

Pembury Estate Residents' Association Service Charge Meeting with Peabody

Tuesday 11th July 2023 6-7.30pm, Pembury Community Centre

DRAFT MINUTES

Present from Peabody: Kay Majola, Sunny Vadher, Jason Reid, David Bishop (property accounts team), & Taye Ineh-Igiehon.

Residents present: Lottie Story, Andy Parkman, Stuart Doucas, Fiona Sheil, Jackson Pamme, Heather Mendick, Neil Eckerley, Will Kettle, Jonny McCullough, Matthew Lowe, Eva Palacios, Chloe Campbell, Piotr Baranski, Konstantious Kapetanakis, Jose A Sainz, Raymond McKenzie, Annamaria Carsi, John Birkin, Jenny Harrison, Jake Ireland, Kehashan Nawab, Cindy Shuster, Stephen Shuster, Sharon, Simon Mercer, Richard Harris & others. An estimated 60 residents were in attendance, not all names were collected.

Apologies: Dele Fatogan, Aymara Bianco.

Chair: Kay Majola

Minutes: Lottie Story (PERA Secretary)

1. Introductions

Kay introduced the Peabody team and clarified the roles of Kay and Taye in response to a residents' query about what their roles are and whether they have replaced Kerry. Kay confirmed she covers Pembury East and West and New Pembury and that Taye covers Atkins Square. Dele is the area manager.

Sunny introduced himself – explained responsible for cleaning services for the Peabody North East London region, including Tower Hamlets, Newham, Redbridge and Hackney, introduces Jason as one of his team of six.

Resident asks about structure of meeting – Kay says she is chairing. Resident asks who is point of contact for Pembury residents. Kay – responds saying to go through customer care line, it will then be directed to who it needs to go to.

- 2. Service charges increases – costs, especially care taking and concierge costs, are much higher but service has deteriorated, there is poorer cleaning across the**

estate, concierge not taking parcels when used to (Atkins Square). How can leaseholders hold Peabody accountable for the works that need to be undertaken? MyPeabody is good for showing the repairs but not the progress of jobs, could the web team add an update function to the portal?

Kay - told Lottie from PERA that the insurance and procurement team cannot be here. Lottie accepts this but states as it is on the agenda we expected an answer to be brought to the meeting, it is unacceptable that they haven't brought the answers with them.

Action: Kay to ask a representative from the relevant teams to respond to our question about why our service charges have gone up when services have deteriorated and to email it to PERA Secretary.

Discussion surrounding level of cleaning and caretaking took place.

Sunny - answers about caretaking. He's been here 8yrs. He has provided information about the caretaking that has taken place to the Pembury Estate Residents Association (PERA) several times and to individual residents when they've contacted him.

David – Sunny identifies where caretakers work and it is then attributed to blocks depending on whether costs are internal or external. If internal it is charged to block. At estate level, there are blocks making up the estate, the charges are then split between all of the blocks. It may be evenly split, may not be because of apportionment.

Heather – our question is why has the charge gone up so much when the service has not.

Sunny – asks which block. Heather – asks about Perrywood but states it is a common theme across the whole estate.

Sunny - we are meant to have 10 cleaners. We have had an issue with staff, running since January with two spare vacancies and two long term sick. Sunny says we have been actively trying to get staff in. His region has 35 staff and six vacancies. Sunny tries not to use agency staff as it is an additional cost, also difficult to get agency staff in. Sunny says we ran with seven caretakers for months, tried to provide a basic service and cover 10 caretakers work. Jason is down to five staff, we have borrowed staff from other sites. Standards have not been where they want them to be for past 5-6 months, apologizes.

Sharon - questions it is not just 5-6 months.

Fiona – caretakers have been good, the ones that got sacked pre-pandemic, since then standard has been appalling – Perrywood House – echoed across the estate. We feel disrespected, all use the complaints procedure again and again. Costs we're paying for are for no service, it is the costs of failure. Repeated complaints and we know it will never get fixed. We are never heard and our charges are being increased. We feel powerless.

