

25 Gresse St. Tenants & Residents' Association

Chairman: Gary Comenas | Secretary: Eddie Bloch | Treasurer: Ezra Benson | DMC: Paul Stelb

TENANTS AND RESIDENTS MEETING WEDNESDAY 16 NOVEMBER 2011 @ 6:30pm FREMANTLE BUILDING ONE STEPHEN STREET

MINUTES

Attendees

Gary Comenas (GC, Chair), Eddie Bloch (EB, Secretary), Ezra Benson (EZB, Treasurer DMC2), Paul Stelb (PS, DMC1), Pamela Munro (PM), Victoria Peppard (VP), Annie Thomson (AT), Louis Magill, Cliff Ritson, Antony Eden, John Feeney, Juliet Ace, Chris Howard, Al Goncalves, M. Ritts, Richard Morgan-Hughs

London Borough of Camden: Councillor Adam Harrison (AH), Mary Phee (MP, Camden Supervisor, Saleh Kahn, Holborn HA, Dilip Shah, Camden)
Derwent London: Joe McCready (JM, Central Cross Building Mgr.), Benjamin Lessor (BL), Simon Wittaker (ORMS) Vincent Sherwin, (VS – Galliford-Try)

Apologies:

Councillor Abdul Quadir, Councillor Milena Nuti, Angela Cooke (committee member)

Corrections to previous minutes:

None

Central Cross development:

As reported in the committee meeting of 26/10, GC reported that Derwent plans on applying for additional planning permission for the exterior of 2 Stephen Street which is to incorporate the same exterior cladding planned for the rest of the Central Cross development.

Benjamin Lessor, Development Manager from Derwent London & Simon Wittaker from architects ORMS gave a presentation on the additional planning application submitted for 2 Stephen Street; the main points are listed below.

Apply the same exterior cladding proposed for the rest of the Central Cross development

Brighten up entrance by means of moving the entrance from under the underpass closer to Stephen Mews

Brighten up lighting in underpass and entrance to Stephen Mews

Minimize nooks & crannies which encourage anti-social behaviour

This work would be scheduled for the same time as the rest of the proposed Central Cross development, namely Spring/Summer 2012.

Charlotte building – Light/Noise pollution

There have been continuing complaints from residents affected regarding the light

pollution coming all night from their building. BL confirmed that there is an issue with the controller software and the emergency lighting which turns on and gets spent when the lights are turned off. The contractors are aware of the problems and are working with Derwent to resolve them. The sensors on the 5th & 6th floors are being replaced in 2 weeks and the work will take 2 weeks. If this resolves the issue on these floors, any other areas will be similarly treated.

Another issue regarding the noisy banging of the side door leading to/from Evelyn Yard which can go on all night was raised. BL agreed that there should be some kind of dampener on it and will investigate.

A resident complained that construction materials from the Black Horse development are being emptied in the Charlotte building bins in the early morning. AH said this should be raised with the Black Horse development supervisor.

CCTV removal

GC reported that Camden have agreed to replace the camera if Derwent would take on the upkeep of the system. GC will liaise with BL/JM.

Cycle Racks

Residents asked Camden representatives if there was any possibility of re-instating cycle racks in the building. PM reminded the group of discussions at previous Resident Association's meetings of proposal to utilize the large bin rooms for installation of cycle racks. There was support for this, so PM will discuss further with DS and feedback.

Finances

EZB stated that Resident Association's new a/c with Metro Bank is officially open. But he has still been unable to withdraw the association's money from the old a/c with Santander. After corresponding with the banking ombudsman EZB was told to he could come and pick up a cheque but was still not able to. He has since been told the cheque is available and they will deliver it to him and come and explain to the Resident Association if we wish. GC and EZB agreed that EZB should rather fetch it himself.

GC explained that that although he had promised to bring the accounts to the meeting he was unable to do so because Camden is still reviewing them. CH felt that accounts from 1998, which included a £10k cash withdrawal was made should also be reviewed. PS held up the paperwork that showed the withdrawal was actually made by cheque and was therefore auditable.

DMC

PS explained the purpose of the DMC and his role as our DMC rep. The DMC meet quarterly with the last meeting he attended on Sep 20th and the next meeting will be on Dec 16th.

PS reported on the September 20th.DMC meeting where the main issues directly affecting Gresse St. are:

Caretaking Review (postponed until replacement for the deceased person in charge has been appointed-DS stated that a new appointment, Colin Hunt had now been made)

Government's proposed new Localism Bill - Camden are still forming their opinion. (Still being finalised, some key aspects; currently applied only to new tenancies, being no more tenancies for life, partner's death leading to cessation of a tenancy). Although a (Labour) Councilor publicly stated that Camden were preparing a view once the full details are known, probably Autumn 2011, and Camden has to state a Landlord Policy by April 2012, even if they disagree, he said he was against various aspects of the current proposed Bill.

PS noted that our association and newsletter was mentioned as a good example of keeping residents engaged. In addition, the Fitzrovia News wants to reprint the 'Our Annie' feature from our last Newsletter.

PS also noted that the printing cost of the newsletter is borne by Camden Fed who have a special budget from Camden council for this purpose.

Cleaning/caretaking services

PM reported on the walkabout carried out on 13th September, attended by Cllr Milena Nuti and Dilip Shah from Camden's housing office and the progress made so far.

It was found that while the upper floors were generally in a satisfactory state, the lower larger floors were not. There was also no way of ascertaining a schedule of what or which floors were being done when. The report and action plan agreed, will be on the Resident Association's website

Action Plan:

A weekly schedule of which floors are being done that week will be delivered to PM. The below standard floors will be given priority for the moment and will be monitored until they are brought up to an acceptable standard.

