

BCP Council Budget Consultation

Summary

BCP Council launched a consultation on Tuesday 21 November 2023 asking residents and stakeholders for their views on the importance of council services, our financial strategy, lobbying government, and level of council tax increase. We also asked if respondents wanted to comment on some of our specific proposals to address the budget gap for 2024/25. A questionnaire and consultation document were produced and available online and in paper format. Respondents could also choose to send an email expressing their views. The consultation was widely promoted through a press release and social media channels including Facebook, X, Instagram, LinkedIn and Nextdoor. The consultation was sent to residents and stakeholders signed up to the council's consultation register. The consultation closed Wednesday 20 December 2023.

In total we received 2,445 responses to the consultation questionnaire (224 paper copies and 2,221 online) and 14 emails. The council have analysed the data and written a full report of the findings. Darmax Research Company assisted the council with data processing and coding and writing up the open-ended comments. The full report can be seen [here](#)

Respondents

The vast majority of respondents were people who lived in the BCP Council area (95%), 7% of respondents worked for BCP Council, 4% of respondents were responding on behalf of an organisation working within Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole and 2% of respondents lived outside the BCP Council area. Please note this was a multiple response question so the total percentage will be greater than 100%.

Importance of council services (BCP residents)

Respondents were asked which services they feel are most important. This first question allowed respondents to select as many services as they liked. The services that rated most important by at least half of respondents living in BCP are:

- Collecting rubbish and recycling (89%)
- Parks, playgrounds, open spaces, seafront (84%)
- Maintaining roads and pavements (81%)
- Keeping streets clean (74%)
- Supporting schools and education (67%)
- Social care for elderly or disabled adults (65%)
- Providing libraries (63%)
- Social care for vulnerable children (63%)
- Community safety, CCTV, ASB (61%)
- Providing car parks and parking services (59%)
- Managing the road network (54%)
- Helping people who are homeless (54%)
- Providing sports and leisure facilities (53%)

Respondents were then asked to choose their most important five services out of those they had already selected, the five services rated as most important by BCP residents were:

- Collecting rubbish and recycling (59%)
- Parks, playgrounds, open spaces, seafront (44%)
- Social care for elderly or disabled (43%)
- Social care for vulnerable children (42%)

- Maintaining roads and pavements (37%)

Awareness of the Council's financial situation

Almost six out of ten respondents (59%) said they felt informed about the Council's financial situation. Whilst more respondents said that they felt informed than did not feel informed (41%), this suggests more work could be done to ensure more residents and stakeholders are informed about the Council's financial situation.

BCP Council's budget management

Respondents were provided with information about the council's budget management approach and asked to what extent they agree or disagree with it. Just fewer than half of respondents (46%) agreed with the Council's approach to managing its budget. Fewer than a third (32%) disagreed and 22% 'neither agreed nor disagreed' which suggests they agree with some of the approach and disagree with other aspects.

Respondents were then asked to what extent they agree or disagree with the different aspects of budget management.

The approaches that received the most support were (% agree):

- Letting leases go on premises that we no longer need (89%)
- Selling council-owned buildings that we no longer need (82%)
- Transforming our services to make our internal and external processes more efficient (77%)
- Harmonising our services across Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole to remove any differences that exist following the formation of BCP Council (73%)
- Introduction of a resident's card, which would charge different rates for residents and non-residents for certain services (72%)
- Requesting support from the Department of Education in reducing our Dedicated Schools Grant in-year overspend and repaying the deficit if in return we provide a long-term plan for reducing the overspend (71%)

There was one question where more respondents disagreed with the budget management approach than agreed. Just over half of respondents (53%) disagreed that BCP Council should increase charges for existing services whereas just over one quarter (27%) agreed with this approach.

Council Tax

Respondents were asked to rank three options for council tax levels for the next financial year. There was a clear preference for the lowest council tax rise with 57% of respondents selecting 'to raise Council Tax by less than 4.99%' per year as their first choice, 55% of respondents rated 'to raise Council Tax by 4.99% per year' as their second choice. The least popular option which was ranked by 71% of respondents as their third choice was 'to raise Council Tax by more than 4.99% per year'.

