

**Blenheim Gardens RMO
General Meeting
Held 17th March 2026
At 7pm on MS Teams
and at The Community Hub
23 Prague Place
London SW2**

Present:

Gina Filose– Vice Chair
See signing in sheet for attendees

Also in attendance:

Danny Howcroft (DH Estate Director)
Phill Morris (PM Financial Consultant)
LBL representative for retrofit works
Wates representatives for retrofit works
Critical thinking representative for retrofit works
Paul Toal – Id Verde – contractor
SNT team
Cllr David Bridson (labour)

1.Previous minutes of 23.9.25

Agreed as accurate.

2.Retrofit update:

2.1 James introduced himself as Wates' project manager, Veron and Louise did introductions as well. Mike asked attendees with specific issues to leave their addresses with DH. So far 53 new properties were measured. Work on 24 remaining dwellings was due to end 21.3.26, this is now extended to 21.4.26 (internals). Scaffolding is up too and contractors do need to get bookings in. Mike explained the 53 dwellings included new roofs, doors and insulation. The 24 will be done by 21st April. When this is completed, plan is to move onto phase 3. Exploratory work will be carried out and, it is hoped transfer onto the next phase will be smooth.

2.2 One attendee brought up issues with the new windows. Before the windows were secure including in the kitchen. New windows seem inferior (Mike disagreed). From the outside it permits anyone to click the window and gaining access. Other residents need to be aware of this, and many were not. Another issue is condensation. The attendee noted living on the estate for 40 years and never experiencing condensation or mould. When cooking and the window is closed it caused condensation. It reduced after opening the window but was still there. The newly installed ventilation seems

ineffective. Mike asked James about the lock when it is in first position. James explained the locking mechanism meets fire regulations in event of an emergency. Several residents raised the issue about it being opened from outside. There are 2 settings – one completely shuts the window and the other gives 20 mm for ventilation. It is a change in the window style (450/750 with 4.5 metre fittings as per fire regulations). If the window is locked and the key turned, it cannot be opened from the outside. James offered to visit residents' homes and give a demonstration of the 2 settings. The aftercare booklet for residents covers fans, the window mechanism and Veron will send these out soon. Veron confirmed the booklets were delivered to site today and will be distributed next week.

2.3 Mike noted the ventilation strategy was not yet resolved and not all properties are the same. Regarding noise of the fan this should not exceed 87 decibels. Wates is aware and has passed this back to the architects and designers. The meeting attendee asked about a forum for specific issues. Mike confirmed that Wates will contact residents individually and see what the issues are. Regarding future works – the budget is lesser and BGRMO contributed. It might not hit 42 properties (likely to be 24). Once designs are complete more will be known. Yvonne noted rubbish and litter had blown inside some of the flats after work was done. Mike confirmed James will make contact with residents about these problems.

2.4 Gina suggested Mike or Wates writes to all residents that had work done and explain where things are currently. Another resident felt processes missed, including asbestos tests. Mike noted the complaints process should be followed accordingly, even if it reaches Ombudsman stage. Mike asked James to email him the photos being shown. James confirmed details had been passed to the architects and no regulations were breached. Workers hoover and vacuum afterwards, with contents tested according to regulations. Mike asked if James could put this in writing.

2.5 Gina asked about budget. Mike explained sum was £1.846m with BGRMO contributing the most; end of terraces will make it costly. Reduced measures are being looked at. Mobilisation costs, the compound and Wates are in place but there are other costs. It is hoped to start by April and end in September/October. It should be a mix of 24 properties and hopefully include as many end of terraces as possible. Gina asked if there were any more queries. Another attendee offered to explain building regulations to other residents. Mike noted that a letter can be sent after tonight's GM capturing all of the issues. Someone suggested a Whatsapp group too.

