

Barbican Estate Residents Consultation Committee (RCC)
Monday, 17 January 2022

Minutes of the virtual meeting held at 6.30 pm

A recording of this meeting is available at: <https://youtu.be/gC5KiUxSf50>
for 1 year from the date of the meeting

Present

Members:	Christopher Makin - Chair	Adam Hogg - Chair, Barbican Association
	Ted Reilly - Deputy Chair	Fiona Lean - Ben Jonson House
	Mike Cribb - Deputy Chair	Rodney Jagelman - Thomas More
	Gordon Griffiths - Bunyan Court	James Ball - Brandon Mews
	Jane Smith - Seddon House	Guy Nisbett - Speed House
	John Taysum - Bryer Court	Helen Hudson - John Trundle House
	John Tomlinson - Cromwell	Andy Hope - Breton House
	Mary Bonar - Wallside	Jim Durcan - Andrewes House
	Sandy Wilson - Shakespeare	Dave Taylor - Gilbert House
	Prof. Michael Swash - Willoughby	Sandra Jenner - Defoe House
	David Lawrence - Lauderdale	Monique Long - Mountjoy House
	Mark Bostock – Frobisher	

In attendance:

Susan Pearson	- Ward Member for Cripplegate
Helen Fentimen	- Ward Member for Aldersgate
Jeremy Mayhew, OBE	- Ward Member for Aldersgate

Officers:

Paul Murtagh	- Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, Community and Children's Services
Helen Davinson	- Community and Children's Services
Michael Bennett	- Community and Children's Services
Anne Mason	- Community and Children's Services
Jason Hayes	- Community and Children's Services
Mark Jarvis	- Chamberlains
Julie Mayer	- Town Clerk's

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from the Chair and Deputy Chair of the BRC, who had prior engagements this evening and from Tim Hollaway, representative from Lambert Jones Mews.

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 27th September 2021 be approved.

Matters arising

Members noted that, whilst the government had been somewhat overwhelmed by the number of bids in respect of funding for projects aimed at reducing our carbon footprint, there was no suggestion that its commitment had waived. There had been a delay to the decision in respect of Wave 1 Bids (Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund), from 31 December 2021 to mid-February 2022, but this would not impact on the Barbican Estate at this stage. The Assistant Director and his team continue to work with colleagues in City Surveyors to ensure that all opportunities for grant funding are considered and maximised, and the City Corporation's Climate Action Strategy continues to be implemented.

4. **'YOU SAID; WE DID' - OUTSTANDING ACTIONS LIST**

The Committee received the outstanding actions list and during the discussion and questions the following points were noted:

The External Wall Fire Reviews had been added to the Agenda Plan for June 2022.

The next meeting of the RCC would receive a report to the BRC setting out the City Corporation's policy in respect of EWS1 forms. Members noted that the forms are not a statutory requirement however, the Assistant Director is able to provide 'comfort letters' to mortgage providers on request.

There had been a delay to the Gateway 6 - Outcome Report on Beech Gardens Podium Resurfacing Project Phase 1. This is due, in the main, to the re-procurement of a specialist consultant to investigate and advise on the quality of the works undertaken and, the suitability and level of specification. Members were assured that the lessons learned from Phase 1 had been given due consideration in the preparatory works for Phase 2. It is hoped that the Gateway 6 – Outcome Report for Phase 1 will be ready for the next RCC and BRC Meetings. If not, there will be an interim Update Report instead. It was confirmed that, in relation to Phase 2 of the works, there have been several stakeholder meetings between officers and representatives from the relevant residential blocks.

Responsibility for the maintenance of the highwalks (beyond the residential areas) had transferred to the Barbican Estate Office a number of years ago. However, the funding that transferred with it has, over time, proved to be inadequate for the works required. This matter remains the subject of ongoing discussions with the Chamberlain. The Assistant Director agreed to check on progress with gully cleaning on the podium and highwalks across the Estate.

5. **TASK AND FINISH GROUP CONCIERGE SERVICE - ORAL UPDATE**

The Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, advised that the work of the original Task and Finish Group was now complete, culminating in the resolution put forward to, and accepted by the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC) at its last meeting.