Resident – costs should be less if we are lacking staff.

Sunny - we try and keep costs down. Sunny states he can't answer why the costs have gone up, it is a question for the contract/procurement team. Sunny is doing a project updating the

noticeboards, they've been trialling an app so cleaners can sign in and send photos of cleaning. Sunny will be able to see whether the work has been done.

Fiona – please can we somehow compare the cleaners' information with residents' information, as what each is saying doesn't match. Sunny, please email or call us direct if you have concerns.

Action: Lottie to share contact details for Sunny and Jason with residents. – by end of July.

Action: Kay to provide the calculation of actual costs of service charges for last three financial years along with copies of all invoices relating to these costs – by PERA committee/Peabody meeting on 19th September 2023.

Richard – we all agree that the standards are not good enough, if the basic level slips it will spiral downwards. Issue is that Peabody want management charge and cleaning charge when the job is not being maintained consistently. Residents will treat the estate accordingly. Residents are managing it by contacting Sunny, not Peabody – they are not managing it, needs to be consistent and regular standard. We need an estate manager to keep on top of it.

Resident – every end of the year I am always in credit, why do I pay for the lift when I am on the ground floor. All residents on Shellness Road paying different service charges, it doesn't make any sense. Why is this? We used to have 24 hour emergency caretakers, not that isn't there, we don't know who there is.

Taye -Jason will leave his number so people can call him, we no longer have resident caretakers.

Sunny- we haven't had resident caretakers since estate taken over from Hackney Council.

Stephen – why do Peabody manage their renovations and upkeep so poorly – Hindrey Road, fuse boxes, the upgrade and management was poor, no deadlines met, promised connections and times changed frequently. What are the financial implications of Peabody for this estate of failures on a regular basis? We suspect this is why the service charges are raised because the contractors are doing such a poor job.

Cindy – works are managed poorly and not satisfactorily.

Resident – been here 26yrs, started with Hackney Council, no longer caretakers accessibility. Peabody is on a zero level compared to how it used to be.

Kay - Jason should be around.

Resident – not Jason and Sunny's fault, it is the managers.

Richard – can't have the major and the minor, Peabody have gotten too big. We shouldn't be paying for contract management that is inadequate.

3. **Method of procurement for contracts, including controls/oversights** of amounts charged in contracts, and ensuring we are getting value for money on an ongoing basis

Kay informed meeting there was no one available to come to the meeting from this department. See action point above.

4. **Apportionment schedule** - how the service charges are apportioned to properties and the legal aspect of serving them to tenants and leaseholders

David - clarifies that different parts of Pembury estate have different ways of apportioning the costs.

Pembury East and West (old Pembury) are calculated on a rateable value.

Pembury Place, Pembury Close and Atkins Square (Pembury Circus) is calculated by the number of bedrooms.

Sharon - apportionment should be done in accordance to the residents lease and not Peabody's policy.

David - Pembury East and West were stock transfer from Hackney Council which is why it is rateable, it should always be a fair and reasonable apportionment. Where there is an apportionment method in the lease the landlord can come up with a fair and reasonable apportionment alternative.

Sharon – we looked at yr end accounts 2020/21 and in them Peabody are charging Shellness Road for repairs for whole of Peabody's account. Why are we seeing repair costs for Birchington on Shellness accounts? I raised it in August 2022, no response yet. Why can't Peabody provide the invoices for 2021/22. I met with a temporary member of Peabody staff, Natalie, who went through Peabody's invoices and accounts 2020/21 (as requested under section 22 – right to see invoices). The accounts showed they were being charged for the whole estate. The accounts were redacted and only showed totals, however after expanding the spreadsheet the detail showed repairs for other blocks on the estate. Peabody employ temporary staff to deal with section 22 requests. There will be a massive challenge across Peabody. Sharon Champion (?) (new director of home ownership at Peabody), leasehold is in her remit and we will complain.

