



# Community Governance Consultation

August 2025

## Highcliffe & Walkford

## Research and Consultation Team

Qualitative Analysis and Report by Darmax Research

# Executive Summary

BCP Council are consulting on draft proposals to create new parish, town and community councils across Bournemouth and Poole and to make some small changes to the existing town/parish arrangements in Christchurch.

Before any decisions are made, the council sought the views of local residents on the existing parish and town council arrangements in Highcliffe and Walkford.

This report summarises the free-text responses to the consultation.

## Methodology

Qualitative analysis and reporting was undertaken by Darmax Research Ltd.

## Results

### Reasons for agreement/disagreement

Respondents were asked to provide their reasons for why they agree or disagree with the draft recommendations for Highcliffe and Walkford.

93 respondents provided feedback to this question. 20 of these respondents live in Highcliffe and Walkford, while 73 live outside of the area.

Feedback from Highcliffe and Walkford residents was mixed. Those in favour of retaining the parish council valued its established role, local identity, and representation. Those who were opposed to the existing parish council argued that parish councils were unnecessary and a waste of council tax.

Respondents suggested boundary adjustments, such as moving Friars Cliff into Highcliffe and Walkford and moving parts of Mudeford into Christchurch Town Council. Concerns were also raised over councillor numbers, cost, and the effectiveness of the consultation.

Those living outside the proposal area also expressed a combination of support and opposition. Those who supported the proposal recognised the parish council as effective and valued the preservation of local identity. Conversely, those opposed to it saw parish councils as an unnecessary extra layer of governance and were in favour of BCP Council-led services. Other concerns centred on additional bureaucracy, service fragmentation, cost increases during a cost-of-living crisis, and scepticism about the consultation process.

Many also suggested including Friars Cliff within Highcliffe and Walkford and renaming the parish to reflect this.

## Any other comments about the draft recommendations

46 respondents provided further comments. 8 of these live within Highcliffe and Walkford and 38 live outside the proposed area.

Local residents who opposed the proposals reiterated that parish councils were a waste of money and criticised the lack of cost detail. Boundary concerns included rejecting the inclusion of Mudeford Wood within 'West Highcliffe', while administrative concerns ranged from the pressures of being a councillor to a desire for BCP Council to focus on more pressing issues. Additional feedback included transport-related suggestions, such as improved bus services, road safety measures, and cycling infrastructure.

Those who live outside the proposed area gave mixed views. Some praised the stability of the parish's governance, while others opposed its continuation or the creation of new parish councils altogether.

Many supported incorporating Friars Cliff into the parish on the basis of shared geography and issues.

Wider opposition focused on the added bureaucracy, duplication of services, and cost implications. Respondents suggested a referendum to decide, clearer information before implementation, while some questioned political motives behind the proposals.

## Contents

Executive Summary .....	ii
Methodology .....	ii
Results.....	ii
Reasons for agreement/disagreement .....	ii
Any other comments about the draft recommendations.....	iii
1 Methodology .....	5
2 Analysis and results .....	6
2.1 Reasons for agreement/disagreement.....	6
2.1.1 Respondents living in proposal area.....	6
2.1.2 Respondents living outside proposal area .....	8
2.2 Any other comments about the draft recommendations.....	10
2.2.1 Respondents living in proposal area.....	10
2.2.2 Respondents living outside proposal area .....	11

# 1 Methodology

Qualitative analysis and reporting was undertaken by Darmax Research Ltd.

Qualitative responses (write in text) to questions were exported into Excel and were thematically analysed. The most common themes are reported on in this report. Anonymised quotes from participants have been used to illustrate the themes identified.

Please note that while the purpose of qualitative data is to provide deeper insights into reasoning and impact rather than to quantify data, the numbers of respondents who mentioned the most prevalent themes are provided in this report to give an indication of the magnitude of response. However, given the nature of qualitative data, it should be noted that this does not provide an indication of significance in relation to the question asked.

In addition, where respondents have provided comments that relate to more than one theme, their feedback has been categorised into multiple categories. Where a response makes several different points, only the relevant part to the discussed theme is shown in the report.

## 2 Analysis and results

### 2.1 Reasons for agreement/disagreement

Respondents were asked to provide their reasons for why they agree or disagree with the draft recommendations for Highcliffe and Walkford.

93 respondents provided feedback to this question. 20 of these respondents live in Highcliffe and Walkford, while 73 of these respondents live outside of Highcliffe and Walkford.

