

Council

13 January 2015

Title: Community Governance Review – Proposals for Finham Area

Supplementary Paper

1. Background

At the Council meeting of 9th December 2014, the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities made it clear that representations about the request for a Parish Council could still be made ahead of the January meeting of Council.

To allow the maximum opportunity for comment, a deadline of midday on 8th January was set.

Feedback from representations received during this period is summarised in this paper.

2. Responses

34 responses were received, 30 of which were from people living within the petition area. 24 out of the 30 respondents had already participated in the ballot. In addition, four responses were received from outside of the petition area.

Responses were made against each of the three questions which had been asked previously in the ballot. Some people answered only either yes or no while others also made comments. The full set of comments received is attached as an appendix to this report.

In response to the question, “Do you think that you can influence decisions that affect your area?” 13 people living within the petition area said yes and 17 said no.

In response to the question “If you wanted to have a say about an issue affecting Finham, do you feel there are appropriate ways to do so?” 10 people living within the petition area said yes and 19 said no.

In response to the question “Do you support the creation of a Parish for the Finham area of the city?” 27 said yes and 3 said no. Of the four responses from people outside of the petition area, two supported the creation of a parish council, one did not and one was undecided.

3. Summary of the Issues raised from residents within the Finham area

Many of the responses referred to the ballot carried out during October and November, with several people saying that they had already contributed or that they supported the result. *“I completed the Ballot form sent out as part of your review. The result was a large percentage in favour of Finham becoming a Parish Council”* and *“residents voted in favour and therefore we should have our Parish Council”*.

Some people commented that they feel they are currently able to influence decisions that affect their area *"I can influence decisions about my area through the residents committee. I can air my views at meeting and obtain support of the group which will have greater strength than one. But these and other people also commented that the area "can only benefit from having a parish council" and "a local parish council can act directly on some issues and have more influence at a local level"*.

Some of the reasons given for supporting the application reflected those set out by the Finham Residents Association and summarised at paragraph 3.5 of the main report to Council. These included:

- The ability of local people to have more of a say in what happens in the area: *"If the Finham area had the status of a parish council legally we would have a greater say in what happens in our community. This can only be to the good."*
- The level at which decisions are made in the city: *"decisions are largely made with the overall city as a consideration, therefore decisions which could see the local library close and significant housing developments in one of the most affluent, beautiful and desirable areas of Coventry would be battered" and "The Parish would not only take on responsibilities currently held by the council but would allow them the time and resources to make some of those more effective."*
- That Finham is overlooked and that the views of local people are disregarded: *"Past experience has shown that Finham does not get its fair share of attention or funding from the Council"*.

Some respondents identified local needs that a parish council could address: *"I feel we are neglected and would like to have more say in local road issues, looking after verges, community transport and leisure facilities for the young people of the area" and "despite numerous applications over many years, there is still no permanent site for any community activities for the young or elderly residents of the area"*.

Some residents expressed their opposition to the creation of a parish council. *"No it will not add any value to the services and facilities which are currently in place. It will add a further and unnecessary level of bureaucracy which will be self-perpetuating and a costly white elephant."* A comment was also made that the *"Finham residence society are currently (and have been for a while) struggling for members so why should it be any different if a Parish Council is created?"*

Some people commented on the costs to residents. *"I feel that a parish council would more effectively represent the interests and concerns of local residents and I am prepared to pay a little extra council tax to fund this"*. An alternative view raised about costs was: *"I strongly feel that the council do a good job in the Finham area and paying more Council tax is not what I want to do no matter how little it may be"*.

4. Representations received from outside the petition area

Residents from outside the petition area also had the opportunity to make comments.

The Styvechale Grange Residents Association which covers part of the area adjacent to Finham wrote to confirm their support for the application for a Parish Council.

One respondent commented that they *"did not know the value of the parish council suggestion compared to any other option of possibly creating a more cohesive community in the Green Lane area"*.

In addition to the responses recorded above, 13 residents from outside Finham but living in neighbouring areas in the Wainbody Ward signed a note circulated at the December meeting of the Wainbody Ward Forum expressing their support for the establishment of a Parish Council.