

Ebury Bridge Community Futures Group – Meeting 42

12th January 2021, 6.30pm – 8.30pm

via Microsoft Teams

Members Attendance:

- Tom McGregor [TMc] – Chairperson
- Charlotte Pragnell [CPr]
- George Panayioudou [GP]
- Joanna Winterbottom [JW]
- Mohammed Eisa [ME]

Apologies:

- Cristina Pasantes [CPa]
- Tammy Dowdall [TD]

WCC Officers and Consultants:

1. David Thompson [DT] – Project Director Ebury Bridge
2. Gelina Menville [GM] – Ebury Bridge Regeneration Manager
3. Martin Crank [MC] – Communications & Engagement Manager
4. Louis Blair [LB] – Communities First (ITLA)
5. Millie Morrissey [MM] – Project Support Officer (Meeting notes)
6. Tom Elwood [TE] – Programme Manager
7. Stephen Stretton [SS] – Programme Manager

Notes: *This document provides a summary of the discussions which took place during the meeting including questions and respective responses that were raised during the session, action points and key decisions.*

1. Welcome

TMc welcomed all members and gave apologies for CPa and TD.

2. CFG Standing Items

Action List Review: (Item 4) The Wayfinding working group will be merged to focus on Branding and Wayfinding.

Matters Arising:

No matters raised.

Rumour Buster:

No rumours raised.

3. CFG and The Year Ahead

DT presented a list of key considerations for the CFG in 2021. GM explained the list was compiled whilst considering which items will be of key importance to the CFG. The CFG will be consulted and incorporated in key decisions that are made throughout the year.

GM welcomed any new ideas or topics from the group.. GP added it is important to include the rents of the new properties. LB suggested a separate “sales process” topic. LB asked if there will be anything covering the delivery of Phase 2a. GM confirmed this is included under Viability and the outline business case for Phase 2 will include the route to delivery in its entirety. LB suggested a topic exploring who the partner would be and the groups relationship with them. GM explained this is shown on the list as a viability update, but delivery will be included as its own item, so it is more explicit regarding the Phase 2 Delivery partner.

Action: GM will make the list available for viewing on SharePoint following the meeting and take comments and suggestions thereafter [GM]

Outcome: GM agreed rental income will be added, including rent setting and mitigation.

4. Ebury Future Manager Procurement

DT explained the Future Manager Procurement focuses on who manages the New Ebury following completion, and how it is managed. It is assumed WCC has not the experience of multi-tenure management, therefore it is highly probably The Council will ask an experienced, skilled supplier of management services to manage the day to day services on its behalf. If that is decided, there will be a formal process of consulting existing residents who wish to return. The Manager will be both consulted on and procured in 2021/22. GP asked what the provider’s remit will be. DT explained their remit will cover day to day management, it will have nothing to do with rent increases, or tenancy, however they will be responsible for rent collection. DT highlighted overall control will be with Westminster Council. DT assured this topic will be returned to in the near future. JW asked for a refresher with more clarity on phasing.

Action: Revisit the topic of “Phasing” and include a more in-depth definition of each phase [ALL]

DT explained the management provider needs to be in place a year prior to Phase 1 completion to do their recruitment, and necessary planning. From the consultation, a market briefing will be created and go out to relevant management providers in the autumn before Christmas. This will begin a round of Market Testing, followed by RTR consultation and procurement will commence in Autumn 2021 for appointment a year later. DT assured the group there will be at least 3 sessions on this at future meetings and CFG contribution will be required for specification and procurement. GP asked who the management would be ultimately responsible to. DT confirmed WCC.

5. Service Charges Work in Progress

GM explained WCC have been working with specialist advisors SAY to put together a fair estimate for the service charges of the new estate. Once these service charges are approved, they will continue to be tested through the procurement process. This gives a good indication of where we are currently, but these are not set in stone.