David – I can't answer why they haven't provided the accounts, but you should be able to if you put in a request. We didn't employ temps just to keep up with section 22, not true. Service charges should only be apportioned for ones from East and West Pembury.

Sharon – why since Peabody took over Family Mosaic has the apportionment changed? We haven't had an explanation.

David – as far as I am aware I don't think apportionment method has changed, it is on rateable value.

John – correct it is rateable, but it was changed two years ago to by no. of bedrooms. John took Peabody to tribunal and had his changed it back to rateable. Pembury has always been divided as on the ground costs are not the same. The procurement of long-term contracts, cost fixed at the beginning. Why therefore are the costs going up as the costs will have been fixed to procure the contract? The salary advertised for the gardeners do not match what we are being charged. The tribunal reduced his charge by 50%, still not good enough so he went back and it was reduced further. It can be done. Residents should stay calm, go through complaints procedures.

Sharon & Fiona – suggested PERA do a workshop with John and Sharon to help residents come together and complain.

Heather –Peabody should not be ok with allowing residents to take it to tribunal to get treated fairly, we should not have to do this. This meeting has been run badly, Peabody had questions in advance and no answers. They are not addressing our point about the charges going up.

Action: Lottie to arrange PERA meeting about service charge complaint – to be arranged at PERA general meeting on 19th July.

Action: David to send apportionment details for Pembury to PERA secretary.

Action: David to check if the apportionment has changed and check on some leases to see if they have changed.

5. **Buildings insurance** - how it is calculated, claims experience and the effects on premiums

Kay informed meeting no one from the insurance team could attend.

Action: Kay to send response from insurance team to PERA secretary.

6. **Sink Fund Total Figure**- what is the current total held in the sinking fund for the whole of the Pembury Estate?

David – clarified that the sink funds held for each block are;

Pembury Circus (Atkins Square) £239,000

Pembury Place £331,500

Pembury New £0. Lottie requested clarification on why no sink fund for Pembury East/West.

Action: David to double check and let PERA secretary know figures for Pembury East/West.

7. **Service Charge Capping** – at what level is the service charge capped for social tenants/shared owners?

David – clarified that social tenants service charge is capped at a 7% increase per annum.

Shared owners – there is no cap on increases. There is a cap of £250 if work has taken

place with no residents' consultation, or if an increase is more than £100 in a long-term agreement and residents were not consulted on.

8. **Lack of efficiency from Peabody** in dealing with repairs and complaints results in additional cost to leaseholders through service charge (examples can be provided on request or brought to the meeting)

Discussion about lack of efficiency from Peabody including examples from several residents about the lack of responses to complaints.

Resident – In 2019/20 the actuals were £27k less than estimated, but we all got demands for additional payments of hundreds of pounds - £260 variation between flats, it should be apportioned fairly. Poor quality of living, jobs are not done properly, wrongly signed off, raised again, repeatedly.

Sunny – it is clear the quality has not been good and that the charges have gone up – he does not know why.

Resident – 21 Perrywood House – communal areas and bin chutes are filthy, she cleans it every day after work, it is shameful to live like this. Sunny takes her details to follow up.

Fiona – asks what the cost of failure is, who pays for it? Gives examples including Perrywood House scaffolding being up and then taken away for other area of estate despite job not completed. Are we paying for five jobs instead of one. You need contact with the humans in your care, we want the relationships with the caretakers in our blocks. Have you costed the new procedures, the new procedures, the retrenchment model and between having people who knows us. Please can the costings of this take place.

Sunny – structure put in by Peabody first, then staff. Sorry can't answer why prices have increased. There are 35 staff for the north east region then area managers above. Sunny will take concerns back to the area managers about visibility of the staff on site so people know who they can contact to build better relationships. He will tell teams to speak to those making a complaint. Residents encouraged to call Sunny and Jason, if you have a reference number he will find out where the repair/cleaning has failed and why.

