



**Funtley Parish Council: How a Community Governance Review Was Triggered  
in Funtley, Hampshire**

## Headlines:

- The village of Funtley is in the Borough of Fareham, in the county of Hampshire.
- Funtley Village Society triggered a Community Governance Review in Fareham Borough by collecting signatures for their residents on a petition and submitting it to the Borough Council.
- The Borough Council were initially unaware of the legal changes relating to a Community Governance Review (the process by which a new parish council is created) which caused tension between the Village Society and Fareham Borough Council.
- On 24<sup>th</sup> May 2016 the campaign group was informed that Fareham Borough Council may reject their request to create a parish council in Funtley, recommending that the status quo should be maintained. The Borough Council did finally reject the creation of a new Funtley Parish Council on 28 July, 2016 citing the creation of an additional burden to residents of an uncapped precept as the main reason.
- This is a study revealing the difficulty in persuading principal authority councillors that a new parish council will be beneficial for residents when such councillors may feel that their traditional mandate will be undermined by such a new governance model in an area unused to creating new parish councils. It also reveals that the Community Governance Review process needs to be changed again to ensure that mandatory resident referenda are introduced the outcomes of which are binding.

## Why A Council Is Wanted:

Having gathered over 300 signatures, the Funtley Village Society submitted its petition to Fareham Borough Council triggering a Community Governance Review (the process by which it hoped the Borough Council will ultimately agree to the creation of a new parish council in Funtley).

Residents in Funtley wanted a new Parish Council to give their area a stronger voice. They no longer wanted to be powerless in their dealings with by Fareham Borough Council as a small village with no voice. Parish councils are statutory, and almost always permanent, democratically elected bodies – so this model was a further attraction to Funtley. The initiative of local communities in Sutton Coldfield, Bingley and Kidderminster (albeit bigger geographical areas) who successfully established parish councils in their area also inspired the residents of Funtley to follow their steps with a view to having more of a say in local decision making, neighbourhood planning and service provision. As the Borough Council has to address the issues of so many local communities within its area, the Funtley Village Society strongly believes that a parish council would help address local issues much quicker,

being better equipped for meeting residents' needs (for instance parish councils have a range of powers they can use relating to maintaining streetlights and very much more).

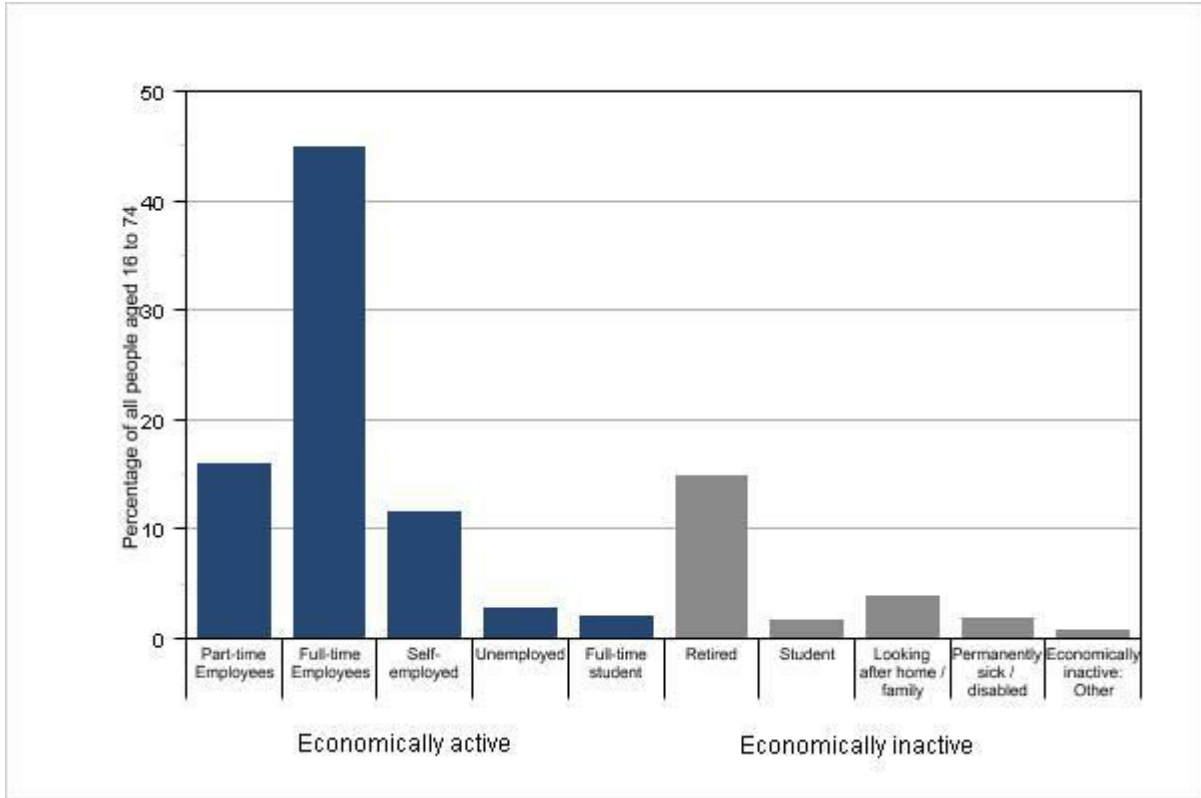
### **Demographics and Possible New Service Areas:**