Respondents were next asked if there was no limit to the amount we could increase Council Tax, how much more would you be willing to pay to protect services. Almost two out of five people (39%) would not be willing to pay any more than 4.99%, one third (32%) are not willing to pay any more than they currently pay, 13% would be willing to pay 6% and 15% would be willing to pay 7% or more.

The findings from these questions show that the majority of residents would not support a rise in council tax above the current threshold.

Lobbying Government

This section of the consultation provided information about the different ways the council could choose to lobby government about funding or legislation.

The lobbying proposals that residents most agreed with were (% agree):

- Increase government funding to pay for growth in social care services (87%)
- Increase government funding for highway maintenance and major road and structural repairs (86%)
- Set a limit of the amount of profit made by providers of children's homes (80%)
- Pay a percentage of the income tax paid in our local area to the council to fund local services (74%)

This suggests that the council would have the support of residents if they lobbied in the above areas.

The lobbying proposals that residents were more likely to disagree with than agree were (% disagree):

- Charge a small fee for using household waste recycling centres (73%)
- More freedom to set our own council tax (52%)
- Apply a local land value growth tax (38%)

This shows that these lobbying efforts would not be supported by residents and should not be pursued.

Service proposals

The second half of the consultation questionnaire asked respondents for their views on a number of specific service proposals the council was considering as part of the budget setting process for 2024/25.

The table below shows the number and percentage of respondents who selected each of the sections, the overall % agree and % disagree for each of the proposals and the % of respondents who said the proposal would impact them 'a lot'.

Service proposal	Number of respondents	% of respondents	% agree	% disagree	% impact a lot
Paddling pools	980	46%	19%	75%	50%
Public protection	914	43%	21%	67%	34%
Street lighting	907	43%	54%	38%	21%
Library opening hours	906	43%	31%	60%	36%
Grounds Maintenance Service	898	43%	49%	43%	27%
CCTV	876	41%	31%	59%	30%
Christchurch Household Recycling Centre	818	39%	40%	52%	21%
Hengistbury Head Outdoor Education Centre	638	30%	44%	43%	13%
School crossing patrol proposal 1	631	30%	55%	32%	22%
School crossing patrol proposal 2			39%	44%	
School crossing patrol proposal 3			73%	17%	
Community Safety Accreditation Scheme	606	29%	22%	73%	36%
Other general comments	486	23%			

Paddling Pools (approximately yearly saving £107,000)

Nearly three quarters of respondents (74%) to the paddling pool section had visited one of the Council's paddling pools within the last 12 months. Quomps paddling pool had been visited by just over half of respondents (51%), Hamworthy Park 29%, Littledown 28% and Redhill 23%.

More people disagree with this proposal (75%) compared to agree (19%). Half of respondents (50%) say that this proposal would impact them a lot and 22% state it would impact them a little.

When looking at the type of impact of this proposal, 37% say they would visit the park less, 30% say they would no longer visit these parks, 18% said they would visit the park for a shorter length of time. Other negative impacts highlighted include the impact on families / children and multi generations that use the paddling pools. The impact on children and young people's health and wellbeing, the impact on low-income families and the loss of a free family activity were also concerns.

304 respondents provided comments relating to the paddling pools proposal. The vast majority of these respondents commented that they were opposed to the proposal.

A number of respondents commented that paddling pools are a valuable and well-used facility for children and their families which have been used by multi-generations, while the saving was minimal compared to the benefits that they provide to local communities. Paddling pools provide a free activity for families, which is helpful due to increased cost of living. Respondents also commented that paddling pools should be kept because there are very few alternative activities available for children in the local area.

Respondents commented on the health and wellbeing benefits that paddling pools provide, including encouraging children to be outside in the fresh air, they are beneficial for those who do not have outside space at home and the physical, mental health and wellbeing benefits to children. Respondents also commented that they provide developmental benefits to children and also help to develop social skills.

