

**Brandon Heating Meeting
09th December 2021, via ZOOM**

Attendees:

Sylvester Hilton (SH Chair), Simon Holmes (SHo), Tom Vosper (TV), Francis O'Brien (FO), Marie Livingston (ML), Tom Lloyd (TL Resident), Cllr Eleanor Kerslake (EK), Francis O'Brien (FO)

Apologies:

Dave Hodgson, Bola Odusanya, Des Vincent, Paul Gathercole

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

Further analysis of riser pipes

In terms of the riser pipes, we said we would do the sectional cut outs to phase in with any shut downs that engineering services have planned. The riser replacement contract is on hold pending further investigations on the other 5 tower blocks. There is not enough validation to continue based on what we found on Cornish. We need to see the evidence for the other 5 before we can make concrete decisions, that is tied into the shut downs.

TL said he is happy with the status on that.

Plant Rooms: SH

We believe some of the issues raised in terms of noise and reliability, it has settled down now and we are progressing with a more stable service.

TL – We have residents across multiple blocks who are experiencing issues with noise. The pumps installed in Oct 2019 introduce excessive noise if they are run at more than 40% of their operational capacity. It was agreed that we would get an external independent person to check the homework of Potter Raper & MEPS Consulting, we agreed timelines which seems to have fallen off the agenda. I was disappointed that they attempted to lecture me at the meeting given they are the ones who have introduced the problems to our heating system, I am not happy to bring them back and let them correct their own work.

Independent Review

SH – They were giving an account for how the system operates, explaining the rational in terms of the need for the improvement and to have the reliability of the system. We did say about getting an independent entity in and see how we can make it work, there are various consultants and frameworks we can use. We will need to make a short list of the consultants who have the right capacity and expertise to review the heating systems so they can make an assessment of what was there before and evaluation of what has been done. We will present you with the list and see how we can move it forward. It will not be Potter Raper & MEPS Consulting.

EK – The TRA are to be given a shortlist, some good independent people and they get to pick the ones they prefer, I am concerned with the timeline as we are near Xmas, we did commit to do this in Autumn.

SH = We will collate a list of the recognised consultants on our books and present it to Tom and engage him in the process.

TV – If we haven't got the scope of the review nailed down then it needs to be done before we approach consultants to do the job. It's more of a mechanical review of the pump sizing.

SH – TL was looking at an overview which would incorporate the acoustics, the noise and the level of the investment that was made to see whether it was warranted, how the system could be improved, an independent assessment of what was done.

TL – Noise and acoustics has to come into it as residents are raising this problem. I hoped we would get someone to take a holistic overview of the heating system and the work carried out in 2019. The pumps specified were incompatible with the system as a whole given that you cannot run them over 40%. This is what introduced the noise problems the residents are having. Is what was put in fit for purpose? Did they install something that was not fit for purpose and has introduced problems? I had no heating for 11 days (just lukewarm) and were running fan heaters. There are still failures with the system because of the new heat exchanger you put in, we have concerns of whether the pumps were suitable and concerns that they produced the noise.

EK – I agree with Tom Lloyd that it needs the holistic view of what is the problem now, what caused it. Tom Vosper said it would be good if the Council could provide an agreed Terms of Reference or State of Works that the TRA are also happy with, A4 sized.

TL – I am happy to email EK the questions that should be asked.

FO – Potter Raper are professionals and have the correct qualifications regardless of what people think, and all the pump rooms have been successfully commission, they have all been signed off. The issue is that we piece meal district heating systems, part of the resolve of that was to renew the riser pipework, we are still looking into that project. In the minutes just sent you from the meeting you requested it shows photographic evidence of the riser pipework; re the plate heat exchanger, we had a comment back from Damien Hyde, the issue is not to do with installation it's to do with bits on the system as it is. It's not a fair statement to say the work undertaken by major works is not fit for purpose as that is not the case.

EK – That is why it is important to resident to have this independent view that it isn't someone that did the works before. It's an independent person that will say this is what their system would ideally have and these are the problems with it. It was always going to be difficult. The TRA are hoping for a whole view of the system.

SH – Whoever is chosen, we will have an outline brief and an overview to what they are to investigate and search for. Tom L to send the information to us and we can formulate an overall brief and sent it back and all parties can agree once we have identified which Consultants we are going to use.

Review - Terms of Reference

Tom V – It may be useful to think about our end goal. The end goal is to have the best system we can at Brandon that is fit for purpose, isn't noisy and works sufficiently. We may need to expand the brief to look at other aspects of the systems in order to achieve the end goal. This should encompass the analogy of "was it a good engine but just the wrong one for the car". If the risers don't need replacing then what other works would be beneficial to improve the efficiency of the network as a whole or is it down to recommissioning works to balance things better using the existing radiators and valves to do that balancing. I would love some input in the brief to ensure we are asking the right questions.

