

## Meeting between Robert Jenrick and Fernwood Parish Council

Friday 5<sup>th</sup> July 2019

### Meeting Notes

#### Present

Robert Jenrick MP and Sue Gray, from the office of Robert Jenrick

Parish Councillors: Dee Harrison, Ryan Cullen, Julia Smith, Jim Weale

Parish Clerk: Marion Fox Goddard

#### 1. Introductions/brief overview from Dee Harrison

Prior to the meeting Fernwood Parish Council had sent a briefing paper to Robert outlining the Parish Council's concerns about the lack of legislation to protect freeholders and reminded Robert that in 2017, he had petitioned The Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government to review the practice of national housebuilders selling freehold properties with a management company attached and legally binding residents to pay unregulated, extortionate fees for managing the maintenance of the open spaces as well as wholly unnecessary and high legal fees for changing mortgages etc.

Dee introduced the Parish Councillors to Robert and Sue and asked where we were up to with this matter.

The Parish Council is seeking:

- legislation to enable freeholders to challenge management companies if their charges are unreasonable or the level of service is inadequate
- management fees to be capped
- greater transparency on charges for estate maintenance and agreements between landowners and management companies
- the handover of open spaces to local councils (town/parish) if requested
- powers for town/parish councils to be responsible for ensuring management companies are performing their obligations satisfactorily and charging local residents fairly.

#### 2. Robert's feedback

Robert detailed that section 5 of the Freehold houses: estate charges paper had been removed as some councils enjoy the mechanism of being able to use private companies to manage open spaces. He has noted that the new Chief Executive of NSDC has expressed an interest in the Council using an arm's length arrangement for the maintenance of future phases of Fernwood and hoped that NSDC would use their soft powers to help Fernwood.

Following his meeting with Councillors J Weale and B. Smith and the Parish Clerk in 2017, he had tried to get a meeting set up with the housing minister, but this was not taken up.

Robert agreed to take up this issue again when a new housing minister is in post (approx. 1month).

Fernwood Parish Council requested that the government takes the necessary steps to get freeholders rights. Fernwood Parish Council representatives would like to meet with the housing minister to move this issue forward.

### **3. Other issues**

Robert asked if there were any other issues in Fernwood.

Concerns were expressed that the new speed limit and crossing will not be in place on the Great North Road when the Suthers School opens in Spring 2020. Robert agreed to write to NCC Highways (Via EM).

The Parish Council recognise the need for a better play park and would like to deliver this. There are difficulties with this as the land is still owned by the developer – this issue has been raised with them and the Parish Council hope to have feedback soon.

Councillor Weale reiterated his concerns that the road infrastructure is not sufficient for the number of houses being built in an around Fernwood.

Fernwood Parish Council have asked Barratt David Wilson Homes to hand over the open spaces in Fernwood to the Council. Robert agreed to write to Barratt David Wilson Homes about this. Clerk to send evidence that this has been requested.