Respondents commented that paddling pools are a tourist attraction that provide economic benefits to the local area, generate income for local businesses as well as income for the council through car parking charges.

Respondents commented that paddling pools provide a safe environment for children to play in and provide a good introduction to water play and safety. Respondents also commented that beaches were not a viable alternative for young children because they were not always suitable or safe, were busy, difficult to access and the cost of parking was restrictive.

Respondents also commented that the effort and money spent on preserving paddling pools previously would be wasted if they were closed, the Council has wasted money on other local services and paddling pools were not suitable to be part of a community management arrangement due to the maintenance requirements and potential additional costs.

Public Protection savings (approximately yearly saving £524,000)

Just over one fifth of respondents (21%) agreed with the public protection proposal whilst 67% disagreed. Over one third said this would impact them a lot (34%) and 49% said it would impact them a little. When looking at the type of impact, 81% said they would feel less safe and 39% said it would impact their health and wellbeing. The other types of impact mentioned by respondents were concern about a potential increase in crime and ASB, concern over reputational damage to the area and impact on local businesses and tourism. Other respondents said that this proposal contradicts the new corporate vision. Some respondents are concerned about the strain on other services, risk of fly-tipping and animal welfare.

Respondents were also asked which of the public protection services are most important. The services that support community safety and anti-social behaviour were rated as most important. Below are the public protection services that were rated as important by more than half of respondents.

- Anti-social behaviour investigation and enforcement (77%)
- CCTV live monitoring and camera maintenance in public places (72%)
- Food hygiene and safety, including ratings of commercial eateries (65%)
- CSAS (62%)
- Residential nuisance complaints, including noise, odour and smoke (56%)
- Environmental nuisance complaints (50%)

220 respondents provided comments relating to the public protection proposal, with the majority of these comments opposed to the proposal. A number of respondents who opposed the proposal commented that public protection and safety is vital, anti-social behaviour needs to be investigated and that reductions to the Public Protection Service would result in increased crime. A reduction in the Public Protection Service would also negatively impact on the mental health and wellbeing of local residents and would impact on local businesses and tourism.

Respondents commented that the Public Protection Service covers a wide range of functions that are needed, including the noise/neighbour complaint service, trading standards, environmental health and the regulation of food hygiene. A reduction in the Public Protection Service would increase the strain on other services and would result in increased costs elsewhere, while the service also helps to prevent escalation of issues. However, some respondents commented that there is a need for more police.

Library opening hours (approximately yearly saving £440,200)

Most respondents (88%) who selected to answer this section had used a BCP library in the last 12 months. One in ten respondents (10%) use the library almost every day, 47% once a week and 32% about once a month. Saturday mornings was the most popular time to use a library (58%). Over half of respondents (57%) currently use the library when they are proposed to close. Just under one third (31%) agreed with the library opening hours proposal whilst 60% disagreed. Over one third of respondents (36%) said this would impact them a lot and 35% said it would impact them a little. When looking at the type of impact, over one third (37%) said they would use the library on a different day, 36% said they would use the library less and 17% would no longer visit the library. Other impacts respondents noted were reduced educational opportunities, loss of a community hub / meeting space, loss of computer and internet access, that the changes were most likely to affect the most vulnerable, elderly and school age children and evening closures after 6pm will also disproportionately impact those in employment. The results vary for each of the libraries so the service will need to look at the findings for each of the libraries.

287 respondents provided comments relating to the library opening hours proposal. While some respondents commented that they supported the proposal, the majority of comments were reasons as to why they opposed it.

Respondents who were in support of the proposal commented that reducing library hours is sensible and is a good idea, is better than full closures and fewer people use libraries than previously so there is a reduced need for longer opening hours. Smaller, less used libraries could be closed fully to contribute to budget savings. Daytime opening hours only is a sensible approach, while respondents also commented that volunteers could be used to manage the libraries, resulting in a cost saving due to a reduced need for paid staff.

