

## Chairs Speech

I want to pay tribute to Mark Bostock who died on August 20<sup>th</sup> last year He would have been 85 yesterday.

He worked tirelessly for residents both as a Councillor and as a member of the BA General Council

He was a man of vast experience google his obituaries to learn about him He had vision and was a strategic thinker. Qualities somewhat lacking in the Corporation of London.

I can count on the fingers of one hand remarkable people with whom I have worked in my lifetime. He was one of them.

He gave wise advice and became a great friend.

His death is our loss.

If I was preaching a sermon I think my text for today would be:

“Change in the City is possible but it takes ages and requires persistence.”

When the BA was asked to comment on Lord Lisvane’s Report on Governance in the City our then Chair Jane Smith wrote to Christopher Hayward Chair of Policy and Resources in October 2020

1 She welcomed Lisvane’s view that the committee structure should be streamlined so that

council leaders could have a strategic overview of the City’s activities and the ability to prioritise competing aims and claims on resources.

Jane added

“Our experience was that at present the City lacks that ability and that that has been to the detriment of the Barbican in the past.”

On this one Little has changed.

Secondly

Barbican residents would like to see more effective ways to influence what happens on the estate and how residents' money is spent and have a say in the future of the estate.

Four years on because of the BEO review we have progress.

She also urged the CoL to consider the need for a strategic body to oversee the integrity of the whole Grade II listed Barbican Estate.

Our home

Following a resolution proposed by Mark Bostock at the BRC last year and pressure from us.

Policy and resources considered a proposal last week to reinvigorate a Barbican Area Advisory Group

Not what we asked for but a start.

Persistence brings some rewards.

During the past year we have been facing major challenges.

Sandra Jenner the new Chair of the Residents Consultation Committee and I have been working in tandem.

She is away on leave and asked me to report on her behalf.

Our major preoccupation has been the BEO review

We sit on the Transformation Board chaired by Judith Finlay Director Community and Childrens' Services with officers, members from the BRC which is there to drive the improvement programme.

BEO review showed that there was need for much improvement throughout, in particular Management capability, repairs and general maintenance of the fabric of the estate.

Progress has been slow but is picking up speed. Change with old management team impossible now new team is forming

Dan Sanders the new head of the BEO joined six weeks ago I know he has already met many of you but for those who he has not met.

Could you stand up Dan.

We did not think it fair to ask him to stick his head into the lions den tonight after such a short time by asking him to address you but he says he is happy to listen. I am sure he will answer any specific questions but please don't beat him up. He will join us for a drink after.

Dan is responsible for all for the Residential Estate including management of all building works from repairs to major projects. He is reviewing his organisation.

A property manager is being recruited and gaps are currently being covered by interim appointments.

In the mean time there is a lot going on

External independent consultants are carrying out Audits on the Service Charge and Energy

consumption Residents have been involved in drawing up their terms of reference

The Renewal of the Repairs, contract currently with Metwin, is underway. Residents are involved .

There are Joint working groups on water penetration, windows, balcony and roof repairs They are looking to start with proper temporary fixes where appropriate, proper diagnostics of the root causes prior to setting up proper programmes.

Residents are being listened to.

These problems cannot be resolved overnight so we ask for patience. It's a new team who were not responsible for the past failings so please give them the space to sort it.

## Looking Forward

We recognise that relations with our landlord need to be more effective.

A joint BA/RCC working party met to consider if the current organisations were appropriate and how we should relate to the new BEO organisation.

It recommends a small monitoring Committee to meet with Dan's team on a regular basis to discuss Service Charges and quality and progress on all work.

## Service charges

It is clear that there has been overcharging through the City's general neglect and on specific items. Further work is being undertaken to understand the estate wide position.

The various reviews with consultants are being paid for by the city.

At last we are optimistic as to the future.

Our priorities for the coming year

Establish a good working relationship with Dan and his team based on respect, trust and confidence.

