibility study of Brandon Mews Canopy. A report would be submitted to the RCC once a proposal had been submitted. A Member welcomed this development, asked if officers could proceed with the resident consultation process as soon as possible and if the scope of service had been defined. The Assistant Director advised that Avanti had been instructed to hold engagement sessions with leaseholders and Listing Authorities prior to the submission of their proposal. However, no scope of service had been defined at the time of the meeting.
5. The Assistant Director provided an ILECS Lift Consultant presentation to the Committee and a Member asked if any comparative figures were available from the previous consultants to explain the difference in cost. It was confirmed that comparative data was not available from the previous contract. A Member raised a further concern in relation to the lift components. The Assistant Director advised that it was becoming increasingly difficult to source components for BRE lifts which were old and some electrical parts were obsolete.
6. 'A Member reminded the Committee that, as a standing Agenda item for each BRC/RCC meeting, a report on the Transformation Programme should include progress against the Transformation action plan, including timelines and milestones of workstreams. Referring to his update to the Action Tracker, the Assistant Director said that such a report would be included in the agenda for the next RCC/BRC meeting in February and offered to discuss the scope and format of the report with the Member outside the meeting.'

6. SERVICE CHARGE OUTTURN REPORT

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of the service charge outrun for 1st April 2023 – 31st March 2024 for the Barbican Estate.

A Member commented that the report was much improved this year in terms of format and explanations.

Further clarity on the £575,172 underspend on general repairs was requested. The Assistant Director explained that there could be multiple factors contributing to this variance and agreed to investigate and report back.

Regarding sharing the appendix with Willoughby House, the Assistant Director advised that the figures were not final and could be subject to amendment..

A Member raised a question in relation to the Q3 service charge bill and asked when and how residents will receive reimbursement. The Assistant Director reminded the Committee that some heating liabilities from 2022/23 were outstanding and would be collected from leaseholders thus reducing the amount reimbursed.. He advised the Committee that further work was required to finalise the situation which could be hampered by resourcing issues within the BEO. However, he expected their resolution by April 2025.

RESOLVED, that – the report and its contents be noted.

7. PURCHASE POWER AGREEMENT

The Committee received a report of the City Surveyor in respect of a high-level overview of the City Corporation's Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) and the benefit due to the Barbican Estate.

The Assistant Director advised the Committee that the City Corporation had entered into a power agreement with a solar farm in Dorset and energy rates had been locked in for a period of 15 years. Excess energy was sold back to the National Grid at the market rates pertaining at the time. Those rates had been favourable and had contributed to overall savings in electricity costs for the Barbican Estate.

In response to a question the Assistant Director advised that a monthly report was received which included a standardised kilowatt per hour rate and the variable rate when selling back to the national grid, and this was applied to service charge accounts. It was confirmed that the benefit of selling to the National Grid at higher rates was provided in budgets but such provision needed to be fairly conservative.

Officers confirmed that the City Corporation had been successful in reducing its energy consumption as part of its Net Zero by 2027 corporate target which reflected the beneficial contribution of the PPA.

A Member raised concerns regarding the sale of electricity back to the National Grid and whether the difference between the contracted price and market price would remain beneficial. The Assistant Director confirmed that the scale of credit received had been due to global and economic factors, however, did not envisage there was a risk that this would fall into a cost negative position. The Member asked if credit(s) attributed to non-residential blocks were used to offset estate expenditure and officers agreed to investigate further and provide clarity to Members on which switch rooms had been credited.

RESOLVED, that – the report and its contents be noted.

8. **PROPOSED HEATING STUDY**

The Committee received a report of the City Surveyor in respect of a proposed study to deliver a set of bespoke, data backed solutions that will address ongoing and longstanding issues and concerns with the performance and cost of the existing communal, electric underfloor heating system.

The Assistant Director advised the Committee that it was the BEO's intention to commission a study by contractor Ambue Ltd using several apartments as a case study to monitor temperature, air and heat loss. This data would be used to create a building information model (BIM) and identify areas where heating was being lost. The objective of the report was to understand the situation on terms of the "Four C's": cost, carbon, control and comfort. The Assistant Director said that solutions could only be devised with the benefit of objective data. The total cost of the study would be £234,900 which is service charge recoverable, however, £100,000 was available from the Climate Action Strategy Fund reducing the total cost to £134,9000 for long leaseholders.

