

The Barbican Association General Council
Draft Minutes of the Meeting on Wednesday 20th March 2024
At 7 pm in The Lilac Room

Present (crossed out not present):

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| <p>Elected Members: Adam Hogg (Chair), Deputy Chair: Ted Reilly Hon Sec: Roy Sully Jane Smith (Planning Subcommittee Chair) Brendan Barnes Helen Hudson David Bradshaw Randall Anderson Jan Marc Petroschka</p> | <p>House Groups Represented: Lionel Meyringer (Andrewes) Helen Hulson (Ben Jonson) Humfrey Brandes (Brandon) Andy Hope (Breton) John Taysum (Bryer) Derek Penney (Bunyan) Paul Moriarty (Cromwell) Helen Hudson (Defoe) Linda Partridge (Frobisher) Ian Dixon (Gilbert) Richard Collins (Lambert Jones) Gail Beer (Lauderdale) Martin Luff (Mountjoy) David Graves (Seddon) Sandy Wilson (Shakespeare) Nadia Bouzidi (Speed) Brenda Szlesinger (Thomas More) Miranda Quinney (John Trundle) Mary Bonar (Wallside) Fionnuala Hogan (Willoughby)</p> |
| <p>Other Members: Tony Swanson (Hon Treasurer) Jim Davies (Membership Sec) Sandra Jenner (RCC) Hannah Logan Co-Opted Member (Parent Rep)</p> | |
| <p>Deputies and Guests: Michael Morgan (Frobisher)</p> | |

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| 1. | <p>Welcome to New Members, Apologies for Absence and Thanks to the Departing</p> <p>The Chairman welcomed Michael Morgan who was deputising for Linda Partridge from Frobisher.</p> <p>Apologies had been received from Jane Smith, Helen Hudson, Randall Anderson, Hannah Logan, Humfrey Brandes, John Taysum, Ian Dixon, Gail Beer, David Graves, Sandy Wilson, Fionnuala Hogan, Tony Swanson, Andy Hope, Richard Collins, Fred Rodgers and Nadia Bouzidi.</p> <p>The Chairman noted that this would be the last meeting to be attended by Ted Reilly who had done so much for both the Barbican Association and whose unswerving loyalty and devotion to duty had inspired so many and achieved so much for the cause of freedom and democracy in both the Barbican estate and the wider world.</p> |
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| | The floor having been mopped dry of the many tears shed, the meeting proceeded. |
| 2 | Approval of Minutes of meeting held on 25th January 2024 |
| | The minutes were approved. |
| 3. | Matters arising |
| | All dealt with below |
| 4. | Membership Secretary |
| | <p>Jim Davies, the Membership Secretary, and Cathryn Worrell, Webmaster, had announced their plans to retire from their positions in April. The Committee joined the Chairman in thanking them both for the service to the BAGC.</p> <p>It was agreed that Jim's retirement provided the opportunity to migrate the membership records to a purpose-built system such as Member Mojo. Stephanie Ross had offered to do this in return for a fee (in the order of £1,000) (to be agreed) and it was agreed that her offer should be taken up. Once this had been done the records would need to be maintained. That task was significant with over one thousand members and, whilst it would be ideal if a competent volunteer would step forward to do it, in reality the BAGC should accept the likely need to pay somebody.</p> <p>This led to a wider discussion of the administration of the BA. The burden of work being carried by the voluntary officers was not light. Matters such as the Section 20 appeals, support for BQA, and effective liaison with the BEO and the Corporation took a lot of time and energy. On top that the organisation had to be run efficiently from day to day.</p> <p>The Chairman therefore suggested a small working party be established to scope a paid position. Jane Smith (past Chair) and Roy Sully (Hon Sec) had agreed to serve. Brendan Barnes and David Bradshaw volunteered to join them alongside Adam.</p> <p>The need to generate extra income to meet the costs of paying people was noted, albeit at least some of the costs should be borne by the Corporation as landlord. The Council felt that the current membership subscription of £5 was absurdly low and it would be appropriate to raise it to a realistic level in the near future.</p> <p>Action: Working Group to convene. Ted to liaise with Jim and Stephanie.</p> |
| 6. | Meeting with the Town Clerk |
| | <p>Sandra and Adam had met recently with Ian Thomas. Items discussed included:</p> <p>Residential Reset, where it became apparent that the Town Clerk had been misinformed that the RTAs had been briefed. In a similar vein Adam said that it would be beneficial to both the City and residents if the Barbican Association, the Recognised Tenants' Association, was used as an established channel of communication.</p> <p>It was felt that Chris Hayward's regular open meetings with residents is a good initiative, but the actions summary needed to be communicated sooner to reinforce messages and demonstrate that issues raised are followed up.</p> <p>Significant delays are being experienced in buying and selling flats following the introduction the new rules. There was currently a risk that these delays could lead to the loss of sales/purchases.</p> <p>Sandra and Adam welcomed the news that Paul Martin had taken a fresh look at Destination City and that his report was likely to include the need for a Cultural Strategy led by the Culture</p> |