Richard – therefore we are managing the estate for Peabody.

Sunny – one of the concerns is that we aren't seen, I am offering to be visible and contactable. It isn't for you to manage the service, it is to quicken the response, rather than going through the customer care hub.

Fiona – who pays for the failure.

David – no leaseholder should be paying for this, if it is a failure of Peabody then they should be paying.

Action: Sunny – we will find out who pays for the failure of repairs for next meeting and get someone from repairs team and procurement team to come to the next

meeting. Repairs concerns and recharges will be taken up by the NCS with the relevant department.

Eva – one example of many complaints, read out all of the dates in which no response received. Four people from Peabody have responded, no answers. Came yesterday with scaffolding for grass in guttering after 7 months. No warning, just came. It could have been done with a ladder. Also had emergency contact due to drug users in blocks on Dalston Lane because of the open doors. Several complaints submitted and no further along. It has been months. Why isn't the person responsible for contracts and repairs here and what are the safety policies that Peabody has. I want them to receive the evidence and I want answers. Handed printed evidence to Kay.

Action: Kay to respond to Eva about her complaints.

Sharon – thanks Peabody staff for coming and thanks Cindy and Lottie and PERA for calling the meeting. Peabody should have had prepared responses. Please can residents come to the PERA meeting on 19th July at 7.30pm to discuss joint complaint.

9. AOB

- a) Who pays for the fire alarm call outs in Atkins Square? If there are repeat call outs due to faulty alarms waiting to be fixed who pays for the call outs?

Kay – residents to check if they've been charged on their service charges.

Lottie – I asked this a year ago, we want Peabody's policy on whether call outs due to lack of repairs is that it is charged to Peabody or to the resident.

Kay – has been told it is on a case by case basis and residents need to check if been charged.

- b) Please can Peabody provide the invoices for 2021/22 under Section 21 & 22 of the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985.

Already discussed above.

- c) Resident asks about fire safety in Atkins Square.

Lottie and Simon Mercer update resident on latest post on Peabody website, acknowledges that the website is currently not working and that Lottie and Simon are chasing on Twitter.

- d) Jane – do residents need to pay for 24 hour lighting on Tolsford Road last year?

Kay – advises Jane to put in a request for the information.

- e) Notice boards – Sunny - we are working with the neighbourhood management team to identify which notice boards require replacing and which we need access to.

Next meeting – will be an online meeting with PERA Committee and Peabody on 19th September, 6.30pm.

Summary of Actions:

Action	Person Responsible	By When
Kay to ask a representative from the relevant teams to respond to our question about why our service charges have gone up when services have deteriorated and to email it to PERA Secretary.	Kay	PERA Committee/Peabody meeting 19/09/23
Lottie to share contact details for Sunny and Jason with residents. – by end of July.	Lottie	End of July

Kay to provide the calculation of actual costs of service charges for last three financial years along with copies of all invoices relating to these costs	Kay	PERA committee/Peabody meeting on 19 th September 2023.
Lottie to arrange PERA meeting about service charge complaint	Lottie	To discuss at PERA meeting on 18 th July
David to send apportionment details for Pembury to PERA secretary.	David	PERA committee/Peabody meeting on 19 th September 2023.
David to check if the apportionment has changed and check on some leases to see if they have changed.	David	PERA committee/Peabody meeting on 19 th September 2023.
Kay to send response from insurance team to PERA secretary.	Kay	PERA committee/Peabody meeting on 19 th September 2023.
David to double check and let PERA secretary know sink fund figures for Pembury East/West.	David	PERA committee/Peabody meeting on 19 th September 2023.
Sunny – we will find out who pays for the failure of repairs for next meeting and get someone from repairs team and procurement team to come to the next meeting.	Sunny	PERA committee/Peabody meeting on 19 th September 2023.
Kay to respond to Eva about her complaints.	Kay	ASAP - by PERA committee/Peabody meeting on 19 th September 2023.