

BARBICAN RESIDENTIAL COMMITTEE
Friday, 17 June 2022

Minutes of the meeting at Guildhall at 1.45 pm

Present

Members:

Mark Wheatley, Chairman*
Mark Bostock
Anne Corbett, Deputy Chairman*
Helen Fentimen
Deputy John Fletcher*
John Foley*
Steve Goodman
Paul Singh

*Non-resident Members

In attendance:

Natasha Lloyd-Owen – Ward Member for Cripplegate

Officers:

Alan Bennetts	-	Comptroller and City Solicitor's Department
Mark Jarvis	-	Chamberlains
Paul Murtagh	-	Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services, Community and Children's Services (CCS)
Helen Davinson	-	CCS
Michael Gwyther-Jones	-	CCS
Jason Hayes	-	CCS
Anne Mason	-	CCS
Julie Mayer	-	Town Clerks

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Elizabeth King, Frankie Leach, Andrew McMurtrie, Deputy Susan Pearson and Ruby Sayed

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

John Foley declared a general, non-pecuniary interest by virtue of his membership of the Barbican Association. Mr Foley had been a resident of the Barbican but not for the past 2 years.

3. ORDER OF THE COURT OF COMMON COUNCIL

Members received the Order of the Court of Common Council, appointing the Committee and approving its Terms of Reference.

RESOLVED, that – the Order of the Court dated 21st April 2022 be approved.

4. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN

The Committee elected a Chairman in accordance with Standing Order 29. Being the only Member declaring a willingness to serve, it was RESOLVED, that – Mark Wheatley be appointed as the Chair of the Barbican Residential Committee for 2022/23.

On taking the Chair, Mr Wheatley thanked retiring Members for their contributions and welcomed new Members. The Chairman also thanked Michael Bennett, the long serving Head of the Barbican Estate Office, who had recently retired after 20 years of exemplary service, and welcomed Rosalind Ugwu, who would be standing in on an interim basis.

The Chairman thanked past Chairman and former Deputy Chairman, Michael Hudson, for his tenacity and attention to detail, which would be greatly missed. Finally, he thanked Christopher Makin, who would be standing down as Chair of the Barbican Residents' Consultation Committee (RCC), having served 4 years in the role, working in partnership with the BRC. Christopher had recently been appointed to the Court of Aldermen and the Committee wished him well in the future.

5. ELECTION OF DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

The Committee elected a Deputy Chairman in accordance with Standing Order 30. Being the only Member declaring a willingness to serve, it was RESOLVED, that – Anne Corbett be appointed as the Deputy Chair of the Barbican Residential Committee for 2022/23.

6. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED, that – the minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2022.

7. DRAFT MINUTES OF THE RESIDENTS CONSULTATION COMMITTEE (RCC)

RESOLVED, that – the draft minutes of the RCC on 6th June 2022 be received.

8. TO APPOINT A MEMBER TO THE CAR PARK CHARGES WORKING PARTY

Steve Goodman expressed an interest in serving. As there had been a couple of apologies for today's meeting, the Town Clerk would contact resident Members after the meeting to seek further expressions of interest in respect of the remaining two positions for resident Members.

RESOLVED, that – Steve Goodman be appointed as a resident Member of the Car Park Charges Working Party.

9. **'YOU SAID; WE DID': OUTSTANDING ACTIONS LIST**

Members received the Outstanding Actions List and noted that a quote for the playground at Thomas More Gardens had been received for approximately £60,000, i.e.; - £30 per flat. Although it was not a legal requirement for this amount, a second quotation would be obtained to ensure value for money. Members noted that a lot of the works would concentrate on the surface area and the contractors were ready to start.

10. **UPDATE REPORT**

The Committee received the update report and noted the following updates.

- In respect of the Brandon Mews Canopy, Members noted that the responsible officer would be the Assistant Director, Barbican and Property Services.
- The Assistant Director advised that the City Surveyors Department is responsible for the Wood Street escalators and agreed to ask them for an update in respect of the regular, intermittent faults. Members noted that this matter would also be raised at the next meeting of the Planning and Transportation Committee. A Member of this Committee, in attendance today as an observer, agreed to update BRC Members after the Planning meeting.