Funtley is a small but historic rural community. The village is located on the River Meon in rural Hampshire and its community thrives on the railway next to which it is located. It is an industrial hamlet built on clay reserves. With a population of approximately 568 people, Funtley has a predominantly young demographic, with the majority of its residents being in full-time employment<sup>1</sup>. The village is considered affluent, ranking 30,380 out of 32,844 according to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD), where 1 is the most deprived (Department of Communities and Local Government, 2016).

The Funtley Village Society have traditionally fought inappropriate development and ineffective planning decisions affecting Funtley residents. However, the Funtley Village Society considers that its own powers to combat such inappropriate developments are limited as it does not have to be consulted on local planning decisions and applications by the local planning authority (in this case Fareham Borough Council again). The Village Society recognise that a parish council has the statutory right to be notified of developments in its area and so is more likely to be consulted by the local planning authority on given planning applications and developments than a village society. Hence its keenness to drive and lead the campaign to create a new parish council and protect the small rural village of Funtley from otherwise inappropriate development on its fringes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Neighbourhood Statistics, Office for National Statistics:  
<http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/NeighbourhoodSummary.do?width=2048&a=7&r=1&i=1001&m=0&s=1465823459535&enc=1&profileSearchText=PO175EE&searchProfiles=&nsjs=true&nsck=false&nssvg=false&nswid=1600>



Above; A histogram showing the percentage of people in each age band, based on 2011 data from the Office of National Statistics, of Fareham residents. Most residents are in full time employment.

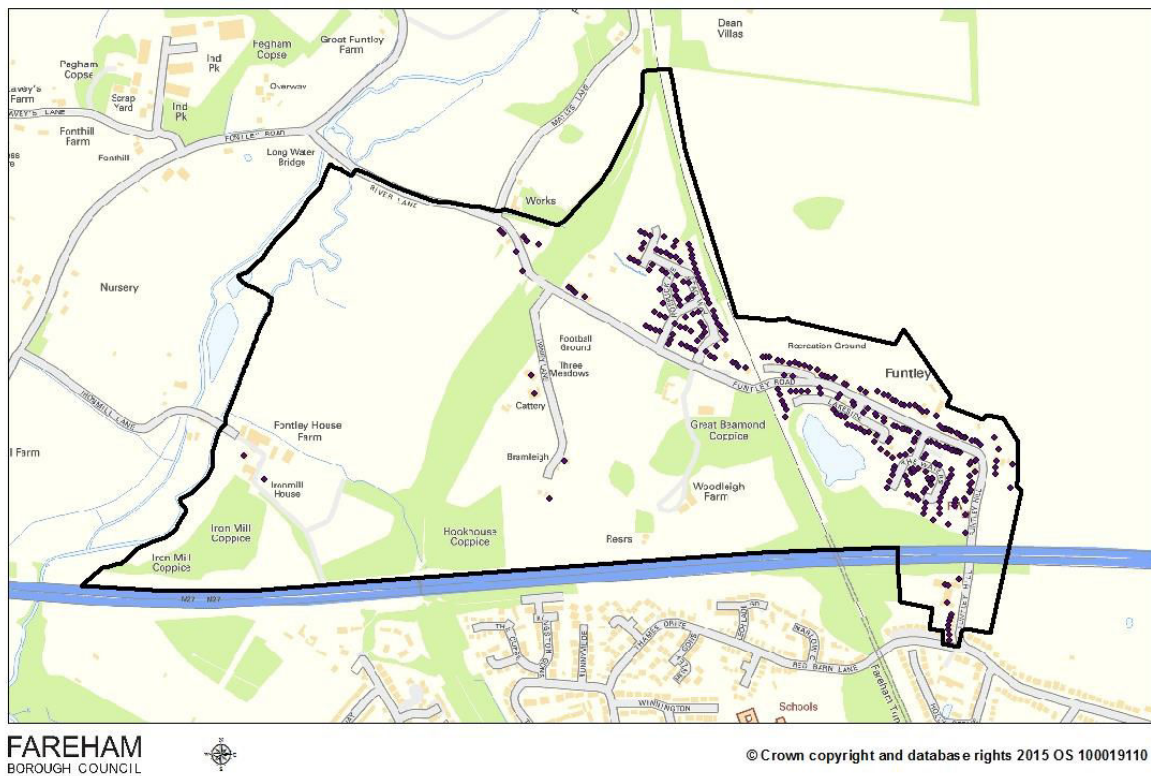
### Who Are The Key Partners / Stakeholders Involved?:

The main campaign group to create a new Parish Council in Funtley has been the Funtley Village Society. The Village Society is the central and only real organisation in Funtley which had the capacity to resource to lead the campaign to both secure enough signatures on the petition and to campaign throughout the Community Governance Review, lobbying Fareham Borough Council over a 12 month period. The Village Society used its own membership, contacts and web-site to both promote campaign activity and energise all campaigners to gather signatures and sustain all related campaign activity over an almost two year period. Given that a population of 568 is not a huge resource from which volunteers will be forthcoming huge credit is due to the campaign group for completing the campaign journey to the end of the campaign. The campaign group rightly deserves to be recognised for having triggered a Community Governance Review in a borough area unused to the concept of parish councils (there are not many parish councils in Fareham).

The Hampshire Association of Local Councils was the other main local stakeholder which offered constant advice and local political assistance to the campaign group. The Association accessed Government funding from the Department of Communities and Local Government during 2015-16 from the National Association of Local Councils which helped

to progress campaign activity with the production of leaflets and the holding of public meetings. The Village Society used its highly effective web-site (details at the end of this case study) to promote all public gatherings (such as public meetings) and events which were designed initially to secure enough signatures on the campaign petition. The same web-site then provided news updates on progress with the campaign and re-stated the reasons for setting up the parish council (for instance giving residents more of a say on traffic matters in their area and accessing grant monies that parish councils as incorporated bodies can access for the community which the Village Society cannot). The National Association of Local Councils has also continuously provided technical advice regarding the campaign – in particular on the Community Governance Review – to the campaign group.

Map of Proposed Boundary of Funtley Parish



Above; boundary map of the proposed parish of Funtley.

### What Are The Key Campaign Issues / Challenges?:

The Funtley Village Society has been the driving force in the campaign to create a new Parish Council in Funtley. It was the body which gathered the petitionary signatures and submitted the petition to Fareham Borough Council in 2015. The Hampshire Association of Local Councils were instrumental in advising the Society during every stage of the campaign. The Hampshire Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils

both advised on technical issues around the Community Governance Review and the campaign group's relationship with Fareham Borough Council.

In spite of the best efforts of the campaign group, the principal authority is against the creation of a parish council arguing that the status quo needs to be maintained. This comes as a surprise, especially since the consultation during the Community Governance Review showed that 74.5% of respondents were in favour of a parish council. The campaign group therefore decided to submit a formal complaint against the principal authority to the Secretary of State, Rt Hon Greg Clark MP.

Fareham Borough Council reached a final decision in July 2016 – formally rejecting the campaign by 19 votes to 5 in Full Council. The campaign group also organised a separate meeting for residents and ward councillors on 28 July, 2016 (the same date as the final full council decision) to engage one last time on the promotion of the benefits of creating a new parish council – before the end of the Community Governance Review phase. The main reasons cited by the Council Leader for rejection of the campaign were that there was apparently diminishing support for a parish council and that it was too small to run effectively, that it would add a level of bureaucracy, that the cost outweighed the benefits of having a parish council, and that community cohesion would not be enhanced (these were all arguments the campaign group had lobbied against during the Community Governance Review phase of the campaign).

It is also fair to say that then relevant department at Fareham Borough Council required guidance at the start of the Review as to the length of the Review – hoping as it did to be able to conduct it in a period of over a year. After some clarification from the National Association of Local Councils the final decision was agreed to be reached a year after the petition was submitted to the council meaning that law and regulation would be satisfied.

Ed Morell, Campaign Champion from the Funtley campaign said; *“We feel we have done extremely well to trigger the Funtley Community Governance Review in Fareham Borough as we are only a small village of 568 people, gathering 322 signatures over 6 weekends in February / March 2015. We have got the impression that whilst Fareham Borough Council have fulfilled their minimum legal obligations in initiating the Review, they have lacked certainty as to their responsibilities in undertaking a Community Governance Review – we will however continue to work constructively with them.”*

### **How Have These Issues / Challenges Been Overcome?:**

The initial challenge the campaign faced was Fareham Borough Council not being aware that the law in regards to the Community Governance Review had changed in March, 2015 which gives the principal authority a year from the date a petition is submitted to complete its

review. Fareham Borough Council was unaware of this change and had to work alongside relevant parties to complete the Community Governance Review within a year. This challenge was overcome through regular communication and negotiation between the relevant parties. The Hampshire Association of Local Councils and the National Association of Local Councils steered the Funtley Village Society towards holding workshops and engaging in regular communication with Fareham Borough Council as well as local residents during the Community Governance Review phase. The Village Society again used its highly effective web-site to keep residents updated on progress with the Review (especially latterly when it appeared that councillors were opposed to the idea of creating a new parish councils (see <http://funtlevillagesociety.org.uk/parish%20council%20campaign.html> ). The campaign group used all means at its disposal to communicate both with residents and councillors for the whole of the campaign. It is clear that residents overwhelmingly supported the creation of a parish council, but that for party political reasons a principal local authority has rejected the creation of a parish council, apparently suborning the wishes of residents.