2.6 Regarding communication – there's a newsletter and Verone does a very good job. DH is on site as is James and Mike as well. All would be happy to look at an issue. Others felt the RMO was dealing with Wates directly. DH clarified that the office can only relay issues as it is not a BGRMO contract. Things have been done and communication is directed accordingly. A duty of care to residents is shown by the office. Mike confirmed that DH informs of access issues like with the bins and other aspects and has been very helpful. DH gives information on properties which is invaluable to both Lambeth Council and Wates.

Mike and Wates representatives left the meeting 8.10pm

3. Management Accounts

3.1 Freeholder service charges reduced by 7%. Insurance increased by 10% with estimates not included last year – such as electricals and blocks costs (latter charged every 5 years). Generally, grounds maintenance and general maintenance costs are like the previous year.

3.2 In term of the budget – most years the RMO had a £200k surplus by end of the year. This is due to how budgets are set. Lambeth Council is reviewing the allowances this year and costs increased by about 30%. This led to a significant increase in what BGRMO is paid by Lambeth. A few things may be adjusted. Contingencies were put in and the CCTV service will be run from the estate at extra £2.14. An allowance for providing the service will be paid (i.e. monitoring and maintaining). The main cost of monitoring will be included in staff costs and may be included in charges to homeowners on the estate (in retrospective at end of the year). Entry phone system maintenance will be taken on as well. Evaluation on this is needed but it is currently included under ‘income’.

The budget includes a significant sum for radiator replacements. Some work on this has started and will continue next year. Legal fees budget increased. A question was asked about the significant work referred to.

3.3 PM explained the threshold and allowances that can be reversed. A resident recalled when Lambeth wanted to install cameras and at the time it was felt not be needed. DH explained how Lambeth will seek to recover outlay on CCTV and door entry. PM noted that previously both leaseholders and freeholders paid costs incurred. Lambeth was asked about intermediate charges for tenants and introduced the charge. **Another resident noted a problem with slow closing doors on the right-hand side. (DH will report to Lambeth Council) – action**

3.4 Allowances increased by over £150k and the reserves are healthy. Garage charges increased but Lambeth agreed to pay extra for managing and maintaining. The doors and other work costs will be drawn from this sum. At times, access is needed to clear properties, and this increased the overall task of managing the garages. Lambeth does not plan any changes in this area. There is now an evaluation of the pension fund (BGRMO is funded 160%). The budget surplus is over £124k.

3.5 Specific approval is needed for item 1 of the report (i.e. to approve £15k stairwell painting, £25k for works and £10k). The General Meeting had already approved £1m and in previous year approved costs of a part time support worker for 6 months – this has not occurred yet in this budget. A resident noted service charge for the CCTV is £10 but was not sure what service is being received. It seemed some service charges are newly introduced and generate a lot of money. PM explained that most service charges across the borough are monitored by a team. The council pool these costs, not BGRMO. Overall costs can be shown by Lambeth. PM also explained that average costs are used by Lambeth Council. With freeholders, they receive a service charge that includes maintaining the estate. The calculation of service charges is broad and has been since

its introduction. At the time, Lambeth Council considered introducing specific charges on certain estates but never did.

PM also noted that painting is a usual annual agreement. Any unspent money from previous year is carried forward.

Vote – to approve specific items in part one of the report (painting of stairwells, porch roofs and garage doors) and the revenue budget unanimously agreed by meeting attendees

4. RMO Performance report:

4.1 At end of January BGRMO outperformed Lambeth Council in all KPI areas. Gina noted this was excellent, including void turnaround times. A leaseholder had a service charge collection query – DH explained the approach was changed without Lambeth informing RMOs. A Section 20 was put into the daily service charging. Some elements should have been invoiced separately.