GM presented a pie chart of elements which make up the total service charge. The estimated annual service charge cost for the new Ebury is £2,615,400 per annum. GM added a more detailed breakdown of tenant’s service charges will be given at the next meeting. JW observed current service charges are modulated on the size of each flat, and whether or not you make use of the lifts and asked if those elements will be considered with the new charges. GM explained all of the properties are within the block so it is likely the majority will pay for the use of the lifts. GP observed the new costs are high for someone on a pension. GM reiterated this is a starting point and any additional mitigations, such as housing benefit still need to be looked at further. LB asked if WCC have spoken to existing Westminster lease providers. GM explained extensive conversations have been had with internal leasehold colleagues as well as external specialists.

JW commented the new proposed tenant cost is much higher than the current cost. GM explained this is because the service being received will be vastly different and of a higher standard than the service currently. SS added the tenant aspect of the service charge, can be covered by housing benefit if the tenant is eligible.

Action: GP asked for the policy regarding housing benefit and services charges in writing [SS]

TE presented some comparable figures from existing Westminster properties as well as new Westminster Development schemes. GM explained everybody on the new estate would have access to the same services and receive the same service as each other. GM added after the meeting the presentation will be circulated for digestion by the group so they can provide their feedback to the team. GM invited anyone with questions or who wishes to talk in more detail to get in contact to discuss further. CPr asked if things can be stripped out to lower fees. GM explained where there are options to pull back a service, this needs to be looked at and how it effects the management, running and quality of the new estate.

Outcome: GM confirmed a detailed breakdown of charges will be provided at the March meeting.

LB added it would be useful to drill down in terms of headings, what existing residents are paying currently and what they will be paying as additional costs will present barriers. LB added there will be people who would not wish to receive benefits in order to afford the new costs and there will be leaseholders who are on a fixed income and won't be able to access benefits in the same way as tenants. GM explained there will be two more sessions to drill down in to figures before taking this to a Cabinet Member. JW commented the service charge calculation should be from baseline of what we can afford and work from there. GM explained the ethos of scheme is for it to be tenure blind and the services will be accessible to all. There will be things cannot be reduced because that's how much it takes to run and maintain certain things, e.g. lifts. GP asked what is meant by standard of service. GM explained the design and the cleaning of blocks is different to the standard that is needed to look after blocks such as the existing Ebury blocks, which are hard standing and open air. GM added service charges will be broken down in to bedroom and flat size.

Outcome: TMC suggested specific breakdowns for each bed flat to be presented at the March meeting.

Action: GM asked all CFG to provide initial comment on the starting point costs by the next meeting on 2nd February. [ALL]

6. Branding Exercise

MC presented the branding survey that was sent out for comment by the CFG. feedback was that Feedback received described Ebury as a well-established, vibrant, diverse community.

MC added the survey will go out with the next newsletter across the estate for people to give it some thought and respond in their own way. This can then be fed back to the people who will speak about the virtues of the estate. TMC added there is a lot of history and hidden connections to the estate and this should not get lost in translation. MC stated it is very important to demonstrate to anyone new interested in coming to the new estate is aware that there is a strong existing community already.

7. AOB

LB asked if there is any update on the work done previously on leasehold disturbance costs. MC updated there is a piece of ongoing work being done to develop the leaseholder journey. MC added WCC must be clearer about disturbance costs and their definition. The issue of what defines as a disturbance cost has been discussed. Communicating what the actual policy says is of paramount importance.

JW explained there is still more feedback to give on the leaseholder journey mapping exercise. CPr would also like to be involved and draw from personal experience. MC will circulate some potential dates for the revised draft to be reviewed by any leaseholders on the CFG, who wish to get involved.

Action: MC to circulate the revised draft to be reviewed by leaseholders on the CFG [MC]

LB asked if a date has been set for the Planning Committee. MC explained it is likely to be February or March.

LB asked if the new development planning application for the garage on Ebury Bridge Road will have any knock-on effect to this scheme. GM explained a meeting has been had with them, but further discussions can be had to ask those questions.

Action: Officers to provide an update on the Dementia facility planning application at February's meeting [GM/MC]

8. Date of next CFG meeting

Tuesday 2nd February 2021