



Connected Communities – BCP Council's Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy 2021-2024

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Foreword

We are passionate about our communities and believe that everyone should be able to play an active role in the things that matter to them most. That is why we are committed to empowering and engaging our diverse communities across Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole to help inform and shape council services through the Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy.

Engagement is a term that is frequently referred to by the council and our partners and relates to the entire working relationship the council and its partners has with its residents and communities.

Our Community Engagement and Consultation strategy builds on how we currently involve our communities and outlines what we aim to do to improve the way we consult and involve local people across the area over the next three years. It is driven by engagement and using strength-based approaches to work with our vibrant communities.

This strategy has been developed following extensive consultation and engagement with our communities across Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole. We have listened carefully to the feedback we have received and produced this strategy which aims to enhance our involvement offer and encourage more people to take part in our engagement opportunities, whether it is by taking part in online consultations, suggesting an idea on our new digital engagement hub, attending a council meeting, or setting up a neighbourhood forum, we hope there is opportunity for everyone to be more involved with BCP Council.



Cllr Drew Mellor,
Leader of the Council



Cllr Karen Rampton,
Cabinet Member for Adults



Cllr Jane Kelly,
Lead Member for
Community Engagement

Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy



This Strategy sets out how the Council will engage and consult with its communities in a meaningful way, ensuring that our communities are at the heart of everything we do. The strategy also details our commitment to work collaboratively with the community, enabling them to:

- have a greater say and choice in the design and delivery of local services
- develop new skills and expertise
- become better informed about the council's work

We will work to ensure more people can be involved in the decision-making process and shape local services. The aim is to embed these principles and procedures to maximise the benefits of engagement for all our communities and enable us to supply services which better meet their needs. We aim to improve the way in which we involve residents, students, the community and voluntary sector, local business, and social enterprises and demonstrates the council's commitment to continually involving and consulting to make a real difference to people's lives.

BCP Council already consults and engages with local people through established ways such as partnership boards, user groups, networks, area and neighbourhood forums, resident's surveys and regular consultation and engagement activities across the full range of council services. Our Councillors are at the centre of our community engagement and consultation activities. We also work alongside partners such as: Town and Parish Councils, Dorset Police, Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Board, Dorset Integrated Care System, the voluntary and community sector, and the Together We Can Community Resilience Partnership.

Alongside the Council's Corporate Strategy "Connected Communities: empowering our communities so everyone feels safe, engaged and included.," and the Big Plan developing "Vibrant Communities where everyone can play an active role and feel part of their community." As part of the transformation of the council we are embedding strength-based approaches within our service delivery which seeks to build on the assets that already exist within our communities. This approach challenges the traditional problem-based approach of trying to solve issues by focussing on what is not working. Instead, it focusses on "what's strong, not what's wrong" within a community, by demonstrating that local assets such as people, buildings and places are key to ensuring sustainable communities and sustainable community development. This is a commitment and an approach to developing a relationship with residents and giving them the space and support to develop their own solutions.

One of the fundamental principles is that everyone and everywhere has assets upon which resilient, healthy communities can be built. Some of these assets may be obvious such as parks and open spaces, community events, community centres and community and voluntary sector organisations. But many assets are hidden within our communities, often within the residents that make up our communities and may need time, trust, and patience to be discovered. These assets may be skills, gifts, talents, or networks - such as a local business letting residents use their office space, a retired teacher looking to get involved in the local community, the parent who volunteers at a youth club, a local pre-school who engages with children and parents or the local café that opens in the evening for a social meet up.





As part of the transformation of the council we are expanding how we use strength-based approaches, not only in terms of how we operate as a council but also in relation to how we support our priority neighbourhoods across Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole. Investment into the Community Development function of the council is enabling us to work in all our priority neighbourhoods across Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole, working with and enabling the local community rather than using a 'top down' approach.

This strategy aligns with other key areas of work such as the Voluntary and Community Sector and Volunteering Strategy, the Communications Strategy, Children and Young People's Participation, Adult Social Care Community Engagement and Smart Places. It builds on already existing best practice such as the Council's Statement of Community Involvement which uses the same principles of inclusivity, appropriate methods of engagement, extending community contacts and providing more opportunities for contact with our communities within planning services. In short, this strategy details how we are putting Vibrant Communities at the heart of everything we do.