Update: Weekly schedules are received by PM. Cleaning is better but white patches are appearing on floors. MP stated that the vinyl flooring is sensitive to the cleaning materials and that a layer of resin had been removed by cleaning. She also said that the previous caretaker used a floor cleaning machine but she could not see any electrical sockets in the hallways. (it was explained that the sockets were in some of the utility cupboards.)

A separate walkabout to identify the service doors which need attention will be organized by PM. These can then be addressed with a block repair request.

Update: The lock to access door to the roof has been repaired, but repairs still required on back stairs and there is a gas cupboard without a door.

A separate walkabout to identify the communal windows which need attention will be organized by AC. (besides for letting in the elements, the inability to open/close windows prevent their effective cleaning). These can then be addressed with a block repair request:

Update: (AC sent apologies as she could not be at this meeting.) Walkabout was arranged by AC. EZB attended the walkabout with AC and many windows which needed cleaning and repairs were identified, the results of which were posted on the communal notice board. The window cleaners have been recalled and are due back on Nov 17th. EZB noted that we estimate 21 windows need doing over but they think only 4.

Lift maintenance – more attention required to keep areas like the grooves by the door clean and residents should have access to the lift padding.

Update: There is an improvement in the lift areas but there is still room for improvement.

DS and MP stated that the caretaker is working very hard and we need to lower expectations as it is a council block and not a 5 star hotel. PM agreed that the caretaker is working hard, but that we should separate that from striving for the desired results. Overall PM felt the progress has been disappointing and the lower floors especially remain in a poor state. This said, it had been agreed to give 3 months before formal re-evaluation.

The next cleaning walkabout will be in the New Year. GC emphasised that he is here every day and sees how hard our cleaner works and that he was doing an excellent job.

Rathbone Place (20-22)

Vince Sherwin, the site manager of the above development kindly addressed the meeting. He had come in response to an e-mail sent to the developers Lothbury IM detailing a series of complaints by a resident, but unfortunately the resident has not responded to attempts by GC to confirm his attendance at the meeting and discuss his complaints in person.

Mr Sherwin detailed the life cycle of the project and said it was scheduled to finish on Feb 13th 2012. He explained that complying with Westminster development guidelines had lengthened the project duration but was pleased to say that the noisiest part of the development has finished and sympathised with the resultant disruption to residents but said it should just be 'normal' construction noise from now on. He also said anyone who wanted to have a look round the development is welcome and should get in touch with him. He also thanked CH for alerting the police to a break in to the site one night.

Fire safety

Following the fire alarm outside the building a few weeks ago, the committee felt the building could do with a review by the fire department. EZB has arranged a walkabout by the LFB for Tuesday Nov 29th and anyone who wishes is welcome to join them.

Fitzrovia Open Spaces

Cnclr AH noted that Fitzrovia is one of the poorest areas in the borough for parks and seating areas and with the cancellation of the redevelopment of the Rathbone Place Post Office and the small park area from the Saatchi building development this is not about to change. The council has engaged outside consultants to look at possibilities in the area.

He reported on an upcoming Area Action Group meeting at the Marchmont Centre in Bloomsbury on November 28th, where they will be discussing

- Neighborhood development plans may be effected by the Localism Bill
- Open Space for the area

He encouraged residents to support the initiative and get involved if possible.

AOB

Jumble Sale: GC confirmed that Camden doesn't mind our using the paved area outside our building, but suggested we review the idea in the spring when the season is more favourable.

Pub Quiz: PS had previously suggested getting a pub quiz team together as a bit of fun/get to know your neighbors social activity. Anyone interested should let a committee member know.

Lobby holiday tree: PM objected to the concept of a holiday tree as the 'holiday' / festive season was Christmas and that this should be recognized and celebrated by those who wished to do so. PM agreed that she is happy to help EZB collect for the tree.

People were generally in favour of a large tree, but agreed that the width should be monitored so that it should not obstruct lobby/lift access.

Lift protection: PM asked residents to please cover the floor and walls of the lift if they or their contractors are using it for work in their flat. PM to liaise with DS for possible use of their lift protectors.

Service charges: PM stated there are discrepancies/lack of clarity with some charges that Camden can't explain satisfactorily. She will be meeting with a member of Camden's Homeownership team to discuss the issue. She also noted that AC was attending a Leaseholder Forum where this will be discussed. PM also noted that the list of repairs expenses & charges for the block were to be found on the council's website although it is not clear how these are finally invoiced.

AT voiced concern about the way she was being harassed regarding a number of issues. PS will visit her to discuss further and try to be of assistance. AH agreed that this should not happen and noted that there was a Housing subcommittee which was reviewing the quality of works for leaseholders and the appropriate conduct when in dispute, which included the suspension of any claim until the dispute was resolved.

PM would like to look into a council initiative which allows residents to manage their own services. As we are not sure if it is appropriate for us, she will initially invite a representative to a committee meeting to discuss it.

Future Meetings: A survey of residents as to the preferred time of TRA meetings as well as what should be discussed at meetings was suggested. GC noted that residents are always free to bring up any matters they wish to discuss in the "any other business" section of the meeting.

Signage: GC reported that the council had said there is no through road signage on Gresse St/Stephen St corner. EZB explained that further signage stating 'No through road' in words as well as 'Please switch engine off while waiting' was being requested. GC to forward previous correspondence with the Council about the signage to EZB.

Next meetings planned:
To be confirmed.