#### **Outcomes – Learning From The Campaign:**

The Funtley campaign group held a series of workshops for residents in March 2016 which again promoted the benefits of creating parish councils. Residents of Funtley would have benefitted from the creation of a parish Council as a parish council would have been able to choose the services the precept was spent on to benefit residents of Funtley alone. Leaflets have regularly communicated this back to residents, as well as via the Village Society newsletter

(<http://funtlevillagesociety.org.uk/onewebmedia/Funtley%20Newsletter%20Parish%20Special%20June%202016.pdf> ) and its web-site

(<http://funtlevillagesociety.org.uk/parish%20council%20campaign.html> ).

*“If we have a Parish Council, we will have more say about what happens in Funtley. For example, if we want to improve the footpaths or adopt traffic calming measures we don’t have to wait for Fareham Borough Council to prioritise it along with all the other requests they get in the Borough.*

*Parish Councils are legally recognised bodies and as such, they hold more weight when consulted about decisions such as planning applications.*

*If we have a Funtley Parish Council, it also gives us the right to apply for numerous types of grants in order to do the things we want, to improve our village.*

*Having a parish council will allow us to maintain separation and our own identity as a village, now we know that the Welborne Plan is going ahead.”*

(Funtley Village Society web-site, 2016)



Above: Campaigners campaigning for a new Funtley Parish Council.

### **How The Campaign Group Succeeded At The Petition Phase:**

The Village Society were responsible for driving the campaign to secure resident signatures in addition to meeting with Fareham Borough Council and organising workshops and public meetings during 2015-16 to promote the benefits of a parish council for the village. Resident buy-in was secured through regular leaflet communications on the benefits, also. It proved to be an advantage in one crucial respect (that the village was so small) – as everyone knew what was happening and planned for the campaign very quickly. This proved powerful and explains why the campaign group was so easily able to secure 322 petition signatures over six weekends in early 2015.

### **Campaign Lessons To Share With Others:**

Campaigners recognise that attending the two New Councils' Briefings (09/15 and 01/16), organised by the National Association of Local Councils, to network with other campaigners was the main way in which literature and feedback was shared from the Funtley campaign. Campaign leaders also consider that seeking guidance at an earlier stage would have further benefitted their campaign.





The campaign group could not in the end persuade the Borough Council that the establishment of a parish council was the best governance model for the village. Campaign leaders hoped to achieve this through further negotiation and with the help and support of the local community, the majority of which was in favour of a parish council. However, it seems the majority group on the council feared the potential loss of influence they might incur with the borough if the new parish council was created.

Unfortunately, campaign groups across the country have different experiences in their relationship with their principal authority, ranging from the principal authority being very helpful, to not being supportive at all. If the relationship with a campaign group's principal authority is difficult, campaign groups are advised to seek guidance from their county association of local councils, who based on previous experience with other campaigns, will be able to assist.

If it is found that the principal authority has acted unfairly or unlawfully during the Community Governance Review, then the Department for Communities and Local Government should be informed as there are strict regulations and laws surrounding the conduct by principal authorities, for Community Governance Reviews. In any case, the Government's guidance on Community Governance Reviews does need to be updated to ensure that resident referenda are made mandatory during such Reviews, and binding.

#### **Who Can I Contact?:**

**Campaign Champion: Ed Morell 07714 104543 / [edmorell@me.com](mailto:edmorell@me.com)**

**Steven Lugg of HALC: [hampshirealc@eastleigh.gov.uk](mailto:hampshirealc@eastleigh.gov.uk) / 02380 688 061.**

#### **Other Information:**

**More information on creating a Council: The NALC 'Create a Council' web page:**

**<http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/create-a-council> .**

**To see template resources such as a media release, leaflet and poster, please click here:**

**<http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/create-a-council> .**

**More information on how to create a council – The NALC's Create A Council web page -**

**<http://www.nalc.gov.uk/our-work/create-a-council> .**

**NALC Power To The People publication here - <http://www.nalc.gov.uk/publications> .**

**Funtley Village Society - [www.funtleyvillagesociety.org.uk](http://www.funtleyvillagesociety.org.uk) .**

**Hampshire Association of Local Councils - <http://www.hampshirealc.org.uk/> .**