

## **Working Party Updates**

### **Residents Consultation Committee 04 March 2019**

#### **Gardens Advisory Group**

##### **GAG meeting held 15<sup>th</sup> February 2019**

As if to emphasise the strangeness of the climate, after the long, hot summer last year members of GAG started the February meeting with a walk round the gardens in glorious sunshine and unseasonal warmth. It could prove another challenging year for the gardening team.

The resident members of GAG still have concerns about the work load in the BEO and how this is impacting on GAG – this was raised with the RCC last September. It was agreed that all members of GAG would communicate directly with everyone else to assist Helen Davinson. Also resident members are to be encouraged to take on the role of Chair and Secretary for GAG as was agreed in the 2017 Terms of Reference.

Resident members of GAG have noted that budget constraints often limit the work the gardens team, and delay or prevent desired improvements to the gardens. The cost to the service charge of the Open Spaces work is very small within the overall bill, with tower flats paying around £2 a week and smaller flats less. While in most cases residents wish to limit service charge increases, GAG members suggested that the RCC consider agreeing an increase in this part of the budget – with the money raised ring-fenced for the estate gardens team – since even an increase in the order of 50p or £1 a week per flat according to size would fund a significant difference to the attractiveness of the private gardens.

The walkaround highlighted the problem of vine weevils in many planters around the Estate. These pests can also be found in residents' balcony window boxes and allotments. Vine weevils eat plants' leaves making unsightly holes, but do more serious unseen damage to roots, eventually killing plants. The gardeners have used biological methods (nematodes) to control infestations, but where the problem is particularly severe removal and replacement of soil is necessary. The planters on the highwalk by Brandon Mews may need this treatment.

In Speed Garden, GAG discussed the brick buttresses under flat windows on the north side. These prove tempting to children who climb on them, to the annoyance of residents. Suggestions were made for plants to cloak the brick and so deter the youngsters.

Otherwise members noted that previous work is paying off, for instance along the Speed Garden pergola where new planting has grown so well that some trimming of the hebes and tying in of the *trachelospermum jasminoides* (star jasmine) is now necessary. The Thomas More "hanging" garden benefited from much pruning work late last year and in spring new plants will be put in.

Residents will learn about new tree plantings in forthcoming Estate bulletins, including three new trees for the St Giles area and the replacement mimosa for Thomas More. In late spring the Estate bulletin will carry an explanation of the new policy of not watering lawns during droughts following the experience of last summer. Although the unwatered grass looked brown and dead, it revived quickly once it started raining.

On the subject of communicating with residents, Jake Tibbetts, City Gardens Manager, is to address a meeting set up by the BHS on February 19<sup>th</sup>, to talk about the garden team's work and his aspirations. He is planning some "Meet the Gardeners" sessions around the Estate, so residents should look out for information on these.

Jake put forward a plan to build on the regular inspections of the gardens now being made by resident members of GAG. The gardeners would benefit from a grading system so that they could see which areas residents were happy with, and to highlight issues that needed addressing. A future walkaround will focus on how to make grading consistent across the inspection teams.

The Barbican Wildlife Group has been approached by the Butterfly Conservation charity to take part in a new, heritage lottery financed project promoting butterflies in cities. This will include teach-ins on butterfly and moth identification and advice on how to encourage them to live in the City.

Next GAG meeting Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> May.

## **Leaseholder Service Charge**

### **Members**

Anne Mason - Chair (BEO), Michael Bennett (BEO), Helen Davinson (BEO), Jim Davies, Helen Wilkinson, Jane Northcote, Phillip Burgess, David Lawrence, David Graves

Meeting - 5 February 2019

### **Improving Communications with Leaseholders**

All blocks were sent the new format letters for the service charge actuals in September 2018. The few comments received were generally positive.

However, the new format letters did take much longer to produce. It was agreed that in May, as a trial involving five blocks, some of the service charge estimate information would be provided on-line.

The service charge schedules for the current year and the 2017/18 actuals are now on-line. This was advertised in an email broadcast in December.

## **Comparison of Service Charges with other estates**

The working party would like to look at various other estates/blocks to compare the service charges. It was recognised that services provided could vary considerably and care would be needed in choosing the comparables.

The service charges for a two bed flat on Golden Lane and the Barbican was discussed and it was noted that cleaning for the Barbican flat was some 57% higher. However, Golden Lane flats do not have the same level of service e.g. refuse is not collected from the flats.

The services provided to both estates will be looked at in more detail at the next meeting along with other estates.

## **Procurement**

The City's procurement process was discussed. Further discussions will take place with regard to value for money, cost savings and innovation.

## **Asset Maintenance**

The Asset Maintenance Working Party met on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019 (minutes pending).