Responses have been coded into key themes to make them easier to interpret. Please note that where respondents have provided comments that relate to more than one theme, their feedback has been categorised into multiple categories.

Theme	Number of respondents		
	Respondent living in proposal area	Respondent living outside proposal area	Total
General support	11	15	26
General opposition	2	22	24
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	4	19	23
Administration/management of decisions	5	37	42
Cost of delivery	1	11	12
Consultation/decision process	1	4	5
Other	0	1	1

#### 2.1.1 Respondents living in proposal area

11 residents of Highcliffe & Walkford expressed general support for the proposals, referring to the **established** nature of the parish, the importance of retaining its identity, and the benefits of having local representation. Comments also suggested that the current arrangements serve the community well and that there was no clear need for change.



*“I agree with all the recommendations as since we have had a Parish Council in Highcliffe and Walkford, local involvement in issues affecting the local community has been increased.”*

*“Local democracy should be retained. BCP is too big.”*

2 respondents were generally opposed, feeling that parish councils are an **unnecessary use of council tax money**.



*"I do not think we need parish councils. Waste of council tax money."*

4 respondents made comments relating to parish and town boundaries. While respondents felt that the proposed **parish area was appropriate**, some respondents felt that splitting the parish into **3 wards was not needed**. In addition, 1 respondent felt that the area of **Mudeford** should be moved into the Mudeford area of Christchurch Town Council due to a lack of incorporating it into local matters by the current parish council.



*"We find the division into 3 wards unwieldly and unnecessary. I would like to see 2 wards, split down the centre of the parish. The natural internal boundary would be Hinton Wood Avenue, Castle Lane and Rothesay Drive."*

*"The area of Mudeford included within this Parish Council should be moved into the Mudeford area of the adjacent Town Council."*

5 respondents commented on the administration and management of the proposed arrangements. Respondents questioned the need for **so many councillors** and that they should be **equally distributed** between the three wards, while BCP Council should be responsible for decisions regarding the entire conurbation.



*"Divide councillors to have equal representation so no one area can have more voting power."*

*"I think better decisions can be taken at council level i.e. BCP with the benefit of greater officer involvement and advice having regard to the council's priorities as a whole and reflective of the administration's objectives."*

One respondent raised cost concerns, noting that the costs involved could be **spent better elsewhere**. One respondent commented on the consultation process and that the **views of residents** were unlikely to be taken into consideration.



*"The costs involved in administering the council could be spent elsewhere without undermining localism or local needs."*

*"Don't forget the area voted not to have a Parish Council in a referendum before it was established. The referendum result was simply ignored."*

## 2.1.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

15 respondents living outside proposal area of Highcliffe & Walkford expressed general support for the proposals, commenting that the **existing parish works well** and the value of local identity and representation.



*“From what I have heard the council in this area is doing a great job, so no need to change.”*

*“The area has been served well by this historic system.”*

22 respondents commented that they were generally opposed to retaining the existing parish, with many expressing the view that **parish councils in general are unnecessary** and do not justify their cost.



*“Town and parish councils should be removed as they add an unnecessary layer of councils for no added benefit.”*

*“The parish council should be abolished. It is a waste of tax payers money and adds unnecessary bureaucracy.”*

19 respondents commented on boundaries and parish/town allocation, with the majority of these suggesting that it would be more appropriate for **Friars Cliff to be incorporated** into Highcliffe and Walkford rather than within Christchurch Town Council. Following this the name of the **parish should be renamed** to reflect its inclusion.



*“HWPC should remain roughly as it is, but with the inclusion of Friars Cliff ward (currently in CTC). Therefore another ward needs to be created and number of councillors increased to cover the number of residents (1 councillor for this ward). The name should therefore be Highcliffe, Friars Cliff and Walkford Parish Council (HFWPC).”*

37 respondents commented on the administration and management of decisions. Concerns included an **additional layer of governance** slowing decision-making, and the fragmentation of service delivery. Respondents also felt that parish councils have limited benefit. Some argued that **BCP Council should retain sole responsibility** for local services, especially as the previous merger was meant to reduce bureaucracy and costs. Some respondents were in favour of **reverting back to the previous three town councils** if this has not been the case. Respondents also commented that there are **already enough councillors** without the need for additional roles being created.