We Asked, You Said, We Did

In January 2020 we launched a consultation programme across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole seeking residents' views on a set of 5 draft principles to inform the development of the Community Engagement and Consultation Strategy. BCP Council is committed to asking everyone with an interest in the services that the council provides, including residents, community groups, partners, and staff, to consider proposals and share views so that they can be considered when the council makes decisions.

We consulted BCP residents on:

-  The 5 draft Community Engagement and Consultation Principles.
-  How they currently and prefer to get involved.
-  What would encourage them to have their say.
-  Local area meetings.

Not the usual Consultation:

-  Open consultation (online and paper) promoted through communications channels, Have Your Say displays, Roadshow.
-  Attended meetings, including Zoom with young people and People First Forum.
-  Postal Survey of 5,000 households.

Key findings: Over 1,400 people gave feedback on how they would like to get involved in council services and the decisions we make. Here are some of the results of the consultation, which have been used to shape this strategy.

- Over 75% of respondents agreed with all five principles
- 56% of respondents said they would prefer to get involved in council decisions affecting the local area by taking part online.
- Just under half of respondents would prefer to take part using paper surveys and consultation material.
- Neighbourhood /area forums and safer neighbourhood meetings were the most preferred style of meetings.

Our Communities

Data insight – our community



Population growth

2011 **378,888**
(Census 2011)

2019 **395,331**
(MYE 2019)

2030 **404,838**
(SNPP 2018 based)

Growth is slower than previous projections predicted.

Growth driven by migration to the area and by an increase in the number of over 65s.

Number of births projected to fall to 2030, deaths to increase.



Age profile

(Mid-Year Estimates and HESA)

Children **17%**

Working age **61%**

Pensioners **22%**

Students **21,500**
across 3 universities

Gender

(Census 2011)

Male **49%**

Female **51%**



Life expectancy at birth

higher than national

Men **80.5**

Women **83.7**

Healthy life expectancy

higher than national

Men **64.5**

Women **66.6**



Life limiting illness (BCP)

A little **10%**

A lot **8%**

Not at all **82%**

[more data](#)



LGBTQ+

Sexual orientation

The percentage of the population identifying as **heterosexual** has decreased to **94.6%** in 2018.

The proportion identifying as **LGB** has increased to **2.2%**.

Young people most likely to identify as LGB (16-24).

→ ons.gov.uk

Religion

(Census, full breakdown on Tableau)

Christian **60%**

No religion **29%**

Not stated **8%**

Other **2%**

Muslim **1%**

Ethnicity

White British **88%**

White other **6%**

BME **6%**



Number of households

176,600

1,200 more than in 2013
(+0.7%)

15,115

Number of businesses

(UK Business Counts, 2020)

Most common (2020)

Construction **2,530**

Professional, scientific and technical **2,305**

Business admin and support **1,270**

Retail **1,160**



Median salary

Working in BCP area

£29,200

Living in BCP area

£29,300

Deprivation

16,000 people
in decile 1 (4%)

45,400 people
in deciles 1+2 (12%)



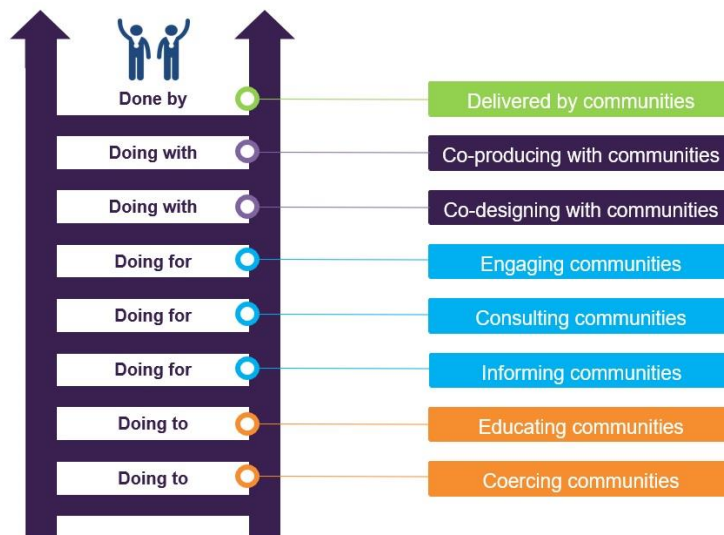
BCP Council recognises that each community will have diverse needs and priorities. Communities can mean different things to different people and there are many diverse groups that make up a community.

