

Funtley Governance Review

Results of First Phase Consultation

21 September to 14 December 2015

Consultation

The Council asked if respondents wanted to:

- (a) Create a Parish Council
- (b) Make no changes to the current arrangements

And to provide reasons for their views

Who did we ask?

A letter, information pack and survey was sent to:

- Every person on the electoral role within the boundary of Funtley
- Every business and community organisation within the boundary of Funtley

CAT Meeting

- 20 residents attended a CAT meeting held on 24 November to discuss the proposals
- Notes from the meeting and a consultation reminder were sent out to Funtley residents at the beginning of December
- Some Funtley residents contacted the Council as a result to say they would like to withdraw their support for a Parish Council

The Results

- 230 responses were received from a total of 565 – that's 41% returned
- 171 (74.5%) were in favour of creating a new Funtley Parish Council
- 59 (25.5%) did not want to make changes to the current arrangements

Pro Parish Council

67% of those in favour, thought a Parish Council would give them more say over local issues, but did not give specific examples of what they wanted more influence over.

33% of those in favour of forming a Parish Council provided reasons for their decision and this resulted in some emerging themes

Planning

Protect Funtley from the impact of the Welborne development

Response: A Parish Council is not able to decide on local planning applications but is a statutory consultee. The Council already affords this status to Funtley Village Society.

Planning

More say over local planning applications and development in Funtley

- A Parish Council can be asked for comments on planning applications in their Parish but is not able to determine the outcome. The Council already asks for comments from Funtley Village Society.

Infrastructure

Put traffic calming measures in place

Response: This is a function that could be carried out by a Parish Council but only if delegated to them by Hampshire County Council. Officers from Fareham Borough Council have liaised with residents and put in place temporary speed limiter reminder signs on a number of occasions.

Infrastructure

Improve street lighting

Response: This is a function that could only be carried out by a Parish Council if delegated to them by Hampshire County Council.

Facilities/Leisure

Have dedicated funds to improve the area

Response: This would depend on the level of funding provided by the precept. Funtley Village Society is already able to apply for funding from a range of sources open to Parish Councils, including the Council's Community Fund. They have already secured new benches from the Council and are working on a bid for a community noticeboard via the same route.

Facilities/Leisure

An opportunity to manage their local play area

Response: This is a function that could be carried out by a Parish Council if delegated to them. It would cost an estimated £70,000 to replace and update the Play Area at Funtley recreation ground. However the Play Area had a mini make-over in 2015 and is scheduled to be totally refurbished 2017/18 by Fareham Borough Council following a consultation to be held later this year.

Community Cohesion

It would bring the community closer together

Response: Parish Councils do have the potential to act as a focal point for local communities, as indeed does the Funtley Village Society.

Vote for status quo

85% of respondents who prefer arrangements to remain as they are provided reasons for their decisions. This too resulted in a number of key themes.

The themes were primarily cost, a view that changes weren't necessary, and comments that people were not familiar with Funtley Village Society (FVS).

Cost

- “I see no need for a parish council and the extra costs involved”
- “Why do we need to pay extra for the same works carried out by FBC?”
- “Uncapped council taxes! Silly idea, why change!!!”
- “I do not want to pay extra payments on top of my council tax”
- “Cannot afford and do not want extra charges”

Unnecessary

- “Think they work well as they are at present. Why add another level of bureaucracy?”
- “Facilities provided are already adequate. Cannot see a demand for further provision, so no benefit at all.”
- “I see absolutely no reason the current arrangements should be changed as it would seem that everything the parish council can do, FBC already does.”

Not familiar with FVS

- Individuals that are making this proposal are not representative of the residents of Funtley
- I do not understand why people move here and then want to change everything
- I've lived here for 20 years and I have never met any of these interfering people, therefore how can they be representing my interests?

Evolving opinions

Fifty consultation responses were received after meeting notes were circulated following the CAT Meeting.

- 27 (54%) wanted to keep arrangements as they are

This indicates that when residents learned more about the proposals, and the possible impact, they were more inclined to want to keep things as they are.

Evolving opinions

- Some of the responses indicated people felt they have been misled about what the proposed Parish Council could do, and how it would be run.
- Older residents have approached Council officers to voice concerns about the pressure they felt was put on them to express their support for a Parish Council.

Evolving opinions

- “When I was approached to sign the petition certain gains were put forward So you can see how people so readily signed the petition.”
- “If my name appears on the original application you have my permission to remove it.”

Conclusions

The Government has emphasised that recommendations made in Community Governance Reviews ought to bring about improved community engagement, more cohesive communities, better local democracy and result in more effective and convenient delivery of local services.

Conclusions

It is clear from the majority of responses received that there is a strong community spirit in Funtley. By participating in this consultation residents have shown that many want a greater say in local matters, particularly related to planning issues and applications, leisure and recreation facilities, and infrastructure such as traffic calming measures and street lighting.

Conclusions

Funtley Village Society is already treated in the same way as a Parish Council for planning issues and has the ability to apply for community funding and many other funding streams.

The play area had a mini makeover in 2015 and is scheduled for a complete refurbishment in the 2017/18 programme and Funtley residents will have the opportunity to request equipment or other features when this is consulted on later in the year.

Conclusions

In terms of infrastructure, the Council is able to work with Funtley Village Society to determine whether further traffic calming measures are necessary in the future.

Street lighting is looked after by Hampshire County Council.

Conclusions

It is the Council's belief that the requirements of the Funtley Village Society and Funtley residents, as identified through the survey, can be met by existing arrangements, without the need for imposing any additional costs on residents. There is concern about the potential for unchecked increases in Council Tax as has been experienced in neighbouring parish councils.

Conclusions

By not imposing an unwanted precept, the Council is able to satisfy those residents who have made it clear, for whatever reason, that they do not want to pay for a Parish Council.

Moving forward however, the Council proposes to build on the great work Funtley Village Society (FVS) has done through engaging its community, and to continue to strengthen this relationship with both FVS as a key interested party and Funtley residents in general.

Draft Recommendations

Options for consideration:

Make no changes to the current arrangements

Create a Parish Council

The proposed officer recommendation is not to create a Parish Council but to enable the residents of Funtley to have a greater say through the work of ward councillors and Funtley Village Society, thus cementing community cohesion.