

**Brandon Heating Meeting  
14<sup>th</sup> October 2021, via ZOOM**

**Attendees:**

Sylvester Hilton (SH Chair), Simon Holmes (SHo), Tom Vosper (TV), Paul Gathercole (PG), Tom Lloyd (TL Resident), Marie Livingston (ML),

**Apologies:**

Dave Hodgson, Bola Odusanya, Cllr Eleanor Kerslake, Cllr Stephanie Cryan; Des Vincent (DV),

Meeting opened by Sylvester, welcome and apologies given. Minutes agreed by all.

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## 1. Update re Major Works

The evidence found from the report in terms of the condition of the riser pipes from Cornish we decided to do a similar exercise on the other 5 blocks. We plan to incorporate the cut outs based on the evidence we have seen we could not justify shut downs for the cut outs as we are entering the winter mode so we have arranged to incorporate those sectional cut outs which would be a wise way to move forward based on the evidence we have seen at Cornish House, pending any further results from the 5 risers should the cut out show anything different. TL would like to be present when the cut outs takes place and SH agreed.

- *PG and his team to ensure the date of the shutdown incorporates TLs presence.*

PG will undertake shut downs during repairs and there will be a 14 day notice period during which TL will be informed.

SH summary: The random riser contract is parked in a pending state on the basis of the results from the Cornish House riser pipes, if it transpires that it shows different results then we will revisit it. TL is happy with this.

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## 2. Re Letter from TL:

SH: In your letter you touched on radiators and cylinders. I met with Paul yesterday, following the information given to Paul, he will write back formally addressing those items. TL wants to know if there was a planned programme.

Responses to bullet points:

- PG indicated that they won't be doing that, we are not doing a whole programme of radiator replacements, they will be replaced as they break. The Council has agreed that a complete plan for the borough is being put together. Depending what they decide will determine what they do inside the properties.

TL: So will it continue to be a break/fix approach?

PG: Yes, it could be that the whole internals are changed or redesigned, it all depends what is shown/ found on the cut outs and the further detailed feasibilities on the major works

TL: The cut out has nothing to do with the hot water cylinder and radiators in the properties.

PG: The cut out will determine the state of the system and whether we replace the whole system/ network. We cannot decide what will be done internally until we know the full state of the system. This could involve changing some of the pipework / upgrading the systems.

TV: I agree given the cuts that were done at Cornish, we will do the pipe cuts as soon as we can but the assumption is that they don't need replacing but they were seen to be in poor condition from the analysis but we need to do a bit more investigative work. We may need to install HIUs and heat meters.

TL: OK nothing progressed since last meeting.

- Second bullet point answer is similar to the last question pending further investigations and decisions about where we are going. We want to be transparent about what we need to do.
- Third bullet point = Yes. We should be able to have numbers of how many radiators and hot water cylinders have been replaced over the last 5 years by next meeting. *Action for PG.*
- Fourth bullet point: TV = Often the modern systems don't use hot water cylinders at all. The advantage of a hot water cylinder is that you have stored hot water if there is ever an outage. The advantage of the HIU with a plate heat exchanger is that you save space and never run out of hot water. We need to do a full design survey of the block and see what the best solution is going forward. Re: the cylinder and radiator cuts done last time, it would be great to know how indicative they are in the same way we ask the questions of the risers. Once we have the answer of how many radiators have been replaced by SEO over the last 5 years, if we get other cylinders / voids coming up it would be great to add them onto a lab test, the more data we have the more knowledge and certainty we would have as to whether we need to invest in replacing the internals; the estate is about 60 years old.

TL: When the estate was originally built there was a hot air heating system, the central heating system was retro fitted in the 1980s, they are not original. If you take a flat that have never had their cylinder or radiators replaced the components will be about 32-33 years old, some have been replaced by OCO on a break/fix basis. What % of the radiators and cylinders are the original 33 year old components and what % have been replaced over the years? We do need this data to make an informed decision on what % of the properties actually need to get the internals replaced.

SH: Paul has indicated that he is committed to get that report and we can have a look at that.

PG: Going back over the life of the system to see what proportion is original without surveying all properties will be difficult, it will be a guesstimate at most but not what we have changed over the last 33 years.

TL: There were no computer systems 33 years ago, OCO haven't had the contract for the last 33 so I agree but it would be better to work with some data than to work with zero data.

PG: I am going to go back on our payment records for schedule of rates pay and that will be done on a day basis.

TV: If we get a year by year basis we can see if more radiators were being replaced in the last couple of years than 4/5 years ago because they are reaching their end of life.

PG: I will collate all information, it will be done on that basis.

TL: With hot water cylinders it's quite easy to tell if they are old or new, if there are 7 radiators in the properties it's quite unusual to change them all at the same time.

PG: We will get an indication and some numbers and prior to any works taking place, if they were like for like then each property will have an independent survey, if it was different technology they might need replacing depending on what technology we go for. I will go back to April 2016 when our last heating contract started so that would give us 5½ year's data.