- Geographical communities defined by a particular geographical area with physical boundaries e.g., a housing estate. These communities may have similar concerns about issues that affect their local area.
- Communities of interest defined by a shared interest, experience, or situation e.g., loneliness, social isolation, transport, accessibility, and climate change.
- Community of identity is defined by how people identify themselves or how they are identified by society. This can be by using demography such as young people, older people, faith groups, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer + (LGBTQ+) and ethnically diverse communities.

Individuals can associate themselves with more than one community and this can relate to where they live, work and their interests. It is essential to let people define their own communities.

Community Engagement

Engagement can take many forms and the level of involvement can vary greatly. Each type of involvement is important to help the council with its decision-making and service provision. It may not always be possible to reach consensus around issues. Diverse communities, residents, and businesses all have different needs. Improving stakeholder dialogue will raise the council's reputation and build trust. Communities given the opportunity to have greater choice in the design, and delivery of their services will see those services delivered appropriately and more effectively. Removing any physical, language or social barriers for



communities to access information or voice their opinions will see local communities better informed and with a clearer understanding of the policies, priorities, and the challenges.

Consultation

Consultation is a two-way process in which people are fully informed about the options available and are asked their opinion on an issue the council is considering. Consultation has a defined start and end date and opinions from consultation activity should be used to inform decisions in a clear and transparent way. Feedback from consultation activity is used alongside performance, intelligence, legal, financial and sustainability information to make decisions about how council services are delivered.

We want to ensure that our communities can be aware of and be able to comment on consultations which matter to them. Within the action plan we outline the ways in which people will be able to be aware of upcoming consultations and improve the ways in which they can get involved and have their say. We also want to ensure that we have consistent standards for how we consult with our communities and the action plan contains a range of measures which will help us to achieve this.

Community Engagement and Consultation Principles

The following five principles are built on council best practice, values, and behaviours. Alongside the feedback from the community engagement consultation held across the area. They form the basis of our actions and plans for our engagement and consultation activities.

	1 Involved communities	We are passionate about our communities	We will strengthen local democracy and decision-making processes to ensure participation is inclusive for all sectors of our community.
	2 Inclusive communities	We treat everyone with respect	We will champion inclusive communities and work with our partners, including the voluntary sector, to make this happen. We will use the best, most appropriate methods to engage with our residents, businesses and visitors.
	3 Transparent with our communities	We have integrity	We will strive to engage and consult with our community in ways that work for them. We will share outcomes of engagement activity and responses will influence our decision making. We will admit when we make mistakes.
	4 Keeping it simple for our Communities	We embrace innovation	We will use plain English in our communication materials. We will strive to make our engagement interesting, relevant and to the point. We will keep up with digital technology to keep you informed.
	5 Collaborative Communities	We take pride in what we do	We will work with our communities to develop plans to address issues such as the climate emergency. We will work to ensure everyone knows what their role is so that we can all take pride in making a difference.

Principle 1 - Involved Communities



Provide flexible and innovative involvement opportunities for communities to help shape the development and delivery of quality services and the relevant policies that reflect local needs. To put residents at the centre of collaborative decision-making processes, sharing skills, and engagement and consultation opportunities.

We will...	So that
Follow strength-based community development principles – exploring what is already available in communities through different agencies and wrapping these around the individual	Staff and councillors encourage and help support communities to engage. Have the skills to understand the needs of their communities.
Establish an engagement leads network to share best practice, deliver consistency and ensure a reduction in duplication	We can ensure a consistent approach across all services and include all the relevant stakeholders
Provide training for staff and partners in community led strength-based community development approaches	Staff, partners, and councillors have the tools they need to engage with communities effectively and efficiently
Establish a consultation hub e.g., Engagement HQ where we can promote opportunities to gather views, ideas, and insights in a single place.	It makes it easier for communities to find opportunities for involvement.
Actively promote registration to our consultation hub through our communication channels	
Present feedback from engagement and consultation activity in a clear 'you said, we did, you did' format.	There is feedback when communities have helped to shape our policy.
Strengthen our engagement with our business community by continuing to support and engage with various networks including, the Business Improvement Districts, Local Enterprise Partnership, the Chamber of Commerce and various sector networks including digital and engineering.	We continue to listen and engage with the business community
Continue to stream all public committee meetings post COVID 19 and further promote this amongst our community.	We continue to improve transparency of the decision- making process.
Explore options and associated costs for introducing a 360 immersive experience of council meetings.	People can have the full experience of a committee meeting from locations convenient to them.

