

Minutes

of the

Meeting of The Barbican Association General Council
held by Zoom at 7.00 pm on Thursday 16 September 2021

Nickie Aiken

Prior to its formal business, the meeting heard from Nickie Aiken, MP for the Cities of London and Westminster. Louise Perry, NA's PA, also attended the meeting. NA spoke about her three main concerns – homelessness and rough sleeping. NA is member of the Kerslake Commission, which is examining the response to the effect of Covid on roughsleepers. NA was pushing for the repeal of the Vagrancy Act 1824 and said, as mental health and addiction were biggest reason for homelessness, there needed to be better funding and emphasis on treating mental health. Another concern was pedicabs, which were unlicensed in London and were a big problem in the West End and NA was sponsoring a private member's bill to introduce licensing. The third concern was air pollution and NA was a member of the Westminster Commission for Road Air Quality. As far as the BA was concerned, NA offered to hold monthly meetings with a BA representative.

There had been two written questions. The first being the possible repeal of Section 618 of the Housing Act 1985 and the second being whether her statement, when leader of Westminster City Council that "the planning had not only to be impartial but seen to be" also applied to City Corporation's planning process. NA gave a positive response to the first question, saying she had been in discussions with City Corporation and would do what she could with the government. Her answer to the second question was more political since the issue of the lack of transparency wasn't addressed. However, NA was clear on the need for consultation and meaningful consultation since local people weren't NIMBYs but feel they have the local knowledge of how to improve community assets and it is important that local people have a voice. To a third question, from DB on the Congestion Charge applying at weekends in the City, NA said complaints should be sent to Unmesh Desai, the GLA member for the City and East.

NA and LP left the meeting at 7.35 pm and formal business commenced.

Present

Elected Members:

Adam Hogg (Chair), Jane Smith (Deputy Chair), David Bradshaw, Helen Hudson, Sandy Wilson, Christopher Makin, Sue Cox, Ted Reilly, Tony Swanson (Treasurer)

House Groups:

Ian Dixon (Gilbert), Jenny Nisbet (Frobisher), Heather Thomas (Lambert Jones), Tim Cox (Cromwell), Humfrey Brandes (Brandon Mews), Graham Bulpitt (Thomas More), Helen Hulson (Ben Jonson), Fionnuala Hogan (Willoughby), Martin Luff (Mountjoy), Erin Summers (Defoe), Gail Beer (Lauderdale), Andy Hope (Breton).

Fred Rodgers (Hon Secretary), Mark Bostock.

Apologies

Randall Anderson (EM) , Mary Bonar (Wallside), Francis Pugh, Lionel Meyringer (Andrewes).

Minutes of the last meeting and matters arising

The minutes of the Meeting held on 15 July 2021 were agreed. JS gave an update on the proposed meeting room at the Arts Centre, confirming that funding had been obtained to carry out the preliminary study but further funding would be required for the actual work, with the Neighbourhood Fund of the Community Infrastructure Levy receipts being the anticipated source. FR pointed out that this fund seemed to be decreasing rapidly and JS would look into this.

Reports from WPs 1, 2 and 3 re making the BA more effective

The Chair thanked the members of all three WPs for their written reports and asked the chair of each one to introduce their reports and answer any questions.

WP1: The discussion centred around opt in and opt out RTAs and whether or not if the BA gave up its subscriptions and became opt out, it could claim a bigger membership. The problem remained that GDPR prevented the BEO disclosing the name and address of each lessee, so it wouldn't be able to identify its members. The report showed that membership was disproportionately in the towers and it was felt there should be a membership drive in the terrace blocks. There could be a standard framework for the relationship between House Groups and the BA. The experience in BJH was that members renewed each year but there was no fee. It was felt an opt out RTA had difficulty in getting quorums. GP, FR, JS, FH and HHul contributed.

