Notes of a Meeting of the Fernwood Maintenance Strategy Group held on 22nd April 2015 in the Village Hall.

Present J. Gould, D. Heath, B. Smith, D. Harrison, P. Murray, S. Taylor, J. Weale & M. Weale Apologies - none received

The meeting concentrated on compiling a document that will set out the key issues that concern residents and the ways that they could be resolved. A key issue document was drafted that also had a survey element that all residents would be encouraged to complete.

DH - draft document

The Key Issue document is dependent upon the Parish Council resolving whether it wishes to gain ownership of the open spaces within Fernwood and to subsequently maintain them.

It was agreed that the Key Points document would be used as a reference point for Group Members when asked and also be available to the Parish Council and Residents Association for reference. It would also be used to inform the press, all Newark and Sherwood District Council Councillors after the forthcoming election and the Directors of Barratts/David Wilson Home. It will also be used through social media to inform residents.

It was also agreed that a meeting with C. Penn of Barratts/DWH be arranged as soon as possible to discuss land ownership and other related matters.

DH arrange meeting with C. Penn

In addition to the document, the following key issues were identified as needing further investigation:

- A. What would a new owner be liable to maintain?
- B. How much higher would the Fernwood precept be likely to be if the Parish Council gained ownership of the land?
- C. That the District Council should be requested to contribute towards the maintenance costs
- D. That the legal position of maintaining the car parks for Freehold and Leasehold owners be obtained.
- E. Who would change the transfer documents to remove the covenants and at what cost?

Following the meeting, further discussions took place on the draft document and survey through email. The document was updated and amended and a final version agreed which is attached to these notes. It was further agreed that the options available within the survey are more complex than originally thought and it was agreed that the survey options would be examined in detail at the next meeting of the Group.

We Want to Make Life Better and More Affordable in Fernwood

- Many of us in Fernwood are paying more than twice the actual cost of maintaining our Village due to the high management fees charged by OM/FirstPort.
- 2. David Wilson Homes refused to pay Newark and Sherwood District Council to take ownership of the Village open spaces contrary to the original planning permission and instead contracted a private company that house owners are required to pay in addition to their Council Taxes.
- 3. David Wilson Homes are apparently intent on giving Fernwood open spaces to a private maintenance company who are answerable only to their shareholders and have been proven to be unreliable. The Parish Council wants to take care of the all of the Village open spaces and facilities in the spirit of the original planning permission which would also result in lower costs to residents.
- 4. Multiple significant errors have been found in the OM accounts for Fernwood.
- 5. Freehold house owners have OM on their Land Registry Title document and are treated as "long leaseholders" by having to pay a fee of up to £500 to ask for permission to undertake any works, either inside or out, to the property that they own. They must pay OM/FirstPort to change their mortgage company or to sell their property.
- 6. Nearly 20% of Fernwood Villagers are exempt from charges and restrictions on their properties.
- 7. Many who own their own garages pay over £250 a year to be able to drive over the private road or parking leading up to it.

The Parish Council is writing to Barratts/David Wilson Homes to formally request ownership of the public open spaces be transferred to the Parish Council with the maintenance costs of the open spaces being paid for through a small increase in the Council Tax. This would then spread the costs fairly amongst all Villagers.

The transfer of the open space maintenance to the Parish Council would result in the removal of OM/FirstPort from Freeholders title deeds. This would also remove the need to ask for permission to undertake works to a freehold property and also the need to pay for the involvement of anyone else in the sale or mortgage of a freehold property.

The increase in your Council Tax portion for Fernwood is expected to be very significantly less than the present maintenance charge once a small one off legal cost of the change to the Land Registry documents has taken place.

Produced by the Fernwood Maintenance Strategy Group on behalf of Fernwood Parish Council.

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