

The Rt Hon Greg Clark
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

2nd June 2016

Dear Mr Clark,

Current stage – Fareham Borough Council’s draft recommendation following stage 1 of initial consultation of Community Governance Review

We are writing as the representative body for parish and town councils across Hampshire, in response to the initial draft recommendation received from Fareham Borough Council, and following the Community Governance Review they have just conducted. We wish to register our dissatisfaction with the draft conclusions and recommendations from Fareham Borough Council. As the local MP has not replied to Funtley Village Society’s correspondence, we felt it was appropriate to write to you directly. The continuing lack of formal Appeal process, undermines government’s policy to support the full parishing of England, and we ask for this to be addressed, as we have done so before. The local MP’s lack of engagement also seems a little odd?

To provide a little background information, Funtley is a small village on the northern edge of Fareham Borough. It has approximately 700 residents, of whom 568 are on the electoral register. In November 2014 as a result of a number of community requests, Funtley Village Society (FVS) looked at the advantages and disadvantages of having a parish council for our village, and as a result decided to launch our campaign to set one up.

The timeline of the campaign is listed below:

November 2014 – Following extensive research and consultation, the decision was made to campaign for a Funtley Parish Council;

December 2014 – Application made to NALC for grant funding of the campaign (DCLG money);

January 2015 – Grant funding approved;

February 2015 – Initial campaign literature printed and petition started to obtain 250 signatures (out of 568 residents listed on electoral register within our defined proposed parish council area);

April 23rd 2015, a petition with 322 residents’ signatures supporting the formation of a Funtley Parish Council was submitted to Fareham Borough Council;

July 30th 2015 - Fareham Borough Council (FBC) agreed the terms of reference for the Funtley Community Governance Review (CGR);

September 2015, October 2015, December 2015, January 2016, June 2016 – Parish Council campaign newsletters and literature hand delivered to every household in Funtley, uploaded on to the Society's website and published via its Facebook site, email database and on notice boards in local village pub and social club;

November 2015 - Public meetings hosted by the Funtley Village Society and Fareham Borough Council, giving residents the opportunity to find out more about the parish council proposals;

November 2nd 2015 – Letter sent to our local MP, Suella Fernandes, outlining the aims of campaign and inviting her to attend our public meeting on 19th November 2015. FVS received no acknowledgement or response of any kind;

21st September to 14th December 2015, the consultation period for the terms of reference and the survey issued by Fareham Borough Council as part of the Community Governance Review. 230 surveys (41% response rate) were returned;

March 2016 – Funtley CGR workshop held for members of Fareham Borough Council (five attended). Another one is planned for June 6th;

May 24th 2016 – Letter received from Fareham Borough Council outlining its draft recommendation as a result of the Funtley CGR. **Despite 74.5% of surveys returned supporting the formation of a Funtley Parish Council**, Fareham Borough Council states that the 'status quo' should be maintained;

June 2nd – Response sent to Fareham Borough Council and FVS letter of complaint sent to the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government;

What is clear is that FVS have met the clauses laid out in the legislation, and have demonstrated the overwhelming support of local community. As there is a presumption of creation, Fareham Borough Council are in danger of Judicial Review, further bringing the CGR process into disrepute.

As you are aware, the Coalition Government's 2013 consultation paper on setting up new parish councils said:

"We believe that localism is best achieved when it is led by the local communities themselves. We see town and parish councils as playing a vital role in helping local people to make this happen; it is for this reason we want to support those neighbourhoods who want to set up a parish council."

The evidence shows that FVS has followed the legislation scrupulously, has the support of the majority, and yet, FBC seem unwilling to support government policy?

We would value your comments on how a community is supposed to create a parish where the principal authority is minded not to – given that the principle of self-determination should be paramount? We would also welcome NALC's support in lobbying government – Funtley want a parish and have met the requirements – where is democracy in this country if they are not supported in their quest?

Yours sincerely,

Steven Lugg

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Chief Executive

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