Ensure that the transformation is undertaken and delivers:

Value for money for appropriate levels of service.

Resolution to the major repair issues

And most importantly Historical overcharging is identified, quantified and repaid.

The second big challenge we are facing comes from the City's failure to consult with residents.

In April 2017 City entered into a contract to supply temporary workers without consultation as required by law.

In August 2021 a leaseholder queried this failure. No response till



March 2022 Following letter to MP City admitted wrong doing and agreed it would seek dispensation from the tribunal. Nothing happened till

30<sup>th</sup> May 2023 the City applied to the tribunal.

On 15<sup>th</sup> August the City wrote to all leaseholders following direction from tribunal.

On 30<sup>th</sup> August BA appoints Bishop and Sewell as legal advisors.

13 October 2023 City sought permission to withdraw application having realised that they had also failed to consult with all the other estates in the city. They said this was to enable informal negotiations

25<sup>th</sup> October Bishop and Sewell applied to the Tribunal for our wasted costs of £20,362 and an order prohibiting the City from charging its costs to our service charge account.

Where are we now?

Tribunal due to hear our application for costs week before last we are awaiting the decision.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024 City has invited us and potentially 1000 leaseholders from across the City to attend a Teams meeting on May 3<sup>rd</sup> when they would like to open informal discussion.

We the BA, with our lawyers, will attend as observers to hear what the City has to say.

The sums of money are significant since 2017 over £2million has been spent on our behalf unlawfully (because they failed to consult) on our behalf.

## London Wall West

Yesterday the Planning Sub Committee met to decide on the City's application to demolish Bastion House and the Museum and replace it with three large office buildings. Opposition was represented by Barbican Quarter Action's two KCs.

The Barbican Association has always opposed the City's plans and contributed some £73,000 to Barbican Quarter Action to procure expert

advice. This has been augmented by crowd funding of £23,000 to date.

I pay tribute to the team who have run an effective campaign putting the City on the back foot throughout. In particular Averil Baldwin, Brenda Schlesinger and Jan Marc Petroschka who have given up sleeping during the past few weeks to ensure opposition of the highest quality was expressed.

Thank councillors Naresh Sonpar and Liz King gave evidence.

Jan Marc can you explain what happened.

Now to the future

A call for help

Many are confused as to the respective roles of the Barbican Association and the Residents Consultative Committee.

The BA is the RTA, the recognised tenants association and the RCC is the link to the Barbican Residential Committee which is responsible for the Barbican Estate office on leasehold matters.

Frequently Individual residents get in touch with me on leasehold matters when they should be referring to the RCC chair and vice versa.

We try to respond but In practice neither the RCC nor the BA have the Bandwidth to pick up individual issues.

If you have a problem you should in the first instance take it to the BEO. If it is not resolved then take it to your house group, others may have a similar problem.

If it is estate wide the HG should take it to BA or RCC.

Resident involvement across the Barbican is patchy, some houses have active house groups others less so. If you want to see your Landlord paying proper attention

Join in you can make a difference.

Active house groups supporting the BA and RCC are the key.

Help us make it happen by getting involved with yours.

Back to my text

It is possible even in the City of London to change things, but it requires persistence and energy. Recently we have made an impact.

There is no doubt that Sandra and I working together has helped

But for both of us this has been a full-time job. We have been lucky enough to have been supported by a few residents who have been happy to put their heads above the parapet. You know who you are thank you.

But We need more to share the load. If you have skills and energy to contribute please contact your House groups, Sandra or me.

When I agreed to become Chair I was of the view that three years was quite enough for anyone.

I am still of that view but am persuaded that I should offer to stay one more year as we are at a critical point in the transformation of the BEO. There are jobs that need to be finished.

It is of course up to the members of the Council to re-elect me.

Can I hand over to Ted Reilly who wants to bring you up to date on energy and climate change issues in the Barbican.