Discussions took place concerning:

- Underfloor Heating (see below)
- Garchey – an update on the current position to be re-sent
- Beech Gardens – an update on the current 2 leaks and the proposal for phase II
- Repairs and Maintenance Contract – AMWP resident members to sit on the Working Party to monitor the new contract
- Issues Log – An issues log was presented and well received to capture actions and updates from the working party
- Redecorations – An update on the proposed next phase of the 5 year redecorations contract
- Lifts – an update on the proposed condition survey of the tower block lifts
- Fire Safety – an update on the testing of fire doors
- Stock Condition Survey – an update on the current position and the tender process

## Background Underfloor Heating

The Underfloor Heating Working Party met on 7<sup>th</sup> February. Below are the draft minutes.

Apologies:

Renu Gupta	Resident
Kate Wood	Resident
Sarah Bee	Resident
Ted Reilly	Resident
Craig Allen	Resident

Attendee		Organisation
Mary Durcan	GL	Chair - Resident
Paul Murtagh	PM	Assistant Director Barbican & Property Services
Mike Saunders	MS	CoL Housing Property Services
Shaun Moore	SM	CoL Housing Property Services
Shaunna McFarlane	SMc	CoL Housing Property Services
Garth Leder	GL	Deputy Chair – Resident

Chris Sedgewick	<p><b><u>Review of Preceding minutes</u></b></p> <p>Minutes of last meeting date to be amended, all other matters are covered under agenda.</p>	
CoL Housing Property Services 1	<p>It is confirmed for this meeting we will review the residents briefing paper as it covers all items under the agenda.</p>	
2	<p><b><u>UFH WP Objective</u></b></p> <p>The ultimate long-term objective of the Working Party is confirmed and noted as the following:</p> <p>‘The long-term objective of the Resident members of the Working Party is to provide for those residents, who are willing to pay for it, a mechanism by which they can control their own heating. This will recognise the constraints of the lease, and the heating system itself.’</p> <p>This objective will be presented to the Barbican Association AGM on the 24<sup>th</sup> April; a detailed report is being prepared by Party Members,</p>	

	it is then hoped that a vote will be able to shower whether the above is something that most residents will want.	
<b>3/4</b>	<p><b><u>Load Balancing/Switching Loads</u></b></p> <p>An audit has been carried out by the engineers and a list generated detailing the current flats and which loads they are on.</p> <p><b>List to be circulated to all members.</b></p> <p>The engineers have gone through the control rooms to ensure that the new system is mimicking the original cyclo control system, which it now is.</p> <p>October 2020 is when the current contract with our current supplier comes to an end, approaching this date we will be able to negotiate and get prices for changing the profiles for the system; with the desired profile being only one estate wide load being used.</p> <p>It is confirmed that we will need to brief the Corporate Energy Board in the above i.e. James Rooke, negotiations of the contract will go through this team.</p>	
<b>6</b>	<p><b><u>Demand Side Response</u></b></p> <p>James Rooke has been in contact and has advised that there was a delay in the trial due to funding. Funding has now been confirmed and we will be moving forward with Schneider.</p> <p>It is confirmed that along with Guildhall, Barbican Centre and Barbican Residential will also be included in the trial.</p> <p>James is hoping that the above will be in place in the next 2months.</p> <p>It is also confirmed that we will see a return for the electricity we do not use during the allotted time. (30mins a day)</p>	
	<p><b><u>Individual Flat Controls</u></b></p> <p>GL confirms that the trimmers were installed in his property (Defoe House) 10 days ago, he has been monitoring them daily to make sure they are working as they should be.</p> <p>GL will now start trying to adjust the controls using future weather forecasts, results to be given at next meeting in June.</p> <p>GL asks if Data Loggers can be purchased so he can log the temperature and keep accurate records of when he adjusts it.</p> <p><b>SM to investigate the above</b></p>	

	<p>Costs for the above installation is confirmed as:</p> <p>£155 for the new trimmer £350 for installation</p>	
	<p><b><u>Live Web Page for Residents</u></b></p> <p>SM has been chasing Schneider's technical department in the hopes of getting daily updates emailed to the engineers with details on the nightly charges, once Schneider can confirm and do this, we will be able to make it available to residents via the web page.</p> <p><b>SM will continue to chase Schneider</b></p>	
	<p><b><u>Seasonal Load Transfer</u></b></p> <p>It is noted that TR has created a tool which shows shifting the heating load to the shoulder months could be done in a cost-neutral way.</p> <p><b>SM and TR to sit down and go through design to establish whether it is feasible.</b></p>	
10	<p><b><u>AOB</u></b></p> <p>A Working Part Action Plan is to be created, this will clearly outline any actions and help keep track of progress.</p> <p><u>Next meeting date</u></p> <p>Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2019</p>	