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| | <p>Committee. We expressed the hope that this would include a response to our concerns about the lack of a joined-up plan for the Barbican Smithfield area.</p> <p>Time did not permit We discussion of our view that the attraction of the whole Barbican Estate ie all the constituent parts: Arts Centre, GSMD, BRE, etc could be leveraged to be an important part of Destination City. We had stressed this in our response to Lisvane. We are not convinced that strengthening the Barbican Area Advisory Group will provide what is needed. In our view the freeholder needs to be committed to ensuring that this jewel in the City's crown is looked after in the future. After all it is the freeholder making the decisions and investment, along with BRE leaseholders, which will have long lasting impact.</p> <p>Ian promised Sandra and Adam a copy of the Corporate Plan.</p> <p>The Council thanked Sandra and Adam for their efforts.</p> |
| 7. | <p>Barbican Quarter Action</p> |
| | <p>Over 800 objections had been filed to the planning application. The application had been resubmitted twice with corrections so there was still an opportunity to object further before 6th April. Ten members of staff had been assigned to the application by the CoL and they would have their work cut out to get everything ready for the planning meeting on 17th April when the application was due to be considered.</p> <p>The crowdfunding had gone well and over £22,000 subscribed so the underwriting guarantee provided by the BA was not needed. That said, the fight would continue so further contributions to the war chest would be very welcome.</p> |
| 8. | <p>Joint Working Group on the BA/ RCC</p> |
| | <p>The Council thanked Sandra for the paper she had circulated which summarised the recommendations of the working group which Roy had chaired. It had become clear early on that the idea of bringing together the Barbican Association and Residents' Consultative Committee would be a step too far at the moment, so the working group concentrated on their other more <u>immediate</u> challenge, which was to suggest an effective way for residents and the reformed BEO to work together.</p> <p>The working group proposed that a small <u>Sub-committee reporting to the RCC</u> numbering no more than eight should meet the BEO monthly to discuss estate-wide issues and monitor progress on resolving them. The BEO would provide the secretariat but the committee would be chaired by a resident. In due course the meetings could happen bi-monthly and then quarterly.</p> <p>The key representative of the BEO would be the Assistant Director and the suggested terms of reference for the new committee had been framed to mirror the objectives in his job description.</p> <p>The Council welcomed the proposals. There was concern that the workload of members would be too great but it was agreed that to make progress required considerable effort would be required while the Augean stable that was the old BEO was cleaned. There were grounds for optimism too inasmuch as the new staff, in particular Daniel Sanders, appeared keen to work with residents for the common good. Mr Sanders was bothering to acquaint himself with what was going on so that deep-seated problems could be resolved.</p> <p>For the committee to work properly and get things done it needed to be small. So it would fail if the RCC model of "one house one vote" were adopted. The nature of the business it would discuss transcended detail. It would address estate-wide issues so the key attributes of members would not be intimate knowledge of individual blocks but the ability to think big.</p> |