Principle 2 - Inclusive Communities



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Inclusive communities

We treat everyone with **respect**

We will champion inclusive communities and work with our partners, including the voluntary sector, to make this happen. We will use the best, most appropriate methods to engage with our residents, businesses and visitors.

We will make information accessible to all and consider how best to engage in diverse ways and in a variety of accessible formats. Our engagement with communities will be timely and meaningful and we will work hard to include all communities who have a stake in the matter.

We will	So that
Develop our internal and external engagement networks. E.g., Dorset Integrated Care System, Youth Participation, Resident Involvement	We extend our engagement research and target seldom heard groups
Extend Community Equality Champions Network - internal and external community front facing staff and community representatives that support community engagement amongst ethnically diverse communities	We extend our engagement research and target seldom heard groups
Partner with Dorset Race Equality Council (DREC) to deliver our equality and diversity objectives, inform council services, decisions, and Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA's). To ensure representation.	We can ensure we consider the views of our diverse communities before making decisions about policies and changes to services.
Work with DOTS Disability to provide opportunities for disabled people (with a range of impairment types), unpaid carers and older people to inform council services, decisions, and EQIA's. DOTS Disability will monitor the diversity of disabled people involved in DOTS Consultations to ensure the widest representation possible.	We can ensure we consider the views of disabled people (with a range of impairment types), unpaid carers and older people before making decisions about policies and changes to services.
Develop and extend area/neighbourhood community forums/celebrations /events across the area	We can create effective dialogue with our communities and create opportunities for them to be included in all areas from policy to service delivery
Establish and promote consultation points in libraries	Consultation and engagement opportunities are available to those in the community who would prefer to respond using a paper format.
Conduct annual residents' surveys which will include community engagement questions	We can regularly measure how involved our community feels and whether they think we act on local concerns.
Monitor the respondents to our consultations.	We can look to improve the representativeness of our consultation activity and improve engagement with any communities we seemingly may not be reaching

Principle 3 - Transparent with our Communities



We will deliver engagement and consultation opportunities, where we are clear about the decision-making processes, what can be influenced and what can be delivered. We will work with our communities to produce solutions and we will encourage communities to be actively engaged and help to deliver these solutions.

We will...	So that
Support communities to access council information through e newsletters, social media, Engagement HQ, Livestreaming, BCP Council website.	Local people have clear messaging and therefore find it easier to be involved and feel that they make a difference
Create a Community Engagement Toolkit for all staff that provides step by-step practical advice for staff on how to select and use the most appropriate engagement tools.	Staff, partners, and councillors have the appropriate tools they need to engage with communities effectively and efficiently. Communities will understand the standards they can expect
Improve our messages to our residents so that they are more accessible and targeted.	Local people have clear messaging and therefore find it easier to be involved and feel that they make a difference
Ensure all services carrying out consultation and engagement activity are equipped to prepare and deliver a Community Engagement & Consultation Plan (CECP) effectively	There is consistency in the delivery of consultation and engagement activities across the Council
Establish permanent spaces for involvement (digital and physical)	Local people know what and how they have influenced decision making through digital and physical means
Share results of consultation and engagement activity and be open about what we have been able to do because of the feedback we have received.	

Principle 4 - Keeping it simple



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Keeping it simple for our Communities

We embrace **innovation**

We will use plain English in our communication materials. We will strive to make our engagement interesting, relevant and to the point. We will keep up with digital technology to keep you informed.

We will use appropriate and consistent approaches to engagement and use clear and concise language as part of the process. Feedback to our communities will be delivered clearly across all formats, digital and in person.

We will...	So that
Ensure consultation literature will be in Plain English, we will aim to make documents as clear and concise as possible	Our communities have adequate clear information to base their opinions on when taking part in BCP Council consultations.
Ensure there is a clear call to action on consultation material	
Pilot the use of a range of engagement techniques on Engagement HQ, including ideas walls, location comments, online forums, pulse surveys etc	We can try out new ways of gaining opinions.
Identify initiatives with partners to improve communities' access to digital and improve their skills.	Local people are aware of digital services and are supported to use them.

