

BARBICAN ESTATE RESIDENTS CONSULTATION COMMITTEE
Monday, 15 April 2013

Minutes of the meeting of the Barbican Estate Residents Consultation Committee
held at Committee Rooms, 2nd Floor, West Wing, Guildhall on Monday, 15 April
2013 at 6.30 pm

Present

Members:

Tim Macer (Chairman) – Willoughby House
Randall Anderson (Deputy Chairman) - Shakespeare Tower
Robert Barker - Lauderdale
David Graves - Seddon
Gordon Griffiths - Bunyan
Fiona Lean - Ben Jonson
Prof. C Mounsey - Breton
Helen Wilkinson - Speed
Jane Smith - Barbican Association
John Taysum - Bryer Court
Deputy John Tomlinson – Cromwell Tower
Dr Gianetta Corley – Gilbert House

Officers:

Julie Mayer – Town Clerk's

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mark Bostock, Mary Bonar, Matt Collins, Janet Wels and Philip Sharples. The Committee welcomed Dr Gianetta Corley and Martin Day as the new representatives for Mountjoy and Gilbert Houses. Residents thanked the retiring representatives (Patric Morley and Francis Pugh) for their past contributions to the Committee.

2. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND DEPUTY CHAIRMAN

Members congratulated Randall Anderson on his appointment to the City of London Corporation's Court of Common Council and noted his resignation as Chairman of the RCC.

It was proposed by Mr Anderson, Seconded by Mr Tomlinson and agreed unanimously that Tim Macer be appointed as Chairman. In accordance with the City of London's Standing Order (30), Mr Anderson agreed to serve as Deputy Chairman for the following year.

3. A SUGGESTION FOR QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS AT RCC MEETINGS

The Town Clerk presented a discussion document, introducing the possibility of a more structured question and answer session at RCC meetings. The proposal before members was typical of the procedures in place in most local

authorities, for meetings attended by members of the public. The Town Clerk stressed that the document was a suggestion for members and invited their comments.

In summarising the benefits, the Town Clerk suggested that, by submitting written questions in advance, the responses given at the meetings would be complete. Some Members might feel more comfortable in participating in the meetings if they are able to prepare and submit questions in advanced. By taking the written questions on a 'first come, first served' basis, it could be argued that the process would be fairer and more democratic. Members noted that the agenda items in respect of '*questions relating to the work of the committee*' and '*items of urgent business*' would remain.

Members made the following comments and agreed to take the proposal forward on the following basis:

1. A deadline date for submitting questions might be unreasonable, given that representatives would wish to consult with their House Groups. However, Members noted that it is desirable to submit questions as soon as possible, particularly those of a complex/technical nature.
2. The suggested procedure was quite formal and rigid, as it was typical of local authority council and cabinet meetings, which are decision making bodies. The RCC should be flexible; to retain its spirit of consultation and debate. If the Terms of Reference were to be changed, enforcing '*points of order*' could stifle debate.
3. There shouldn't be a limit imposed on the number of written questions but each question should relate to a single issue, with a supplementary question permitted. The Chairman and Town Clerk would agree on a reasonable number of questions for each meeting, depending on the amount of business on the agenda.
4. Written questions should be encouraged as far as reasonably possible but there should be provision for ad-hoc questions at the meetings; at the discretion of the Chairman and dependant on the amount of business on the agenda.
5. Whilst it is desirable to send out papers as early as possible, in the case of the regular Update Reports this could be detrimental as it is updated frequently and could therefore prompt questions which might be answered in a later version of the report.
6. The Town Clerk would copy the written questions to the RCC members.
7. Comments as well as questions should be encouraged.
8. There was a general agreement that written questions, in advance of meetings, would help to track and manage outstanding actions.

The Chairman and Town Clerk would work the above suggestions into a protocol and circulate to Members.

ANNUAL REVIEW UPDATE 2013/14

1. Communication – what improvements could be made to the way the BEO communicates with residents, for example, newsletter, notice boards, emails (to RCC/BA Chairs, House Group Chairs, House Group representatives), website (new COL website is due to be launched in the summer), reception? What do you think of the new email broadcast service?

