

World's End Residents' Association



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Notes of the WERA Special General Meeting held on Tuesday, 19th of September 2006 at 7.30pm in the WERA Clubroom

Attendance

All attendees were asked to enter their details into the WERA sign-in book as they arrived.

A total of 80 attendees entered their details. Of these, 76 were residents and 4 were non-residents. Of the residents, 48 were tenants and 28 were leaseholders. They represented a total of 46 tenant households and 28 leasehold households respectively.

The 4 non-residents were Cllr. Mark Daley, Ward Councillor, Chris Lloyd, the consultant from Pellings, and two representatives from St. John's church.

Three members of TMO staff were in attendance: Gary Riley, Peter Tozer and Lorna Cunningham.

The consultant from MCPS, Mark Patchett, was also in attendance.

Proceedings at the Meeting

As per the agenda, the meeting began at approximately 7.30pm with Mark Patchett of MCPS conducting a short presentation on the residents' survey that had been carried out on the estate over the summer and its results, which had recently been published. A small number of attendees interrupted the presentation on a number of occasions and were asked to wait until the end of the presentation before asking any questions. After the presentation was complete, attendees were asked if they had any questions with regards to the survey or its results. Almost immediately a small number of attendees proceeded to pass comment on the scheme itself rather than ask any questions, shouted down comments and questions from other attendees, made a number of irrelevant statements and generally behaved in an unruly manner. Despite repeated instructions to the contrary, they continued to do so for much of the remainder of the meeting.

Peter Tozer attempted to answer questions and address some of the issues raised by attendees during the meeting. He managed to do so on a number of occasions but was often interrupted.

A number of attendees expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the TMO's management of the existing security system and the estate in general. On several occasions those

attending brought up issues (not relevant to the security system proposals) which they felt had not been dealt with properly by the TMO.

The meeting closed at approximately 8.45pm.

Issues

The following comments/issues/questions were noted:

- A resident claimed that the level of crime on the estate did not merit the “excessive” security system being proposed. The resident claimed that the Police had told her that the level of crime on the estate was extremely low. This claim was vociferously disputed by a number of other residents.
- A resident of the sheltered housing scheme described how his walkway suffered from continual and ongoing loitering by youths, often smoking marijuana outside his kitchen window. He was in favour of the zoning proposals.
- A resident described how youths loitered outside the children's home in Whistler Walk on a daily basis, causing noise nuisance and acting anti-socially.
- A resident claimed that his lease did not allow the scheme as proposed to proceed without variation and his clear consent and that he would not give it. He claimed he had previously advised a solicitor to formally notify the Council/TMO of that fact in writing and would do so again. The resident claimed that his previous actions had brought the scheme to a halt “four years ago”.

All the Leaseholders in attendance were repeatedly reminded and encouraged to respond in writing to the recently issued Section 20 notice and take the opportunity to bring any specific issues they might have with the proposals to the attention of the Council and TMO.

Tenants were also advised to write to the Council/TMO with any questions, issues or concerns they might have with the scheme.

- A resident noted that the recent survey was flawed as it had not provided residents with a choice; they had simply been asked to “approve” the proposals but had not been provided with any alternatives to the proposals.
- A number of residents claimed not to have received the letter and leaflet describing the proposals or been interviewed for the survey.
- A resident noted that the current security system provided no real security and had been, and continued to be, a complete waste of money.
- A resident stated that they would not pay for any of the security works if the system, once installed, failed to function properly. In particular where this was clearly due to ineffective management and lack of enforcement action on the part of the TMO. The resident demanded that the TMO guarantee the effectiveness of the system being proposed, that it would be managed properly and that action would be taken

against anyone vandalising or abusing the system. The TMO should describe in writing exactly how they proposed to manage the new security system.