Principle 5 - Collaborative Communities



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Collaborative Communities

We take **pride** in what we do

We will work with our communities to develop plans to address issues such as the climate emergency. We will work to ensure everyone knows what their role is so that we can all take pride in making a difference.

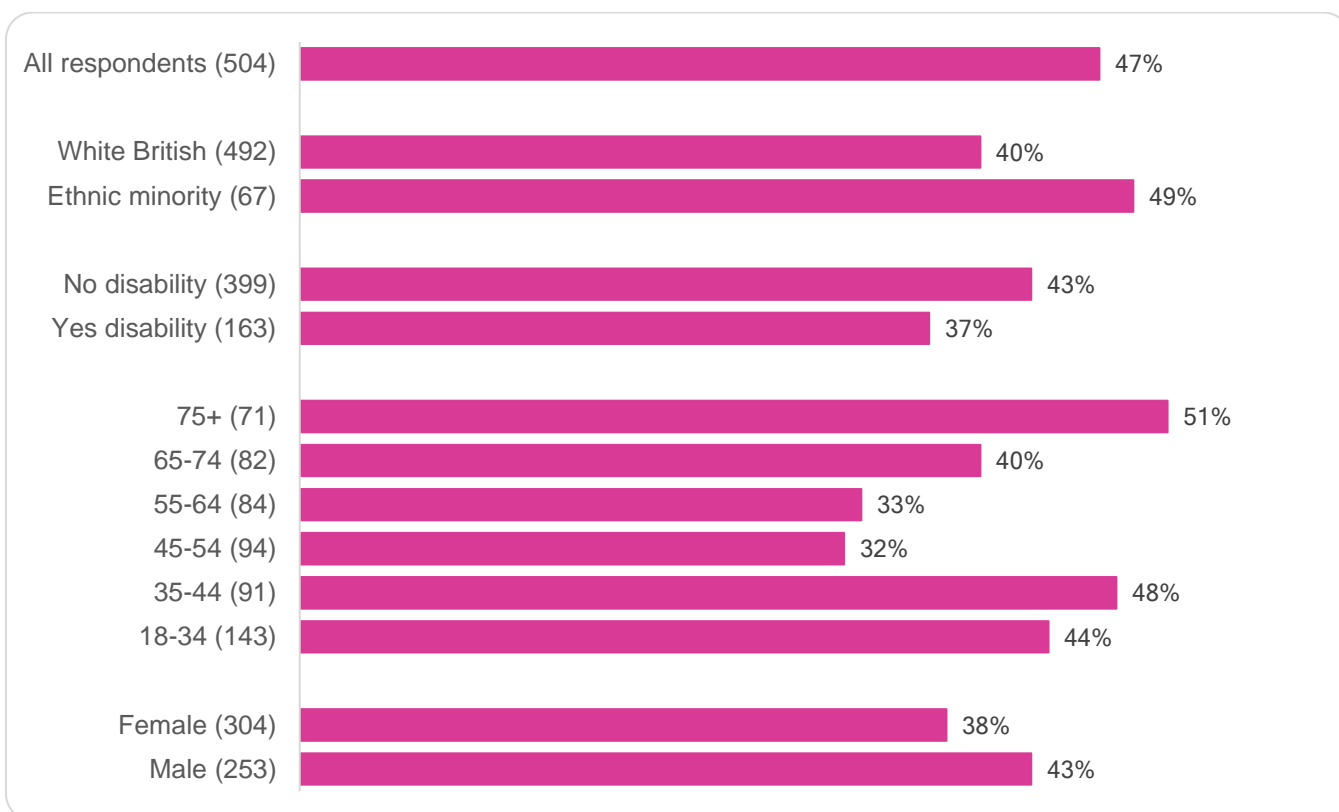
We will promote partnership working and the crucial role that it plays in delivering services for all our residents. We will support local community and voluntary groups to help ensure that they have the capacity to improve the lives of the communities they serve.