1. More than one channel of communication is important; residents find the website particularly convenient. ***New COL website launched in July 2012 & communicated via newsletter***

COMMENTS FROM AGM 15 APRIL 2013

Minutes of the Barbican Occupiers User Group and Working Parties should be available on the web site with clear links.

Search engines could be more efficient, particularly for questions and answers.

2. When the City's website is updated this year, could there be a clearer link to the BEO and various representatives. ***Link is: services – Housing & Council Tax – Barbican Estate & link to Residents Representation & Consultation***

COMMENTS FROM AGM 15 APRIL 2013

Could the URL appear at the bottom of emails for those residents who have signed up for alerts.

The good practice on the Planning site was noted; ie offering other areas of interest similar to Amazon.

3. There is low awareness of the differences between the BA and RCC – residents suggested an annual letter from the Chairman, setting out the scope and differences. Could this also appear on the website? ***There is a link to Residents Representation, Consultation & Committee Papers – Barbican Association information – section on the difference between BA/RCC***

Publicise the election of the new Chairman – (15 April 2013)

4. Could the link to RCC/BRC public papers be clearer? Particularly the most recent set of minutes from the RCC, which appear on the BRC

agenda. Could residents also receive these via email, once they have been approved by the Chairman? ***There is a link to Residents Representation, Consultation & Committee Papers – link from RCC/BRC information to RCC/BRC minutes/reports & sent via link on email broadcast service***

5. The BEO newsletters are not always noticed, could they be more prominent? It can be difficult to find information in respect of emergency services. Could they be kept together, either at the beginning or end of the Newsletter? Could the emergency numbers be easily accessible on the web page? ***Emergency services in middle/front of newsletter & there is a link on the website from Resident Information – Emergency Services***

6. Could the BA newsletter receive a regular 'update from the RCC' from the Chairman? ***BA newsletters now include an update from the RCC Chairman***

COMMENTS FROM AGM 15 APRIL 2013

Could BEO Broadcasts advise when the RCC papers have been published.

RCC representatives' personal contact details should not be available on the public site.

7. Could the BA newsletter also contain an article on forming house groups, clarifying procedures in respect of 'opt out' memberships and constitutions? Could this also appear on the web page? ***Being reviewed by BA. New section on RTAs being added to website including sample RTA letter & checklist from Town Clerks, draft constitution & last RTA annual audit.***

The BA has noted the action for the newsletter.

8. Could there be an Annual 'BEO meets the residents' meeting? ***Summer & Christmas meet the residents events***

COMMENTS FROM AGM 15 APRIL 2013

It was suggested that a more formal Q&A annual meeting take place, possibly in the Girls' School. Members were reminded of regular ward meetings.

9. Could noticeboards be kept free from non-relevant Guildhall publications? **Cleaning Supervisors monitor**

2. Reporting – would you like to see any changes or improvements to the reports that are presented to your committee?

1. Could there be a report on fringe developments – i.e. Frobisher House? It was suggested this be the subject of a report to the March Committee. **Updates in City Surveyors report to RCC**

Mark Bostock asked the following question (15/4/2013):

'I have never understood why previous City Surveyor 's reports to the RCC includes Frobisher Crescent under this fringe item!

The Frobisher Crescent House Committee understands that after nearly three years of occupancy United House has handed over to the City the Development with the exception of the hot water and heating system. The Landlord has advised UH that they will not accept the hot water/heating system until they are satisfied that it is fit for purpose for the 69 flats and that this will not be contemplated until after the 2013 winter. In these circumstances the House Committee requests that the City Surveyor gives a full report on this issue in his RCC papers until this matter has been properly resolved. From the residents' point of view the unsatisfactory performance of the system continues to be a worry which fortunately seems to us to be reflected in the City's position.

We assume that the BRC is fully aware of this issue but we have no evidence of this'.

The Chairman commented that this was currently a live City Surveyor issue not formally BRC business at this time. There was a general agreement to keep updates on Frobisher on the agenda and for the BRC to remain fully informed by the City Surveyor.