The majority of respondents who were opposed to the proposal commented on the community benefits that libraries provide. Libraries act as a community hub that provide access to education and health resources for people of all ages. Libraries are an important space for community and social groups, many of which are held in the evening. Libraries could also be utilised to provide access to other community services and support. Libraries provide a free service that needs to be kept and that the proposed changes would also impact on those who are economically disadvantaged.

The proposed changes would impact on the elderly, libraries encourage socialisation and reduce isolation and loneliness. Library opening hours should not be reduced because they

are a warm, safe space. Libraries also provide access to technology and support with completing forms online.

Respondents also commented that people can only visit libraries in the evenings because they work during the daytime. Some respondents suggested that libraries should open later and stay open later in the evening to allow more people to make use of them.

The proposed changes would impact on library use by children, they encourage an interest in literacy and many children use libraries after school as a space to do their homework as well as those who are homeschooled.

Respondents were also concerned that reduced opening hours would result in full library closures.

Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (approximately yearly saving £270,00)

Just over one fifth of respondents (22%) agreed with the CSAS proposal whilst 73% disagreed. Over one third said this would impact them a lot (36%) and 40% said it would impact them a little. When looking at the type of impact, 56% said they would feel less safe in Poole, 49% less safe in Boscombe and 40% less safe in Christchurch. Other impacts mentioned were general comments on safety and the potential impacts on areas, positive and negative views on the effectiveness and powers of CSAS officers, other respondents saw this service as a police responsibility but also recognised the lack of police, some respondents showed concern that certain areas were being prioritised over others.

135 respondents provided comments relating to the Community Safety Accreditation Scheme (CSAS) proposal. Respondents commented that stopping CSAS Officers in Poole Town Centre, Christchurch Town Centre and Boscombe would impact on safety concerns, particularly for women, shift workers and the elderly. In addition, respondents felt that there would be an increase in anti-social behaviour and crime in these areas. Respondents commented that local residents and tourists will avoid the areas where the CSAS is stopped, the proposals would impact on businesses and shops will close as a result. Some respondents questioned why only Bournemouth Town Centre would continue to have CSAS presence.

Respondents commented that CSAS Officers do a good job, support the police, act as a deterrent and that there is a need for more Officers due to a lack of police. However, some respondents commented that CSAS Officers have no powers to address issues that arise and that it is the role of the police to tackle anti-social behaviour. There is a need for more police to act as a deterrent and there is a need for stricter enforcement and increased fines.

CCTV (approximately yearly saving £49,000)

Just under one third (31%) of respondents agreed with the CCTV proposal whilst 59% disagreed. Three out of ten respondents (30%) said this would impact them a lot and 39% said it would impact them a little. When looking at the type of impact, over three quarters of respondents to this section (77%) would feel less safe. Another impact respondents highlighted was a concern over the risk of increased volume of crime and ASB, while others said CCTV is viewed as important evidence to aid convictions. Some respondents suggested using AI as an alternative to human live monitoring.

230 respondents provided comments relating to the CCTV proposal. A number of respondents commented that reducing live monitoring of cameras would impact on safety concerns, particularly for women, shift workers and the elderly. In addition, there would be an

increase in anti-social behaviour and would result in increased crime. The monitoring of CCTV also helps to provide evidence.

Respondents commented that live monitoring of cameras is crucial due to a lack of police presence and that it is important that live monitoring is properly manned with staffing levels and monitoring hours maintained. Respondents also commented that the CCTV system should be upgraded, and the number of cameras should be increased.

Respondents commented that a reduction in live monitoring would impact tourism and the number of visitors to the area, which would negatively impact local businesses and the local economy.

However, some respondents commented that the proposal seems reasonable, and that CCTV monitoring should be funded by the police.