We will...	So that
Set up a central register of community stakeholder and residents' groups which is updated every quarter	We can make sure we are communicating engagement opportunities to established groups within the community.
Community Development Officers (CDO) to support communities across the top 20% deprivation areas in BCP	Communities are seen in a strengths-based way able to be supported in delivering their own solutions
Work with our partners Community Action Network to deliver shared objectives to support community groups and communities	Communities are supported and empowered to deliver their own solutions
Continue to work with our partner organisations as part of Our Dorset Sustainability and Transformation Plan	We can ensure a joined-up engagement approach for the transformation in health and wellbeing.
Meet with our Town and Parish Council representatives four times a year.	We can have an on-going dialogue of information and engagement.
Work with our community centres so they can thrive as places for people to meet.	Communities have local places to meet, learn, and address local needs e.g., loneliness and isolation
Support community and voluntary sector groups through the continued delivery of the BH Coastal Lottery.	Voluntary & Community sector organisations supported
Work with the Urban Regeneration Company (URC) to support the development of their engagement strategy, aligning BCP Council's engagement principles within the regeneration projects.	The URC and BCP Council's engagement principles are aligned.

Measuring our progress

We will review the strategy annually to ensure that the actions and aims are still appropriate and relevant. It is important to know whether this strategy is making a difference and that we are working to our principles. We will measure the overall success of the strategy by aiming to increase the percentage of people agreeing that they can influence decisions affecting their local area. We hope to see an increase in percentage from the people within our communities.

% Of respondents who agree they can influence decisions in local area (random sample survey)



In our actions and delivery plan you can see how we will measure the success of each of the individual actions.

- Other ways we can monitor the delivery of the strategy and its impact across council's service delivery and alongside our partners is to show that: -
- Better understand the needs of our local communities
- Identify and work more closely with our diverse and seldom heard from communities
- Using this to ensure information, consultation, involvement, and empowerment opportunities are provided and that they target the right people and are accessible
- Local communities - people feel that there are sufficient opportunities to get involved and they know how to access them if they want to.
- Our communities recognise that the council's policies reflect this involvement, and those services are accessible, responsive, and tailored to the different needs of our local communities

Glossary of terms

Community-Led Strengths Based Approach: Challenges the traditional problem-based approach of trying to solve issues by focussing on what is not working. Instead, it focusses on “what’s strong, not what’s wrong” within a community, by demonstrating that local assets such as people, buildings and places are key to ensuring sustainable communities and sustainable community development. This is a commitment and an approach to developing a relationship with residents and giving them the space and support to develop their own solutions.

Adult Social Care: Reviewing their delivery services in a strength-based way, co-producing care services in line with local needs and priorities and engaging care communities in how to access services and the delivery of those services, whilst using appropriate information sharing processes and procedures.

Communications Strategy: This Strategy shows how to promote awareness, understanding and action through proactive campaigns that inform, engage, and motivate our audiences. It seeks to use clear, honest, and compelling messages, delivered through the channels that people use, at a time when they use them.

Community and Voluntary Sector and Volunteering Strategy: This strategy sets out how BCP Council will work in partnership with our community and voluntary sector to achieve better outcomes. It also sets out our aspirations for growing opportunities for volunteering ensuring that volunteering is accessible to all.

Children and Young People’s Participation Strategy: Will identify how to involve children and young people appropriately and effectively in having their say on the delivery of these services across the area.

Dorset Integrated Care System: Is a partnership of the local councils, the NHS and the community and voluntary sector, working together to address local health, wellbeing, quality, and financial challenges across the county. Engagement leads across these organisations meet regularly to review engagement activity.

Health and Wellbeing Board: A forum with leaders from the local Councils and health and care sector, working together to improve the health and wellbeing of the local population. The board’s current priorities are prevention at scale; the 20% most deprived areas and tackling food insecurity.

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA): The purpose of the Public Sector Equalities Duty is to integrate the consideration of equalities into the day-to-day business of public authorities. It requires the local authority to consider and promote equality, diversity, and inclusion work objectives. EQIA’s are used as evidence-based reporting tools that demonstrate how the Council has considered and will mitigate inequalities and remove barriers for its diverse communities.

Smart Places: Creating digital solutions to improve the lives of our residents, the vibrancy of our communities and the prospects of our local businesses. These innovative solutions utilise the benefits of innovative digital technology, interconnected information, and the latest high-speed connectivity.

Town & Parish Councils: A tier of local government, where elected members have discretionary powers and rights to represent their communities. BCP have 5 local Councils: Burton and Winton Parish Council; Christchurch Town Council; Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council; Hurn Parish Council and Throop and Holdenhurst Village Council.