Members noted that officers were now considering various options in respect of the car park attendants, and possible alternatives in terms of achieving savings targets. This work will be subject to a full consultation with residents. The Leaseholder Service Charges Working Party (LSCWP) is seeking to identify cost savings in the provision of the car park service that does not affect the service itself. The wider remit of the LSCWP to seek reductions in service charges, without compromising services, continues.

The Director of Community and Children's Services and the Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, meet regularly with the Chairs of the RCC and the BA to maintain oversight. It is anticipated that the Corporation will be in a position to consult with residents on the various options around the beginning of April. The Assistant Director confirmed that Members of the RCC/BRC would be able to comment on the proposed options for consultation before they go live. Members will receive an update report on the outcome of consultations and preferred options at their next meetings in the Spring/Summer of 2022.

6. BLAKE TOWER - ORAL UPDATE

The Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services advised that, despite some progress towards the end of 2021, the Corporation is still some way off taking over responsibility for the management of Blake Tower. The Assistant Director had met with some of the residents on 2 December 2021 to view some of the areas of concern. Unfortunately, the following day, on 3rd December 2021, a burst sprinkler pipe caused a serious water leak in the building. The City Solicitor has written to Redrow, setting out the concerns raised during the Assistant Director's visit, and residents' various emails, and they had since responded. Members noted that some residents had independent legal representation, and the Estate Office could not intervene in these cases. However, the City Corporation would continue to exert pressure on Redrow and, whilst not obligated to do so, had paid for the Saville's Fire Safety Survey on the block.

7. FIRE SAFETY UPDATE

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which provided an update to Members on the progress made in relation to fire safety matters since the last update report submitted to Committee in June 2021.

During the discussion and questions, the following points were noted :

- The Planning Documents in respect of the signage strategy would be submitted within the next couple of weeks.
- The Fire Strategy document had been discussed at the Asset Maintenance Working Party and was ready to be shared with House Groups. The officer agreed to send this to the Chairman for onward circulation and officers were thanked for their thorough communications in this matter. The Cromwell House representative was invited to speak to the officer outside of the meeting, in respect of the design of the notices.

- The Fire Risk Assessors and Arup Survey had picked up on compromised standards of compartmentation, caused by unauthorised structural alterations. Whilst Fire Risk Assessments sometimes made generic comments, they had been considered in detail and the leaseholders affected had been contacted. Members noted that the Home Improvement Approvals process, in respect of final inspections and sign-offs, had been amended to prevent a recurrence.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

8. SERVICE CHARGE EXPENDITURE & INCOME ACCOUNT - ORIGINAL BUDGET 2021/22 & ORIGINAL BUDGET 2022/23

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services and the Chamberlain, which set out the original budget for 2021/22 and 2022/23 for revenue expenditure included within the service charge in respect of dwellings.

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

1. Major works for 21/22 had been around £700k higher than expected, mainly due to asbestos remedial works and the windows replacement programme. The drainage works were itemised and referred to one block.
2. The Projects Team did not expect the water tanks replacement cost of £283k to be as high as set out in the report. Members noted that all works are itemised following surveys. The officer gave assurance of the strict governance procedures in place, across the City Corporation's Gateway Projects Procedure, to protect against variances and underspends were due to stringent budgetary controls. In the case of the water tanks, it was likely that there had been less full replacements than expected. Repair and maintenance works are often the hardest to predict but the project team look at trends over the past 5 years. Similarly, there are variations in heating costs, and these too are based on consumption over a 5 year period.
3. The windows stock condition survey had been discussed at the Asset Maintenance Working Party. The options under consideration, to support the longevity of the Estate, would run alongside the City of London Corporation's Climate Action Strategy.
4. The redecoration works had been scheduled for 2020-25 but were delayed due to the pandemic. It was unlikely that the full £142k would be spent this year and any costs incurred would be billed to leaseholders as part of the balancing adjustment in September 2023.
5. Officers agreed to investigate the asbestos repairs to the bin lockers at Bunyan Court.
6. Departmental Chief Officers are the Director of Community and Children's Services and the Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services
7. The reference to investment properties in para 2 is an example of Central Risk budgets. This does not apply to the Barbican Estate Service Charge Account

8. A pilot for repair works was underway at Defoe House, which is expected to be more efficient in producing reports and to be potentially rolled out across the Estate. A demonstration of the pilot had been well received by the Service Level Agreement Working party.
9. The car parking reduction has been built into the 2020/21 budget estimate as part of the savings target, however, there was a perception that this could have been made clearer and was being presented as a fait accompli. Members noted the percentage charged to the service charge account in respect of car park charges amounted to 36.8% and the remainder to the car park account. The officer explained that the residential blocks are charged according to the percentages in the Lease. The total of these percentages for the original blocks amounted to 33.3% but the addition of Blake Tower and Frobisher Crescent and the loss of Milton Court led to the revised total of 36.8%.