Christchurch Household Recycling Centre (approximately yearly saving £100,000)

Over two thirds of respondents (67%) who chose to answer the questions relating to the proposal about Christchurch Household Recycling Centre (HRC) had used the HRC in the past 12 months. Over half of the respondents (57%) who use the HRC visit about once a month with 11% visiting at least once a week and 26% had visited within the last 6 months.

More people disagree with this proposal (52%) compared to agree (40%). Just over one fifth of respondents (21%) say that this proposal would impact them a lot and 31% state it would impact them a little.

When asked about the type of impact 35% said they would use the Christchurch HRC on a different day, 25% said they would struggle to find an alternative to dispose of their household waste and 8% said they would use one of the other HRCs. Other types of impacts mentioned included a concern about the potential increase in fly tipping, a concern that Sunday closure will impact those working in full time employment and a concern about an increase in waiting times and traffic at the HRC on a Saturday.

211 respondents provided comments relating to the Christchurch Household Recycling Centre proposal. The vast majority of these respondents commented that they were opposed to the proposal. A number of respondents commented that the recycling centre should not close on Sundays because people work during the week and can only visit at the weekend, while most people do DIY and recycle at the weekend. Respondents also commented that the proposed closures would make other days busier, increase queue length, would make other recycling centres busier and increase congestion on roads. A number of respondents commented that the closures and charging people to visit would result in an increase in fly-tipping, while it would discourage people from recycling and would be bad for the environment.

Respondents also questioned why Christchurch would be impacted while there were no proposed changes at Bournemouth and Poole. These respondents felt that Christchurch continually gets penalised when savings are made. Respondents commented that there reduced services should be shared across the conurbation at the other two sites as well as at Christchurch.

Respondents suggested that if closures were to occur then these should be on weekdays only, should not be on consecutive days, the recycling centre should operate on reduced hours on all days as opposed to full day closures and should explore funding and income generation at the recycling centres.

Review of Grounds Maintenance Service (approximately yearly saving £450,000)

Respondents were split in their agreement and disagreement for the grounds maintenance proposal which would see a reduction in the grounds maintenance service. Just fewer than half of respondents (49%) agreed with the proposal and 43% disagreed. Over one quarter (27%) said this proposal would impact them a lot. When respondents were asked about the type of impact the proposal would have on them, over half (58%) said they would have less pride in where they live, over one third (34%) said they think it would have a positive impact for wildlife and the environment and over one fifth (24%) would consider volunteering to litter pick in my local area. Other types of impacts mentioned included a negative impact on wild/green areas and animals. There was also concern about the impact on tourism and the impression of the area. We received comments that some areas are already poorly maintained so this would make it worse, the negative impacts on roads, drivers and pedestrians and the negative impact on children's play areas and mental health and wellbeing were also commented on.

286 respondents provided comments relating to the grounds maintenance service proposal. While some respondents commented that they support the proposal, the majority of comments were reasons why they opposed the proposal.

Respondents commented that they supported the proposal because it was good for biodiversity, benefitted wildlife, was a sustainable approach and helped to save money. Respondents also commented that volunteers should be utilised, and communities would be empowered to take a proactive approach to maintaining their local area.

A number of respondents commented that they were opposed to the proposal because wild areas look untidy and trap litter, while mown areas and decorative planting looks neat and helps maintain pride in the area. Respondents also commented that reduced grass cutting, wild areas being allowed to grow and a reduction in decorative planting would negatively impact on the impression of the area and affect tourism. Respondents commented that it is important to maintain litter picking and keep streets clean.

Some respondents commented that a reduction in funding for the grounds maintenance service would result in an increase in anti-social behaviour and reduced safety in the local area. Allowing areas to be left unmown would reduce visibility at road junctions and safety on roads. Respondents also commented that the grounds maintenance service benefits the mental health and wellbeing of local residents.

Respondents also commented on environmental concerns of the proposal, including an increase in dog waste, pests and vermin and would result in blocked drains and flooding.

Those who opposed the proposal also commented that they felt the ground maintenance service is already underfunded and that they felt Christchurch has had a reduced ground maintenance service since the merger of the councils.