RESOLVED, that – the update report be noted.

11. **UPDATE REPORT: ARUP FIRE SAFETY STRATEGY REPORTS**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which updated Members on the progress made by Arup's in carrying out a detailed fire safety strategy audit on a representative sample of residential blocks on the Barbican Estate. The Assistant Director provided an update on the history and background of this project, for the benefit of new Members on the Committee.

Members noted an update to the recommendations in the report in that the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, strongly recommended the installation of sprinklers to the three high rise blocks on the Barbican Estate, as had been the case with the City's social housing blocks. Members noted that they would receive further updates in respect of the action plan and feasibility study and were encouraged to visit a trial installation in a flat on the Middlesex Street Estate to see the impact of a typical sprinkler installation.

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

1. Whilst it was very important to be transparent about the intrusive nature of the works, this should not distract from the fact that sprinklers save lives.
2. This report has also been circulated to the members of the RCC. At their last meeting on 6th June 2022, the Assistant Director made a commitment to robust communication and consultation with residents.

3. There is currently no budget for this work, as was the case with the fire door replacement project, and a special bid would be needed if the project were to proceed. It was noted that these works are categorised as improvements and Leaseholders would not be liable under the terms of their leases to contribute towards the cost of the works.
4. The Barbican is a Listed Estate, so there will be planning issues. The installation of sprinklers will be intrusive but pipework and ducting would be designed to be as inobtrusive as possible.
5. A 'myth busting' document had been produced for social housing tenants and would be reproduced for the works on the Barbican Estate. Members noted that the risk of sprinklers being activated by accident is about 1 in 16 million.
6. The Corporation's Fire Safety Advisor, a former London Fire Brigade (LFB) employee, has been consulted on this matter. The view is that the LFB will expect the Corporation to manage fire safety across its housing portfolio and would very unlikely contradict the recommendation in the Arup report for sprinklers to be installed in Cromwell Tower. Similarly, although, the LFB cannot enforce the installation of sprinklers they can make a strong recommendation.
7. The Executive Summary of Arup's report, appended to this report, highlights a lot of the issues that will be picked up as part of the future action plan.
8. In respect of Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEP's), officers wrote to all residents on the Barbican Estate and there had been a high level of response, given that co-operation is voluntary. Officers had been pro-actively contacting those vulnerable residents who had not responded. Plans were being developed, and officers agreed to bring a report to the next meeting in respect of emerging recommendations and mitigations. There is a lot of officer intelligence in respect of residents with vulnerabilities, and the team works with adult social care services and the carers' group. It was noted that the car park attendants also have a very good knowledge of vulnerable people on the estate.

RESOLVED, That:

1. The contents of this report be noted, together with the Fire Safety Strategy Reports produced by Arup in respect of Cromwell Tower and Andrewes House on the Barbican Estate.
2. The strong recommendation of the Executive Director, in support of the retro-fitting of automatic water fire suppression systems (sprinklers) in the three Barbican high-rise tower blocks, be noted.

3. A Feasibility Study be undertaken, giving consideration to the views of residents and recommendations of the Executive Director, Community and Children's Services, Arup's and the Fire Brigades recommendations.
4. The Feasibility Study and Action Plan be presented to the next meeting of the Committee in September 2022.

12. PROVISION OF EWS1 FORMS

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the City of London Corporation's approach to the provision (or non-provision) of EWS1 Forms across the Barbican Residential Estate.

Members noted that there had been no issues as yet with the 'comfort letters' issued to mortgage lenders. The Assistant Director explained that the EWS1 forms require a surveyor to inspect the whole building and a certificate is then issued. Unfortunately, there is an industry shortage of surveyors. A letter of comfort explains why we believe there is no need for a full EWS1 form and confirms that our buildings do not have ACM and MCM cladding, which has been identified as problematic. It was noted that this policy would be consistent across our social housing and the Barbican estate.

