

## RESIDENTS TAKE CHARGE OF IRONSTONE COMMUNITY

Residents at a groundbreaking new housing scheme in Lawley, near Telford, will be able to influence key community decisions thanks to the launch of an innovative 'stewardship' initiative.

The introduction of stewardship at Ironstone, which is in line with the government's agenda for sustainable communities, is set to create a blueprint for other developments of its scale and size to follow.

Ironstone is being developed by the Ironstone Developer Group (IDG) - a consortium comprising Barratt Homes, George Wimpey and Persimmon Homes – as well as a string of other agencies, including English Partnerships and Telford and Wrekin Borough Council. On completion, it will include 3,300 homes, a new primary school, parks, shops, offices, restaurants and bars.

The resident-led stewardship scheme involves all households paying a £250 'community charge' per annum, in return for enhanced community benefits and the chance to influence many key neighbourhood issues that are usually decided by the local authority alone.

The deal was sealed when IDG signed a partnership agreement with stewardship providers Bournville Village Trust and Beth Johnson Housing Association, which have set up Ironstone Management Services (IMS) to deliver the service. The £250 annual fee has been fixed for five years and the scheme's start-up costs have been underwritten by IDG.

John McNulty, from IMS, said: "Stewardship will ensure that the community is the driver in everything that happens at Ironstone. The annual fee covers the provision of on-site information, estate wardens, enhanced community communications and events, digital technology and the highest quality landscaping."

In addition to essential services, such as grass cutting and maintenance of many public areas, it also deals with a host of other issues designed to help the integration of the community into the local area.

“Stewardship is a holistic approach that will ensure Ironstone looks as clean and tidy in years to come as it did the day the homes were first complete. But it goes far beyond the physical landscape, with access to education, training and community officers providing a support structure that will make it a highly desirable place to live.

“Residents will also be consulted over the allocation of the budget and can suggest new services and facilities - such as community activities, floral displays and other amenities - from the ‘stewardship’ pot,” added Mr McNulty.

Neville Stebbing, director of IDG, said: “Ironstone is all about creating a sustainable community in a village environment, not just about building more new homes. We believe that people want and deserve to have a say in how their environment is managed and to live in an attractive setting. Long term stewardship will mean that residents will enjoy both.

“Long term stewardship offers residents peace of mind – that does not just mean a quality property, but also community spirit, excellent facilities, clean public areas and the security of knowing the neighbourhood is a good and safe one in which to live.”

Stewardship has already been introduced successfully by the Bournville Village Trust, at the nearby Lightmoor Village, although the model for Ironstone takes the concept to unrivalled new heights.