2. Late or 'to follow' reports should be avoided as far as possible, particularly for controversial/complex matters. Chairman of the RCC to speak to the Chairman of the BRC, to share concerns and seek a common standard. **Agreed with BRC Chairman & actioned as much as possible**

Members commented on improvements in this area

3. Can the RCC receive a list of all working parties, to review annually, with a rota to look at each in detail? Could the RCC receive the Working Party Minutes? **Annual list of Working Parties presented to RCC/BRC 2012 (proposed for June 2013). Minutes/reports/updates of Working Parties to RCC/BRC**

The RCC welcomed the regular meetings between the BA and Street Scene and didn't wish to duplicate the business of the BA/RCC.

There was some concern expressed about 'grey areas' with regard to the remit of the Occupiers Users Group and a perceived lack of communication about Virgin Active, and what appeared at times an arbitrary delineation between the residential and commercial parts of the Estate.

3. Service improvements – what services would you like the BEO to prioritise in its review of services. Would you like to see any changes to services? Are there additional services you would you like the BEO to offer?

1. Is a 'review of services' pending? Will any services be ceased? **Annual cleaning review of schedules during winter each year. Review of Technical Services Structure - anticipated new structure in place by April 2013**
2. It was noted that the on-going issues with car parking/agency staff was pending. **Car Park Charging report January 2013**
3. There were some concerns about the security and safety at the Eastern end of the Estate. Could the issue of cameras be revisited on the high walks and access points, particularly when the escalators are out of action? Residents noted that this was frequently discussed at the BA Security Working Party, which is attended by the Police and BEO staff. Could the RCC receive an update in March? **BA Security Working Party report to November 2012 committee**
4. Is litter picking by Gilbert Bridge Ballustrate deteriorating? It was suggested that use of bins on the estate be revisited but noted that foxes have been sighted. Residents asked how rigorously services are being challenged and could RCC be provided with examples? **Schedules for podium cleaning reviewed March 2012. Services reviewed by House Officers**

COMMENTS FROM AGM 15 APRIL 2013

A resident was concerned about the amount of litter/presence of foxes, particularly around Gilbert House.

The use of the area outside the curved wall at the Barbican Centre for smoking by officers of the centre was considered unsightly.

Mr Tomlinson (Chairman of Port Health) noted the above concerns.

4. Costs – which areas of service would you like the BEO to prioritise in its review of service charge costs to residents or which areas of service could be provided in a different way that could possibly reduce costs?

1. It was noted that the car park had been signed off at the last meeting but residents would like the opportunity to revisit this after a year, as set out in the report. ***Car Park Charging report January 2013***
2. Will Roman House generate car park revenue? ***On-going discussions***
3. Have charges been signed off for the area which the cinema will take over? ***Financial agreement in place***

COMMENTS FROM AGM 15 APRIL 2013

Residents would like to see more detail about service charges in relation to general repairs.

There was a general agreement that residents would not resist a moderate increase in charges for repairs, if the estate were being maintained at a high standard.

Early consultation was essential on major schemes, particularly on quality and more supervision on works in progress.

The white tiles on the steps had not been repaired, which an important safety concern for people with a visual impairment; residents would like an update on the recharges for engineers/tilers.

A resident commented that, of late, there had been less discussion on the outturn reports and suggested that this may be because some may find these reports difficult to follow. Could more clarity be provided, especially over what is unusual or exceptional? It was noted that a high proportion of charges were fixed, yet the implication of the questions being considered is that there is an element of discretion. Residents asked if more information could be provided on what degree of discretion there was in providing new or enhanced services; also whether there could be resident input at the early stage of budget planning.

It was suggested that new members coming onto the RCC have an induction.

Could the regular update reports include an action list, with target dates, in a summary format? Residents felt this would make it easier to track progress.

4. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members thanked Randall Anderson for his excellent Chairmanship over the past 4 years and paid tribute to his commitment and high attendance at many of the Estate's working groups. Members felt that Mr Anderson's efforts had a

major impact on the committee's efficiency and transparency and were pleased that he would be continuing as Deputy Chairman

5. DATE OF THE NEXT MEETING - 3 JUNE 2013 - 6.30 PM