

Minutes of Action Against Cladding Group – Annunciation Hall,

Saturday, 22nd June 2024

Residents Response to Barnet Council Cladding leaflet was available on reception. Present at meeting as well as residents were David Pinto-Duschinsky and Ameet Jogia.

- Fire safety instructions discussed, at the last meeting someone was locked in toilet so pay attention to which doors you use to exit.
- Incident on Thursday, 20th June discussed, people camping outside the hall have been removed.
- George spoke about the need and difference between cladding issue being discussed and funds to support works being discussed. The group needs to raise awareness that we do not have funds to pay Barnet Councils (BC) proposals rather than discussing how to minimise works.
- Assertive v aggressive approach discussed using the Post Office as an example. One to one meetings with BC can make you vulnerable so we need to meet BC en masse.
- Ring Doorbell camera recommended.
- Independent advisors – if someone knocks on your door and wants entry to your property they need ID.
- There is no need to discuss legal proceedings or costs at the moment.
- Brick house fires discussed. The Sun newspaper published an article on p29 today.
- Fireproof paint being applied to George's home as well as getting a fire alarm. He will then ask a fire department to verify what else he needs to do to his house.
- No apology received for original letter from BC to tenants. One resident had suicidal thoughts due to that letter.

Room opened to Ameet:

- Very un-nerving time and unacceptable that BC sent the letter without consultation. Feels our pain.
- Should have been handled better and wants to be a strong voice for us. Wants a solution, action is needed.
- None of the safety concerns voiced by BC have been proven yet.
- Although safety comes first and must be taken seriously, there have been no affordable solutions presented.
- Some residents have said they are not sleeping due to the Finchley fire.
- Ameet has written to Michael Gove and has recently had a meeting with the housing minister but has had no response in writing because of purdah during the elections. Ameet expressed our concerns over a lack of clarity.
- Ameet has called for evidence from the Fire Regulation department but this is inconclusive.
- The Finchley fire is not a like for like comparison. It is not necessary that we act yet, we are awaiting evidence and it seems that BC has jumped the gun.
- Meeting took place with BC and councillors – they are standing firm with the costs that have been quoted even without evidence, no responses during purdah.
- If elected Ameet will look for evidence as to whether the houses are unsafe but agrees it is BC that should be paying and he will work to make this happen.
- There are other areas with councils that have received government funding and Ameet can get details of this for us.
- Resident asked why nothing has been sent in writing to residents? Also why there is a lack of information available to residents on the funds available to BC? Ameet feels that BC has jumped the gun.
- Resident stated we should not be paying interest on any loans given from BC.
- Resident pointed out that our homes were built at a different time to the Finchley houses and that our houses were not re-cladded with the same materials as some of the ones in recent fires. Some houses were re-cladded in the 1980's but ours were not in Burnt Oak.
- Ameet said he is available to discuss any queries and attended tonight to advise on what he has done so far.

Room reverted to group discussion:

- Resident asked the group if BC could enforce works to be carried out by residents if they are refused entry to our homes – group was split on whether this could happen or not.
- George advised he would like a vote later in the meeting as to how we move forward and whether we would like to have a committee within the group.

Room Opened to David:

- Believes government should pay not residents and that freeholders should be ‘lobbied’ for.
- Good to be here, we all know him as he has been door-knocking and attended all of our meetings.
- Very angry at the treatment of residents.
- Has spoken to Ali, Caro on regular occasions and has our deepest sympathies.
- The original letter to residents should never have been sent.
- Advised the Grenfell families and worked with freeholders there.
- Has written to the Secretary of State and the National Leaseholders Campaign, has been to lobby at parliament and is working with the opposition for change.
- Debate so far has been mainly for leaseholders because of Grenfell, he wants to make sure government take action for freeholders.
- Government have not expressed whether they agree or disagree with BC.
- BC have mis-quoted legislation, not quoted 2004 as they should have.
- BC need to clarify what category hazard our homes are.
- David has experience of Grenfell and billions have been spent on leaseholders updating flats. In Colindale, some residents have received £100,000 per property.
- Originally above 18ms was the threshold for receiving help. He understands why the government didn’t want to commit but these are unique homes and people need help.
- Suggests contacting End Our Cladding Scandal.
- Referred to 4th paragraph of leaflet and said firebreaks might be a possibility as opposed to what has been suggested.
- Believes government should pay and has supported our group since its beginning.
- Feel free to email or phone him, happy to take questions.
- Subject of BC offering to buy houses was raised – David happy to take questions and discuss after.
- No fire assessments have been made public.
- Inspectors detailed in 19th June letter.
- Fire assessments – BC meant to choose from a list of 40 and do their own surveys for their tenants. BC have already chosen a Company.
- BC and fire assessors have been door knocking.
- BC said they had to act because of 2004 act – BC are asking the government if they have to proceed. Many more councils may have to follow pending the outcome of this enquiry. The government needs to clarify if BC need to act because of the 2004 guidelines.
- The 18ms guidelines came about because of the reach of the 18ms fire ladders.
- It took years for the guidelines to be reduced to 11ms.
- David thinks this is a small amount of money for BC to pay. Is the government worried that if they have to pay BC, this will open the door for monies to be paid to other councils? Again, clarity if required.
- Has anyone looked at the existing budgets from the Conservative government?
- Burnt Oak is unique – timber frame and unmodified. Work needs to be done on 11ms properties.
- Where does this end – what will happen to cottages and listed buildings? There are reasons to get this through government.
- Insurance costs & mortgage costs: how can we tell insurance companies what is wrong when there are no surveys to refer to? If we fail to tell them, our insurance can be invalidated and if we tell them, they may withdraw cover – contact End Our Cladding Scandal. Should the council recommend insurers?
- Why did BC not consider insurance? Nothing has changed for insurers yet so most of the group have not informed their providers.

Room opened to Ameet:

- Had meeting with minister – legislation is in place regardless of which party gets in. BC is currently controlled by Labour and nothing will change locally.
- If Labour is in power locally why can't they help and speak to BC? They should be doing this if they are in power now.

Room opened to David:

- David lobbying for power. Trying to think of the way forward including firebreaks. This should bring costs down and the government should have budgets to pay for this.
- Letter came from BC – why did Labour not try to stop them? BC were legally advised to act under the 2004 act. BC believed it was a statutory duty for them to act.

Room opened to George:

- George explained his autism and that he always speaks his mind, he apologised for comments he made regarding the committee and women.
- Explained cladding leaflet.
- Called for a vote – asked do we want a committee or not? Asked for a show of hands. Crowd voted for a committee – majority show of hands confirmed by Ameet.
- Admin are not present tonight and he feels too many people are discussing they types of cladding when we should be discussing the £23,000. This should be the priority.
- George said the committee should be all the people in the room and jobs to be shared, nothing should be hidden or deleted from any part of the group.
- Trying to hold Labour councillor to accountability should be our priority and fighting for all residents.
- All the people at the meeting are here voluntarily, funds donated are re-invested into flyers and rooms. Cost of living and hardship are evident.
- Urged the group to stick together.
- A committee will be formed as the per the vote. Will take time.
- Thanked everyone for attending.