The Chair thanked everyone for contributing to the discussion and reminded Members that the BRC will receive the minutes from this meeting, ahead of taking a decision on the report on 27th January 2022.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

9. **REVENUE & CAPITAL BUDGETS - ORIGINAL BUDGET 2021/22 AND ORIGINAL 2022/23 - EXCLUDING DWELLINGS SERVICE CHARGE INCOME & EXPENDITURE**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services and the Chamberlain, which set out the annual submission of the revenue and capital budgets overseen by the Barbican Residential Committee (BRC). The report to the BRC, presented to this Committee for information, would seek approval of the provisional revenue budget for 2022/23, for subsequent submission to the Finance Committee. Details of the Committee's draft capital budget were also provided. Members noted that notional capital charges against assets are an accounting convention, but they do not affect service charges.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

10. **BARBICAN AND GOLDEN LANE CONSERVATION AREA CHARACTER SUMMARY AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGY SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING DOCUMENTS FOR THE LOCAL PLAN**

The Committee received a report of the Director of the Environment and noted that a draft Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) for the Barbican and Golden Lane Conservation Area was issued for public consultation during May, June and July 2021. In response to comments received, several amendments were proposed to the SPD, as set out in appendices B and C to this report and these would be put before the Barbican Residential Committee, Planning and Transportation Committee and the Barbican Centre Board over the next couple of weeks. Members agreed to pass this report on to the Barbican Association Planning Committee for comment, on behalf of the RCC, as they have the relevant expertise in this area. There were no further comments or questions at this meeting.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

11. PROGRESS OF SALES AND LETTINGS

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which advised Members of the sales and lettings approved under delegated authority and in accordance with Standing Orders, since the last meeting of the Committee. The report also provided information on surrenders of tenancies received and the number of flat sales to date.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

12. WORKING PARTY UPDATES

The Committee received updates from the following Working Parties:

a) **Gardens Advisory**

b) **Asset Maintenance**

c) **Background Underfloor Heating**

d) **Leaseholder Service Charge**

e) **Electric Vehicle**

f) **SLA** - Members noted that, following the Service Level Agreement Working Party's recent refresh of its membership and terms of reference, there wasn't a regular update report on this agenda. The officer advised that the last meeting of the Working Party, in October 2021, had discussed a variation to the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) and the next meeting was due to consider these further, together with the Defoe House Pilot for repairs and maintenance, referred to above, and a revision of the original 'Blue' SLA handbook. The next meeting of the RCC would receive a further update.

13. UPDATE REPORT

Members received the regular update report of the Director of Community and Children's Services.

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

Michael Bennett

The Chairman and Members thanked Michael Bennett for his hard work in serving the Barbican Estate Office since 2003, and his attendance at around 100 meetings. Members agreed that Michael's diligence had shaped the Estate and overseen many positive changes.

Canopy over Brandon Mews - The Barbican Residential Committee (BRC) are asked to note the following Resolution of the RCC, which was agreed unanimously:

The RCC regrets the failure of the Barbican Estate Office to undertake cleaning the canopy over Brandon Mews and would ask the BRC to investigate this matter and encourage the BEO to carry out this work promptly.

The residents suggested that the Estate Office had used inadequate cleaning products, as one leaseholder had successfully cleaned part of it. The Assistant Director advised that, whilst it might be possible to spot clean a small part of the canopy, some 40 years of dirt and pollution has accumulated and a complete jet spray clean is likely to damage the polycarbonate materials. However, the Assistant Director welcomed the opportunity for a discussion at the BRC about a long-term maintenance plan, noting that there might be some limitations. Members also noted that the canopy was part of the Listing on the Estate.

The meeting ended at 8.30 pm

Chairman

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