WP2: There was a discussion around the responses of the Common Councillors in the two wards to the first part of the report and the proposals for a BA manifesto and encouraging residents to stand next March. Candidates had to be Freemen although this was made easy for candidates and there was around six weeks between nomination and voting. It was suggested House Group Chairs encourage suitable candidates to stand. FR pointed out that the second part referred to stakeholder engagement and not management, as it was felt this was premature for now. The table of engagement would be ever changing, particularly as the changes proposed in the Target Operating Models hadn't been made public. FR, JA, CM, MB and DB contributed.

WP3: The discussion was around the fact that everything revolved around the same small group on both the BA and the RCC and the need to reach out and draw more people into the system. There was a need to have elections to the GC. The proposals re WPs were for discussion but there were too many sub-committees and WPs and there was a need for standing sub-committees able to set up specific WPs, as and when necessary. The BA served the needs of three groups – resident long leaseholders, non-resident ones and tenants - TR, JS, FR, JN, SW and TC contributed.

The Chair pointed out that the WP members had more work to do and that they would need assistance. He was arranging an early meeting with the WP chairs to discuss next steps. Re a manifesto, it was agreed that, in order to sign one off by 31 December it would be necessary to present a draft to the next meeting.

Barbican Centre: Renewal letter from Tom Sleight and BA's future involvement

The Chair had already raised the almost complete lack of mention of residents or the Centre being in the middle of a residential estate in either the letter or the online request for proposals for the

renewal to Tom Sleight and the meeting concurred. The Chair considered that there was, though, an opportunity for the BA to engage now and have a role in the renewal by working with the Centre and this shouldn't be lost but any WP had to have the right people and asked how they were to be found. However, there were concerns whether the renewal would benefit residential amenity or not and whether members of the WP would have a conflict of interest between being residents and artists. As there was an urgency to appoint the professional team and the Chair considered the BA should take the opportunity to get in early before that team was selected. SW, MB, ID, JS, GB, DB, JN, HHul, MB, and TR also contributed.

The Chair asked members to write to him with their thoughts on the scope, membership attributes and identification and selection of membership

Approval of increased financial sign off limits

The meeting approved the Treasurer's request to increase his delegated authority re the payment of insurance premiums as these now exceeded £800.00. The authority was increased to £1,000.00

RCC Matters for information

City's proposals to remove 6 Estate concierge positions.

The paper from the Chairs and Deputies of BA and RCC was tabled for information. It requested residents to consider an interim solution whereby all changes were postponed till the end of the financial year to allow a thorough review of all services being provided to lessees. In return Leaseholders of Terrace blocks would contribute an average of £127 per flat as a one off-payment to cover the costs of keeping the six concierges.

House Groups had been asked to consult their members prior to the RCC meeting on 27th September. Although Mark Wheatley, BRC Chair, had promised a public meeting, no details were available as yet. RCC reps were expected to vote on the offer on 27 September.

It was agreed that there was an urgent need for a proper root and branch review of the services provided and how these are charged.

The figures being used to justify the redundancies had been shared with the resident members of the Task and Finish Group – Mike Cribb, Roger Tynan, Richard Tomkins and Sandra Jenner, on a confidential basis. Members expressed the view that they would also like to see them before agreeing anything. Clarity was necessary. CM, FH, ID, MB, AH, HHud and HT.

- **Service Charge Working Party**

CM reported that the WP was reporting to the next RCC. Progress had been made but not as much as would have been liked. He had discussed service charge issues which had been raised with Paul Murtagh, Assistant Director of Housing and Barbican, whose response was that he understood there was a trust deficit.

- **Ev Charging**

TR reported that a third of chargers weren't working but this resulted from a problem the suppliers, BP Pulse were having nationwide through over-expansion. Another 30 chargers were being installed but there were only 30 residents with EVs, so it was a problem that would get better. FH said Willoughby weren't happy.

Updates on:

- **Planning**
- **Anti Social Behaviour**
- **Beech Street**

The submitted written reports were noted.

Any other urgent business

The meeting decided not to hold in person meetings for the foreseeable future.

Date of next meeting

18 November 2021

BAGC dates

Meetings start at 7.00pm

20 January 2022

RCC dates

Meetings start at 6.30pm

27 September 2021

29 November 2021

The meeting ended at 8.50 pm