4.2 DH introduced the police sergeant for Acre Lane Ward. The officer informed that there are two PCSOs for the patch – Moh and Geraldine who is new. Ward police came to see how General Meeting is run and to meet residents. Blenheim Gardens is one of the best run estates in the borough. DH and Andy are very proactive with relaying CCTV footage and issues. There is a police ward meeting every 3 months and it is advertised. Leaflets will be left at BG office. It is a social meeting to inform of what the police are doing. The next safer neighbourhood meeting takes place on 3.6.26, 6.30pm at Brixton McDonalds. All are invited to attend. Councillor noted the meeting was a good way to raise issues and know about local policing. Police noted BGRMO could send a representative. GF recalled lots of past communication with the police but then there was no presence. Seeing officers tonight is great. Sargeant explained he had been talking more to DH and Andrew over the past few months including email exchanges. There will be a new officer starting in April – PC Emma – and dedicated ward officers who work with children and young people. They will accompany the PCSOs at times but have other duties.

4.3 LTNs, Traffic – Suzannah noted concerns about increased traffic on local roads and drug dealing too. Councillor noted there was no massive peak. A few residents recalled seeing cars with things obviously happening. Councillor agreed that the St Matthews church area is active. Police confirmed seeing an increase in police numbers in the ward. The presence of police in the town centre might be pushing things outwards a bit. There are issues near Brixton prison too. Blenheim Gardens when compared to the rest of the ward is low crime, though there are issues. The Home Office identified that Brixton has a robbery problem and input money. The St Matthews church will likely be renovated and there is a temporary measure – a cage – to prevent access. Streatham Town Centre saw increase in shoplifting.

The extra 28 police officers in the town centre will assist. Regarding Brixton Police Station's opening hours, it has changed to 7am to 10pm weekdays, not 24 hours 7 days

a week as before. The Councillor confirmed work was done to increase police presence, there was also discussion about disused phone boxes being removed from Acre Lane.

GF thanked police officers for attending the GM.

5. Any Other Business

5.1 Tree branches and carparking. Please send message in advance about tree work on the Whatsapp group. Some correspondence from the office to residents seems threatening – for instance stating there will be a fine. DH noted the office was often told late about tree works – for instance 1 or 2 days' notice. Location is a factor as well since the RMO is only informed of area i.e. Glanville Road and not specific tree location. Signs are put up about pending tree work but as mentioned, the office is told about this at short notice. Getting the tree section on site is one challenge, understanding on where they are going to work is another. Not placing notices on cars may result on no works getting done when the tree section attends. Tree work is a council function and BGRMO must work within the agreement. There were lots of complaints raised about trees by residents. Gina noted if told to move cars finding a parking space can be an issue.

DH explained tree work is done on a 3-year cycle with other defects dealt with as and when. Regarding correspondence mentioning fines, it is usually where matters are urgent.

DH noted that fire safety incident was raised, since one of the bushes blocked a door. This was confirmed by a fire officer. A resident noted seeing many hanging branches on the estate and wondered if they too received letters. DH noted if instructions are followed in such areas, there should not be any issues.

5.2 Suzannah relayed a neighbour's problem with LTNs. Concerns were raised but it seems the decision is not being reconsidered. LTNs were to be a trial. Enforcement has caused issues with crime – for instance ASB, car break ins and vehicles turning into Kings Avenue. Some of the roads are now very quiet which makes it ideal to commit crimes. There is still lots of traffic and this has not reduced pollution. It has added time to journeys that used to be simpler. The public's views were not taken into account. One person sent 18 emails with no response, but they received a response the same day for an email sent about terminating pregnancies.

Councillor confirmed that he was also a ward resident. Anyone with a disability can apply for an exemption the consultation results (i.e. Lyon Rd) were reported back. Individual representation and other aspects were considered. It was then trial based with all matrixes looked at. Not everyone will be happy, but Ferndale LTN saw significant positive changes. Councillor urged all to inform about crime issues. Blue badges were also extended to carers. Suzannah felt the changes were experienced locally and have been disruptive. Councillor noted that the original plan had bollards which would have impacted emergency services access and blue badge users. Changes were made and one business owner's customers struggled to get access. The representations were half

and half, and where things are now is quite positive. During door knocking exercises at Ferndale the issue voiced tonight does not arise. Suzannah recalled the consultation and most were not in favour. Councillor asked if an email could be sent about this.

Gina thanked all for attending and closed the GM at 9.20pm