Respondents suggested that not all areas were appropriate for a reduced grounds maintenance service and that it was important that sports pitches and other open spaces used for exercise to be regularly maintained. Wild flowers should be properly maintained and grass verges should be cut.

Hengistbury Head Outdoor Education Centre (approximately yearly saving £10,000)

Just over one quarter of respondents to the section had used Hengistbury Head Outdoor Education Centre in the last 12 months (27%). Respondents were split in their agreement and disagreement with the Hengistbury Head proposal with 44% agreeing and 43%

disagreeing. Just over one in ten respondents (13%) said this proposal would impact them a lot and 21% said it would impact them a little. When looking at the type of impact 16% said they would no longer take part in water sports at Hengistbury Head and 11% said they would no longer visit Hengistbury Head. Other impacts and comments include the loss of an important education and community facility and the impacts on clubs, schools and groups that use it.

96 respondents provided comments relating to the Hengistbury Head Outdoor Education Centre proposal. The majority of comments were reasons for opposing the proposal or suggestions as to how to keep the centre open and available to the public.

Respondents commented that they were opposed to the proposal because the centre is a well-used community facility that is used by people of all ages, and it has provided affordable access to water sports to multi-generations. Respondents also commented that the centre is a good educational facility for schools, teaching people about the environment, wildlife and water safety and it is an important facility for young people.

Respondents also commented that the education centre provides health and wellbeing benefits, the facility was important for tourism in the area and the proposal only creates a small saving and therefore was not worth doing.

Respondents commented that the centre should not be closed if it cannot be transferred to a community group, effort should be made to keep it open, and it will still require council support if it was transferred. Respondents also made funding suggestions as opposed to transferring or closing the centre.

Street lighting (approximately yearly saving £68,000)

Just over a half (54%) agree with the street lighting proposal and 38% disagree. Two out of ten respondents (21%) said this would impact them a lot and 27% said it would impact them a little. When looking at the type of impact, 46% would be concerned about an increase in ASB / crime, 44% would feel less safe, 28% would not go out when the lights are turned off and 18% would prefer it as there would be less light pollution. The other impacts respondents mentioned include using the car instead of walking, concern about the risk of trips and falls on pavements, comments that LED lights do not work. Other suggestions include automated lights/ light sensitive instead, keep alternative lights on instead, turn other lights off in car parks / buildings, consult the police.

249 respondents provided comments relating to the part night lighting in Poole proposal.

Respondents commented that they supported the proposed part night lighting in Poole because of the savings and that people are less likely to be outside during these hours. Turning street lights off at night was also good for the environment as well as wildlife. Some respondents suggested that the proposal should be extended to include turning off more lights and for longer hours.

Respondents commented that a reduction in night lighting would impact on safety concerns, particularly for women, shift workers, those who make use of nightlife entertainment, as well as those who would otherwise take part in outdoor physical exercise. There would be an increase in anti-social behaviour and crime, while reduced lighting would result in an increased risk of trips and falls on pavements.

Respondents commented on the harmonisation of services and that it was not fair that the proposal only focused on reduced lighting in Poole. The lighting system in Bournemouth

should be changed to align with Poole and Christchurch, while some respondents commented that they felt that Christchurch funds schemes in Bournemouth and Poole.

Suggested amendments to the proposal included that alternate lights should be turned off rather than whole areas, lighting should be dimmed as opposed to turned off completely, turning lights off between midnight and 6am was too long, street lighting should be automated and light sensitive instead and that LED or low energy lighting should be installed.

School Crossing Patrol (approximately yearly saving £12,000)

Just under one third (30%) of respondents to this section had used the school crossing patrol service in the last 12 months. Over half of respondents (55%) agree and 32% disagree with the proposal to remove school crossing patrols from locations that have existing crossing facilities. Almost two out of five respondents (39%) agree and 44% disagree with the proposal to remove school crossing patrols from locations that do not meet the threshold. The majority of respondents (73%) agree and 17% disagree with the proposal to use capital funding to upgrade SCP sites to permanent crossing facilities. Over one in five (22%) of respondents say this proposal would impact them a lot and 17% a little. Over one quarter of respondents (28%) would feel their child is less safe walking / cycling to school, 27% would feel safer because of the permanent/ upgraded crossing facilities that would be available 24/7, 15% would miss the interaction with the school crossing patrol.