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| 9. | Updates on RCC Matters |
| | <p>The Council thanked Sandra for the summary of the remarks she had made at the RCC annual meeting.</p> <p>Sandra SJ underscored that it had been almost impossible to begin making changes in the BEO while the old management had been around but the new management were now making inroads. The new Assistant Director, Dan Sanders, who was heading up the BEO had just started. It was important that he be given the chance to understand the inheritance and decide priorities for change. A relationship with residents and their representatives based on mutual respect, trust and confidence would be in everyone's interest.</p> <p>As regards the BEO Review, now that Dan Sanders had started it should be possible to specify the organisation structure under him and begin implementation.</p> |
| 10. | Section 20 Appeal |
| | <p>The Council thanked Adam for the very informative summary he had circulated.</p> <p>The Tribunal hearing of our case for costs for our response to the City's withdrawn dispensation claim was now scheduled for week beginning 1st April. The City claimed that the withdrawal was to pursue a settlement but no approach had been made by the City. The City had still not provided a substantive response to our Solicitor's letter of November nor any subsequent letters.</p> <p>The City had made a formal provision in its accounts of £935k for the Barbican's S20 case. The response by the Chair of Willoughby House was discussed and it was considered that concern about costs running away was not an issue as we were only awaiting the decision on our claim for costs reimbursements and there was currently no other BA claim in play.</p> <p>It was noted that it was the BA not leaseholders who were party to any claim. It was also noted that BA has indemnity insurance. The extent of the cover would be clarified and reported back to the BAGC.</p> <p>A leaseholder had, in his own right, made a S27 claim to the Tribunal for unreasonable service charges apropos the unlawful contracting of Hays without proper consultation and we were watching the City's response to that closely.</p> <p>The overspend of £2k was approved and it was agreed unanimously to authorise a further tranche of up to £10k, including vat, for legal fees.</p> <p>It was agreed that Residents should be updated by giving them the opportunity to see the full summary tabled at the GC on the BA website</p> |
| 11. | AGM Arrangements |
| | <p>The date of the AGM had been advanced one week to 18th April due to the school being booked by others on the 25th. Judith Finlay, the intended guest speaker was unable to attend and it was agreed that rather than seek a substitute the meeting should proceed without a guest speaker. Dan Sanders was coming and would be available to speak informally to members.</p> <p>Notice of the meeting had gone out in good time and nominations for the elected positions invited. So far all of the current electees had indicated a willingness to stand again except for Ted Reilly who planned to rejoice with us, but upon another shore and in a greater light.</p> <p>.....Who else?</p> |

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| 12. | Arts Council Renewal |
| | <p>In what appeared to be little more than an attempt to court attention, the outgoing Chairman of the Barbican Arts Centre, <u>briefing Members on progress on the Renewal Programme Tom Sleigh</u>, had put about an idea that access to the Centre would benefit from the Shakespeare and Defoe car park being commandeered by the Centre, unroofed (in part) and turned into a walkway to spare patrons the need to walk up a flight of stairs to the podium.</p> <p>Whilst utterly unrealistic, the story had been picked up and had caused some consternation, leading to Alderman Makin placing an article which ridiculed the idea, in Barbican Life.</p> <p>In an age of fake news when, for example, Russian media had just announced the death of His Majesty the King (Charles, not Vladimir) it was felt necessary to counter the rumour so Adam would write to Claire Spencer asking her to put the record straight.</p> <p>The meeting considered this most unlikely to come to fruition. Adam, who had already discussed this with Claire Spencer agreed to write to her to express resident concerns and suggest further updates from the renewal team at the termly BA Arts Centre meeting would be helpful.</p> |
| 12 | Security Update |
| | <p>Adam thanked David for re-circulating his <i>Anti-social behaviour list for the Barbican's ASB Reporter</i>. David reported that there had been a decline in the number of incidents reported with less trouble with parkour and skateboarding although there had been more problems with noise, cycling and the dumping of e-bikes.</p> <p>About a year ago Helen Davinson of the BEO had been asked to produce a resident guide to Anti-Social behaviour, since when without result, in spite of prodding, she appeared to have done nothing. Mrs Davinson's behaviour epitomised the problems of the old BEO, a laziness and contempt for those who paid her salary, which we hoped would soon be a thing of the past.</p> <p>The chair will take the opportunity to pick this up at the RCC on 25th March</p> <p>So what did we decide to do?</p> |
| 13 | Planning Update |
| | <p>In Jane's absence, Brenda and Jan Marc briefed the Council.</p> <p>Apart from London Wall West, the big applications currently in or contemplated were:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Tenter House, where an additional four floors were proposed by the developer, 48, Chiswell Street, Telephone masts on the top of Cromwell Tower, 45, Beech Street. <p>Sandy Wilson was particularly concerned about the latter as he feared that a good deal of noise would be generated by the new residents coming and going and frolicking on the balconies. He urged members to lodge objections before 26th March.</p> <p>Brenda reported that plans for flues on the roof of the girls' school had been scaled back and we no longer faced the possibility of gazing upon a recreation of Battersea Power Station.</p> |
| 14. | AOB |
| | <p>Mary Bonar was concerned that the Barbican Association should be a recognised stakeholder in plans to landscape the open space beside Barber Surgeons' Hall.</p> <p>Jan Marc agreed to liaise with Mary on this.</p> |

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| 15. | Dates of future meetings |
| | AGM on Thursday 18 th April 2024. BAGC on: Thursday 25 th April 2024; Thursday 27 th June 2024; Thursday 22 nd August 2024; Thursday 24 th October 2024; Thursday 23 rd January 2025; Thursday 20 th March 2025. |