RESOLVED, that - Option 1 in the report be approved; i.e. the Corporation will not issue EWS1 Forms but provide 'Comfort Letters' for individual residents upon request

13. CONCIERGE AND BARBICAN ESTATE OFFICE SERVICE UPDATE

The Assistant Director provided some background on this matter, for the benefit of the new Members. Members noted that, at the last meeting of the BRC, the Committee had been asked to approve the collection of an interim payment, from the Leaseholders of terrace blocks, to enable further options to be considered in terms of savings targets and the Car Park Attendants. However, further legal advice had suggested that this might result in a challenge. Therefore, the additional amount would not be taken at this stage, and other options were being explored to put to Members.

The Barbican Association and Barbican Residents' Consultation Committee had agreed to a wholesale independent review of the Barbican Estate Office, which was due to commence shortly. The Leaseholders Service Charge Working Party would soon see a first draft of the Heads of Terms for the review to enable its input. The outcome of the review will be presented to a Special Meeting of the BRC. The Town Clerk explained that meetings can only be held during the summer recess in exceptional circumstances but Members were very keen to see this matter resolved. As the quorum is made up of voting, non-resident members, the Town Clerk advised that it would be possible to run this meeting as a hybrid, with the resident Members joining remotely, provided that a quorum of non-resident Members was present. The Chair thanked the officers and welcomed the progress on this matter, noting that the residents hold car park attendants in very high regard.

14. **BARBICAN ESTATE TOWER LIFT REFURBISHMENT - GATEWAY 1-4: PROJECT PROPOSAL AND OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

The Committee considered a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services, which proposed a programme of works to replace all lifts in Shakespeare, Cromwell, and Lauderdale Towers on the Barbican Estate. Members noted that there are nine lifts in total, three serving each Tower.

The Assistant Director explained that this is a service chargeable item, with funding being sought through this report to engage with residents ahead of the design work. Members noted that, when the matter was discussed at the RCC, the representative for Shakespeare Tower was invited to speak to officers, outside of the meeting, to share ideas and concerns about the works and interim lift performance. The report presented a strong argument for replacement rather than refurbishment. Members noted that the works would enable the lift to be more efficient and reliable, offsetting future service costs.

RESOLVED, that :

1. A budget of £50,000 be approved to engage a specialist lift consultant to undertake liaison with internal and external stakeholders, to formulate a specification to tender and cover staff costs.
2. The project budget of £50,000 (excluding risk) be noted.
3. The total estimated cost of the project at £4,600,000 (excluding risk) be noted.

15. **UPDATE REPORT - BEECH GARDENS (NORTH WEST PODIUM) WATERPROOFING PROJECT**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services which updated Members on the latest position with the City of London Corporation's (the Corporation) Beech Gardens (North West Podium) Waterproofing Project, the subsequent issues that have arisen, and the outcome of the steps taken to facilitate completion of the project.

Members noted that the Assistant Director had inherited this project six years ago, together with the issues set out in the report. The report set out lessons learnt, particularly in respect of the drainage which have been used to inform and guide Phase 2 of the Project, which is currently in the Gateway process. Members noted that they would receive the close-down (Gateway 6) report at the September 2022 meeting, as there were no further legal grounds on which to withhold payments to the Contractor.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

16. **BLAKE TOWER**

At the last meeting of the Committee, the Assistant Director reported that communications with Redrow had been poor and residents remained

dissatisfied. Members noted that the City Corporation tends to be more successful in engaging with Redrow than the residents, and Redrow had recently agreed to meet with the Barbican Association and Blake Tower Residents Association.

The Assistant Director stressed that the Estate Office was still not in a position to take over the building but he continued to write to residents regularly to provide updates. Members noted that the Fire Brigade had visited Blake Tower recently and some improvements had been identified.

The Chair thanked the Assistant Director and Executive Director for their intervention in this matter, together with Member Helen Fentimen and past Members Randall Anderson and Michael Hudson.

17. **WORKING PARTY UPDATES**

The Committee received the following updates from the RCC's Working Parties.