TL: If you were looking at changing the technology, would residents have a choice in this?

PG: We would make a proposal if there was a major works scheme and do resident consultations which is improving year by year, I can't say you would be able to say yes or no you were having it.

- The fifth bullet point regarding the question of being aware of the pressure imbalanced issues TL said that TV had already answered the question previously.
- The sixth and final bullet point answer = PG indicated that there is a filtration on the system to capture that before the contaminates and the debris go through.

PG: As part of the plant room refurb done you do have filtration, that will collect sediment that is in suspension within the system, in any type of heating system you will get a build-up of sludge, the systems are regular dosed which can prevent the build-up and keep it in suspension, you will never get rid of 100% of the sediment or sludge without having filters in every flat. When we upgrade systems now we tend to have a magnetic filter, we do what we can within the current system but any new system does have increased filtration, dosing the system is now more regimented under our new contract, its independently verified and is sampled yearly. Until upgrades are done you won't have individual filters but we do filter the system at present and its better within the plant rooms.

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### 3. Plant Rooms

In terms of noise, bellows have been installed in all of the plant rooms to suppress the noise, have you noticed the difference?

TL: Since you turned the heating on, BSW were restricting the pump work to below 40% which does not seem to be communicated to all the OCO operatives, some of the OCO operatives aren't setting the pump maximums properly. TL shared the estates wasp group on screen showing issues and comments of activities from 3/10/21 re heating and water.

SH shared that he is not aware of this volume of issues having spoken with Steve Brown who said it seemed quiet. PG stated that the heating had only been on from the last 2 days this week and not since 1/10/21, it is temperature driven and would need to drop below 17 degrees even in the summer.

TL: We have a communication problem, I have residents who bypass your contact centre and communicate with Steve directly. The contact is not a pleasant experience, it takes 40 mins to get through and often they drop the call and you re-initiate the 40 mins to get through. If you are a leaseholder they ask you to contact a private plumber to prove that it is not your fault. The contact centre drives people away because it does not work. Everyone has to wait for the 40 minutes. I no longer call the contact centre I contact Nat Stevens. When I engage with the contact centre it is very long winded. Everything is not cool and dandy on the Brandon we just find different ways to communicate our issues to Southwark.

PG: Re call centre issues, I brought this up with the seniors and it is being looked into at the highest level. When TL contacts Nat then Nat will contact me and we are then raising jobs and is distracting, we share your frustrations. The jobs are all still logged.

TL: Would they be a way to set up an email address to try and get their issues resolved, where residents could be directed?

PG: I cannot initiate a bypass it has to go borough wide although it happens unofficially.

TV: On Southwark website you can report communal repairs by your My Southwark account, call the call centre or email [repairs@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:repairs@southwark.gov.uk).

TL: If you report a problem on the phone you get a 1 day response, but if you report a problem by email it tells you someone will respond within 72 hours. You have this system but dis-incentivised anyone from using it. How do I convince my residents that they need to waste 40 minutes of their lives to report a problem, and if the call centre put you on hold the line usually goes dead - you have a 70% chance of them getting back to you. It can take a whole morning to get a call logged due to the inefficiencies of the centre.

SH: Communications has to go through the call centre so that it is coordinated and reported. It is worth reporting back the length of time it takes for residents to get a response. Going back to the noise in the plant room and the bellows installed, there were other recommendations from the acoustic report that was mentioned; the size of the pipework – indicates that it was installed as per the design. We made reference

re debris and pipe deterioration but we will counter that by doing the pipe cut outs. Carrying out cleaning and flushing – PG said this will be done when the independent water test is done if required.

TV shared acoustic report on screen.

- Bellows installed which suppressed the noise.
- SH to respond formally respond to the 5 recommendations and get back to TL in 2 weeks.

TL: We agreed to appoint an independent expert to take a look at the whole system and evaluate the problems that were introduced following the BSW installation of the riser pumps 2019, and we were going to work out a way of agreeing an independent expert to take a look at the whole system, we have not done anything on this, when they will come and give an evaluation. SH agreed.

TV: There is a grant fund which allows studies on networks which are not performing as well as they should so we should be, we could apply for a grant to pay for this. An expert has offered his services to do studies like this he is experienced on district heating systems network etc. He has never worked with the Council before.

TL: I would like the person to have true independence and can analyse the system and say what is good and what is bad, I'm happy to consider him as long as we have a say in the picking of the team.

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#### 4. Any Other Business

- Next meeting 12/11/21. Sylvester will have information re the recommendations.
- TL to get 2 weeks' notice of any cut outs.
- PG, TV and PG agreed with TL that the floors where the intrusive cut outs are done, have the aluminium ducting is intact and its integrity has not been compromised (covers left off or pipes exposed and been allowed to rust). TV we are more interested in the internal condition. We will wait for PG report before we do more.

**Date of next meeting:** Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November, 3.00pm