111 respondents provided comments relating to the school crossing patrol proposal and the majority of responses were opposed to the proposal.

A number of respondents commented that they were opposed to the proposal because the safety of children is paramount and school crossing patrollers ensure their protection. Respondents also commented that they would not allow children to walk to school independently if there was not a school crossing patroller, school crossing patrollers help to control traffic flow, they help to educate children on road safety and human interaction with school crossing patrollers benefits children.

Respondents also commented that the savings were minimal and therefore not worth implementing.

Respondents commented that they supported upgrading school crossing patrol sites so there are permanent crossing facilities that are available 24/7. Respondents suggested that additional enforcement and traffic calming measures should be implemented alongside permanent crossing facilities, road safety education should be provided within schools, while needs assessments were required and changes to school crossings only be made on individual site requirements.

Comments

300 respondents provided other general comments or suggestions about the 2024/25 budget.

Respondents commented on the budget consultation in general and that proposals would only result in short-term gains and services were too important to reduce compared to the small savings described. Safety concerns should be considered when making decisions relating to the 2024/25 budget. While some respondents commented that utilising volunteers and community groups was a good idea, others commented that they were wary of relying on volunteers providing council services.

While some respondents commented that they appreciated the opportunity to respond and provide their views on the 2024/25 budget, others commented that they felt that budget decisions have already been made by the council and that the council needs to be transparent with its reasons for making the budget decisions it does.

A number of respondents commented on council spending/funding. Respondents commented that the council should review staff costs to support budget savings, senior leadership salaries were too high, there were too many managers within the council structure and the number of councillors in each area should be reduced. Respondents also questioned the need for some roles within the council and that savings could be made by staff returning to working in offices. Respondents also commented that staff expenses should be reduced. Respondents commented that the council has previously wasted money and that someone else should be responsible for managing council finances. Funding from central government needs to be increased, while some services should be the responsibility of central government and not local authorities.

Respondents criticised the merger of the councils and that it had not saved money, harmonisation had not occurred and that Christchurch residents support Bournemouth and Poole while their services are reduced. A number of respondents commented on council tax charges, including feeling that they receive poor service for the cost of council tax, council tax should not be increased, it should be made fairer based on the size of property and where you live, while council tax rates should be increased for those who own second homes and holiday lets.

Respondents commented that the needs of local residents should be prioritised over anyone else, while there should be a tourist tax and residents should have a discount card or receive preferential rates on local services and amenities.

While some respondents commented that the council spends too much money on providing adult and children's social care services, other respondents commented that the council needs to continue to invest in both adult and children's social care services, including SEN support within schools and transport services.

Respondents also commented on the transport strategy of the council. Respondents commented that the recently created cycle lanes had been a waste of money and the council needs to invest in improving the quality of local roads. Respondents commented that car park charges should be reduced and removed in the evenings to encourage people to visit towns and reduce the need for parking wardens. Respondents also commented that increased enforcement and collection of parking fines in the local area would generate funds for the council.

Respondents commented that there is a need for regeneration of town centres, including improved cleaning and reduced business rates to encourage shops to open and to support the local economy and tourism. While some respondents suggested that the council should sell council land, including car parks and unused buildings to help raise funds, other respondents commented that no more housing developments are needed in the local area and that the council should not sell their sites or build on car parks.

Some respondents commented that environmental issues need addressing, including water quality, carbon footprint and congestion within the local area, while some respondents commented that the council should stop using herds of cows to support environmental projects. Some respondents commented that the council should increase their public bin emptying and recycling schemes and that the seafront promenade required more regular sand clearing.