- 17.1 **Gardens Advisory**
- 17.2 **Electric Vehicle**
- 17.3 **Leaseholder Service Charge**
- 17.4 **Service Level Agreement**
- 17.5 **Asset Management**
- 17.6 **Underfloor Heating**

In response to a questions about the fountains on the lakeside, lower lake and the waterfall, Members noted that leaseholders contribute 85% to the cost of maintaining of the lakes, the same proportion as for garden maintenance. However, in the past, the cost of works such as de-silting had been shared between the Estate and the Centre; i.e. at 42.5% to the Estate. It was suggested that this might be inequitable, and the Member asked for consultation with the residents and for the position to be monitored. Members also noted that the Lakeside area in front of the School and the Centre is not included in the service chargeable area.

The Assistant Director advised that he would raise this at his next regular meeting with the Arts Centre. Members were reminded of the formal Section 20 Consultation, which would capture both residents and the Arts Centre. However, Section 20 is fairly limited and the Estate Office's consultation always exceeds this.

18. **PROGRESS OF SALES AND LETTINGS**

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of the sales and lettings approved by officers since the last meeting of the Committee, under delegated authority and in accordance with Standing Orders. The report also provided information on surrenders of tenancies received, and the number of flat sales to date. Members noted that the 2 properties 'under offer' in the report had since been sold.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

19. BARBICAN ARREARS

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children's Services in respect of arrears on the Barbican Estate. Members noted that a more detailed breakdown was available in the non-public report on this agenda.

RESOLVED, that – the report be noted.

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

In response to a question about the Barbican Association's recent request for an article in 'Barbican News', which had been denied, Members noted that the Executive Director had responded directly; advising that Barbican News is intended for landlord/tenant communications, whereas residents have 'Barbican Talk' for other matters. Members noted that that a review of communications was being undertaken across the department, looking at the criteria in terms of estate wide bulletins, and Members would receive a set of principles at a future meeting.

Members stressed that the residents have very high regard for the Communications Officer and, given that the post is funded entirely by the service charge payers, they believe it is not unreasonable for the Barbican Association to be able to use it.

In response to a question about staff rest rooms, which were recently developed in the Thomas More Car park, Members noted that the cost of £235k for the project had been funded from the Landlord account. There was a delay in staff using the facility, due to Covid restrictions on staff congregating indoors but it was now being used by the cleaning staff.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT

The Chairman has agreed to admit the following items of urgent business.

In respect of the Rent Review, which had been missed off this agenda, it was RESOLVED, that – the decision in respect of the rent review be delegated to the Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman and Deputy Chairman of the Barbican residential committee.

A Member asked if the Environment Department could be engaged in the abandoned bicycles scheme. The officer advised that many abandoned bikes had been provided to charities over the years. Officers were aware of the remaining ones and had checked the car parks this week. The Member asked if the scheme could be advertised in Barbican News, and a generic in-box provided for residents to make enquiries.

Officers agreed to arrange for new Members to visit the Barbican Estate.

22. EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED – That under Section 100(A) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act.

Item no	Paragraph no
23	2,3
24 -25	2,3
26	3
27-28	-

23. NON-PUBLIC MINUTES

RESOLVED, that – the non-public minutes of the meeting held on 27th January 2022 be approved.

24. BARBICAN ARREARS - NON PUBLIC APPENDIX

The Committee received a non-public appendix in respect of agenda item 19.

25. COMMERCIAL LEASE RENEWAL

The Committee considered and approved a report of the Director of Community and Children’s Services.

26. HOUSING MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPGRADE

The Committee received a report of the Director of Community and Children’s Services.

27. NON-PUBLIC QUESTIONS ON MATTERS RELATING TO THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE

There were no questions

28. ANY OTHER BUSINESS THAT THE CHAIRMAN CONSIDERS URGENT AND WHICH THE COMMITTEE AGREES SHOULD BE CONSIDERED WHILST THE PUBLIC ARE EXCLUDED

There were no items.

The meeting ended at 3.20 pm

Chairman

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