SH – There is a term of reference and a platform to move off from. Tom Lloyd will devise his list of questions and what he wants to see from the process, Tom Vosper has a number of items he will want to add. We will look at it holistically, collate the information, and recirculate it to ensure everyone is happy with the terms of the brief. We need to identify the list of consultants with the right resume and expertise to do this then forward to Tom Lloyd to have the option of seeing which would be suitable to appoint to carry out the exercise. TL agreed.

TL - We went 11 full days with substandard heating due to heat exchanges needing to be cleaned. The heating dropped by about 20 degrees last year and was resolved by the cleaning of the heat exchanges in the plant room. This should trigger compensation. There was an issue on 20/11 which was resolved on 2nd Dec.

SHo – Tom to email the two timeframes to Simon, we can check on the system and see how the defect was reported and check if it was individually or a block problem.

TL – You installed remote monitoring software so you can now use a laptop and dial in and see the temperature of the water in the plant room, you have diagnostics that you can report back on all of this. I only have a hand held digital infrared thermometer which I used, I took accurate digital readings of the temperatures across the 11 days. You charged us for a very expensive system to monitor it. The heating was at best tepid. It was the whole of Bateman House, each of the 68 properties.

FO – It has to be an outage and must be 24 plus hours without heating and/or hot water. The policy states an outage and that everyone in the borough is treated equally. We have to follow the policy. It is paid automatically onto or deducted on their rent accounts. TV shared that Leaseholders do get compensation.

EK – We need to gather the information. There should be clear records about this, it sounds like someone has fixed it so it should be recorded. The compensation policy has to be fair to everyone. If it was 3 degrees that doesn't seem fair. Let's see what happens. TV agreed to pick this up in Paul's absence.

TL – Steven Brown said it was the plate heat exchanges in the plant rooms at the bottom of every block that can get clogged up then taken out and cleaned. I believe Southwark have purchased 2 auxiliary sets of plate heat exchanges. If this happens in the future it can be swapped over for the clean set then taken out and cleaned.

TV – I will look into this as I thought we would have installed duty stand by plates anyway which would take 100% load on each plate so you would clean and descale 1 and the other would be fully functioning. I will check in the plant room.

TL – Steven Brown should be able to provide you with the technical details.

SH – Tom V to liaise with Paul Gathercole and Steven Brown to see what the process is based on the issues that were found. We agreed at the last meeting that the radiators and hot water cylinders would be replaced as and when they fail.

Evaluation of Radiators & Hot Water Cylinders

TL – At the last meeting you said you would do some research to establish what % had been replaced over the last 5 year period and would bring that information to this meeting.

SH – Paul G is still collating the information, looking at the history to see how many failures and he will feedback to the group. TL asked for the report to be prepared and ready for the next meeting in Jan 2022? SHo to feedback to Paul for this to happen.

EK asked for a timeframe for when we can get the names and agree the works for the Independent Inspector. TL agreed to provide the list of questions and an overview by the end of the week. SH to look at the Consultants before Xmas. Tom V to look at Terms of Reference then pull it together and see what the overall terms can be.

EK – We could aim to have them in by end of Jan 2022 to see the system when it is most needed and operating at its maximum. Need to check the new Covid rules.

TV – I've been working on a feasibility study that is quite lengthy, it would be quite expensive and take a long time. If we go too big we could slow the process down.

SH – We just need an overview of the system, specification and how it is operating.

Compensation for heating outage - Bateman House

TL – I want to go back to the compensation scheme. The 11 days we had, the flat was too cold to be in without putting on extra clothes so had to use fan heaters and stay in one room of the flat. Is there any flexibility, will you do the decent thing for us? We didn't have functional heating, the ambient temperature in my flat was 20 degrees, we didn't not have heating but it wasn't enough to heat up anyone, it wasn't a complete shutdown. A miserable trickle of heat.

SH – Paul G's team will need to look at the readings and see what it is and to see if it categorises itself into the rules that govern the compensation policy. You had some heating and hot water although tepid, there was still heat running through the system as opposed to no heat and no hot water whatsoever.

TL = The policy seems to have several loopholes that no one will be able to get any money. I can imagine our local Cllr surgeries will get busy if our compensation doesn't show up.

EK = Let's get the facts and apply them to the policy first. If it's a policy that says you can have 5 degrees in your radiator it wouldn't seem fair. I wouldn't expect it to be written in an unfair way. I am happy to speak to Cllr Cryan, I would be disappointed if the compensation didn't apply.

AOB / Action

- Tom V to look at Terms of Reference and add any additional items.
- Sylvester H to devise a list from the Consultant and circulate once completed.
- Tom V to liaise with Paul G & Steven Brown to see what the process is based on the issues that emulated when the plate heat exchanges were clogged. .
- Paul G's team to look at the readings and feedback on the rules that govern compensation.
- Paul G to provide report on % over 5 year history of radiators replaced at the next meeting.
- Tom L to email the 2 timeframes to Simon H re dates of loss of heating.
- Tom L to email brief to EK.

Date of Next meeting: 13th January 2022, 15.00.