Whilst a Member welcomed the proposal he asked for a re-wording of a paragraph in relation to the control mechanism and officers agreed to work with him before the next BRC meeting.

A Member requested that the study be broadened to include overheating caused by solar gain. Officers confirmed that monitoring was expected to be undertaken during the winter period into early spring 2025, however they were willing to explore whether it was possible to extend the study beyond this to investigate overheating in the summer.

A Member drew attention to work conducted by Westminster Council and an online application called "Building Atlas" and suggested that officers liaise with Westminster Council to help create a strategy for sustainability refits and energy sustainable measures.

A Member asked for further expansion on the BIM aspect of the exercise and the Assistant Director advised that it would be the first time that BEO had used BIM but confirmed that it could be more widely used for other work streams.

The Chair wanted to ensure that residents would be involved on the project team and encouraged anyone with an interest, be it RCC Member or resident, to volunteer. The Assistant Director confirmed that resident involvement was essential.

RESOLVED, that – the report and its contents be noted.

9. **BARBICAN WINDOWS**

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services to address the known dilapidated condition of windows situated on the Barbican Estate.

The Chair highlighted to officers that the repairs required were due to the neglect of the buildings, lack of planned preventive maintenance, poor repairs and contract management not because of the age of the building as stated in the report.

A Member was frustrated that more surveys were expected despite several having been conducted in the past and asked for assurance that this survey would deliver a quality output. The Assistant Director assured the Committee that this would be the case, providing a full and costed specification of necessary works. The Member was keen to know where the source of funding for the projected programme costs and it was confirmed that this would be considered in the context of the repairs charging policy once it had been finalised.

The Assistant Director agreed to improve wording in the next report submitted to RCC since a Member asked for further clarity on the term "making good" and officers would make clear the funding strategy for the repairs of windows so that there would be no miscommunication.

RESOLVED, that – the report and its contents be noted.

14. LIFT SCREENS

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of a proposal from Elevision to install digital screens in the lifts across the Barbican Estate. The screens would show building management information, local news such as TFL status and weather and advertisements for which the service charge will receive a revenue share.

The Assistant Director advised the Committee that the BEO had put forward the proposal as a cost neutral potential improvement to communication. However, given the negative feedback received from long leaseholders and RCC Members it was decided that the proposal would not be taken further and thus would not be put to the BRC. He reminded the Committee that as custodian of the Barbican Estate the BEO had a duty to put forward marketing proposals and options and would continue to do so in consultation with the RCC.

The Deputy Chair thanked the BEO for the proposal and enthusiasm shown to explore possibilities to lessen service charge and asked them to continue to do so.

RESOLVED, that – the proposal listed within the report is not considered any further.

15. OMBUDSMAN CHOICE FOR BARBICAN RESIDENTS

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of a proposal that Barbican Leaseholders enter into the Property Ombudsman Scheme as opposed to the Housing Ombudsman Scheme.

The Chair advised Officers that at the pre-meeting of the RCC it was agreed that further time was needed to consider the pros and cons of this proposal and that the Deputy Chair should lead a task and finish project which would report to the next RCC.

The Deputy Chair confirmed that the proposal would be discussed at the next SLWP meeting and those who were interested were encouraged to get involved. The Chair further advised that legal advice would be sought from the Federation of Private Residents' Association to inform the forthcoming report.

RESOLVED, that – the proposal listed in the report be considered further by the Service Level Working Party and a further report be submitted at the next committee meeting for consideration.

16. BLAKE TOWER

The Committee received a report of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services in respect of a briefing note to provide the Committee with background information relating to Blake Tower and to set out the Corporation's actions to date.

The Executive Director, Community and Children's Services advised the Committee that although Blake Tower did not fall under the remit of RCC the report was being shared for full transparency as the City Corporation prepared for the transfer of management of Blake Tower from Redrow Barratt.

The Chair advised officers that the issue of the allocation of service charge costs would need to be reviewed in readiness for when the BEO assumed responsibility for the provision of services to Blake Tower leaseholders. The Assistant Director confirmed that this would be necessary and that it would be undertaken as part of a wider review of apportionment across the Estate.

RESOLVED, that – the report and its contents be noted.

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

A Member informed officers that residents at Bunyon Court had not been advised of works to Blake Tower and the noise emanating from this at anti-social hours. Officers apologised for the oversight on their part for not informing Bunyon Court residents.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

There was no business.

The meeting ended at 20:13pm

Chairman

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