- A resident queried the ongoing maintenance costs of the proposed system. They asked whether the maintenance costs of the new system would be significantly greater than those of the current system.
- A resident claimed that the proposed scheme infringed on his human rights as it effectively relocated the “front door” to his property without his consent.
- A resident explained why zoning was necessary: anyone who gained access to any part of the estate had access to all of it and his or her movements were not restricted in any way. This made it difficult for the Police, or anyone else, to take any action. The resident noted that despite this they did not yet know whether they supported the scheme or not as it was not at all clear that it would actually work.
- A resident noted that the railings intended to seal the gardens from the first floor walkways that opened out onto the garden were extremely unappealing and would make the place “look like a prison”.
- A resident noted that the scheme did not address the problem of youths and other undesirables loitering in the tower stairwells.
- A resident queried whether the level of support for the scheme differed significantly between the residents living on the walkways and those living in the towers. He asked that the TMO investigate this question further.

It was noted that it was possible to use the data from the recent survey to investigate, and possibly answer, this question.

- A resident claimed that the doors that were installed on the walkways had the potential to “lock people in” either in the case of a power failure or malfunction.

It was noted that all of the doors could be opened “from the inside” without a fob and that they failed “safe” (i.e. unlocked) in the case of a power failure.

- A resident claimed that the doors that were installed on the walkways would cause access problems to the emergency services.

It was noted that all of the doors were fitted with standard Fire Brigade locks, of the same design and functionality as those installed on the lifts and current security system.

- A resident noted that the level of traffic through each of the seven towers was not evenly distributed and claimed that the TMO had failed to consult with the Lift Maintenance contractor with regards to the increased traffic levels that some towers/lifts would experience as result of the scheme.
- A resident claimed that his disabled neighbour living on Upper Blantyre Walk in close proximity to Chelsea Reach Tower would be greatly inconvenienced by having to enter and exit through Blantyre Tower; this could prove dangerous in an emergency situation.

It was noted that residents living on the walkways would have to enter the building via their designated single entry point but would then be able to exit through either of the two doors at each end of the walkway at any time (not just in emergencies). In the case of this particular section of Upper Blantyre walk in question, residents would be able to exit through either Blantyre Tower or Chelsea Reach Tower at any time. It was also noted that residents with special needs could be accommodated through the use of appropriate access controls on their fobs (the TMO could give them access to otherwise inaccessible parts of the estate).

- A resident asked whether the new scheme took into account the fact that two previous schemes on the estate had failed to provide any real security to residents and whether the consultant and TMO could guarantee that they had addressed all the shortcomings of the previous schemes.
- A resident queried whether the Council/TMO had briefed Pellings on all the previous failed attempts to install similar security systems on the estate.

Pellings were aware of the existing security system but did not appear to be aware of the zoned door-entry system installed in and around Dartrey Tower in the mid-80s. This had failed to provide any security benefit to residents and had fallen into a derelict state within months of installation.

- A resident stated that the questions in the survey had clearly been devised to achieve a favourable result, not as a true test of opinion.
- A resident asked whether and for how much the estate's leaseholders had been recharged for the existing security system installed in the mid-90s. The resident noted that it had been the first of two phases of works, that only the first phase had ever been installed and asked what had happened to the funding for the second phase.

It was noted that these funds were more than likely spent elsewhere in the borough.

- A resident asked whether any of the money that had already been spent on the scheme would be recharged to leaseholders in the case that the proposals did not proceed any further.
- A resident asked whether the Council/TMO could or would proceed with the scheme without the consent of residents.

It was noted that the results of the survey and the responses to the Section 20 notice would be brought before the TMO's Property Management Committee and the TMO Board and that they would make the decision as to whether the works would/should proceed.

Vote (show of hands)

At one point during the meeting a resident asked other attendees to indicate by a show of hands whether they supported the proposed security system or not. Approximately ten to twelve residents indicated that they supported the scheme. A larger group, approximately twice in number, indicated that they did not. The remainder of those in attendance did not indicate a preference either way.