*“Unnecessary layer of bureaucracy.”*

*“All of these parish councils should be scrapped now that we are all part of BCP. What is the point of increasing the costs and complication of the*



*politics of administration by further devolution. We have in recent years suffered major change by setting up BCP. Let's all just live with that now and get BCP to take the action local residents need rather than just adding costs tinkering around the edges."*

*"Why create BCP to remove duplication just to devolve responsibility?"*

*"If local government bodies should be covering smaller areas, then BCP should be split up. Indeed, it should never have been created in the first place."*

*"We have a Town Council which has council representatives for each area. We do not need more levels of administration but for existing Councillors to do their job and represent their ward to the council with diligence and hard work on behalf of their electors."*

11 respondents commented on **costs** of setting up new parish and town councils, the current cost-of-living pressures and opposing any increase in council tax.



*"There should not be new councils set up at extra cost, where there would be no benefit & possible increase in council tax."*

*"This adds additional unnecessary cost to us all."*

4 respondents commented on the consultation process, commenting that the plans had been developed with **little evidence**, there was insufficient information provided, a whole conurbation **referendum** should take place, as well as questioning the motives behind the proposals.



*"It's shocking that views of respondents from Ashley Cross, Broadstone, Canford Heath, Jumpers Common and Oakdale were even mentioned in the report."*

*"There is insufficient information to be able to make an informed decision on any of these draft recommendations."*

1 respondent commented that while they feel parish councils are unnecessary, they **do not live locally** to the proposed area and it should be the decision of residents.



*"I think it is unnecessary having the parish but it is not really for me to say if the residents want a parish then it is up to them."*

## 2.2 Any other comments about the draft recommendations

Respondents were asked to provide any other comments about the draft recommendations for Highcliffe and Walkford.

46 respondents provided feedback to this question. 8 of these respondents live in Highcliffe and Walkford, while 38 of these respondents live outside of Highcliffe and Walkford.

Responses have been coded into key themes to make them easier to interpret. Please note that where respondents have provided comments that relate to more than one theme, their feedback has been categorised into multiple categories.

Theme	Number of respondents		
	Respondent living in proposal area	Respondent living outside proposal area	Total
General support	0	4	4
General opposition	3	13	16
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	1	10	11
Administration/management of decisions	2	14	16
Cost of delivery	1	4	5
Consultation/decision process	1	4	5
Other	4	0	4

### 2.2.1 Respondents living in proposal area

3 respondents expressed general opposition, stating that creating parish councils were a **waste of money**.



*“Also why spend funds on this now instead of concentrating on more pressing issues. It’s a total waste of money.”*

1 respondent commented on **boundaries**, stating that they live in the Mudeford Wood area and do not want to be known as West Highcliffe. 2 respondents commented on the **administration and running** of the parishes. One of these commented that BCP Council should focus on more pressing issues, while the other respondent commented that being a councillor would be a stressful job. 1 respondent raised concerns about the **lack of details relating to the cost** to residents, while 1 respondent commented that it was important to **listen to the views of local residents**.



*"We have lived in the Mudeford Wood area for over 30 years and don't want to be known as West Highcliffe."*

*"Why is there no explanation of cost to implement the overall recommendations? It's hard to comment on other areas that have changes without understanding the cost benefit calculation."*

*"Listen to the important issues raised by the rate paying residents."*

4 respondents provided other feedback relating to **transport concerns**. Respondents commented that the council should address car racing meetings, consider speed limits on roads near schools, provide evening public transport services and more cycle lanes.



*"It would be nice to have a bus that runs past 7pm at night, and trains that stop more than once an hour at the station."*

*"Considering road speeds around schools in the area."*

## 2.2.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

4 respondents who live outside the proposed area expressed general support for retaining the parish because it is an **established** and stable element of the existing governance framework.



*"It is worth recognising that the stability and maturity of Highcliffe and Walkford Parish Council's governance arrangements are a strength of the existing framework."*

However, 13 respondents expressed general opposition, often reiterating that parish councils were an **unnecessary use of public funds** and that both the existing parishes and proposed new councils should be scrapped.



*"We do not need a parish council as well as BCP."*

*"I disagree with the continuation of current parish councils within BCP Council and I disagree with the establishment of any new parish councils in BCP."*

10 respondents commented about boundaries and parish/town allocation, with the majority of these suggesting that **Friars Cliff should be included** in the Highcliffe and Walkford parish due to sharing the same coastline and having similar issues.



*"Highcliffe and Friars Cliff share the same coastline, are 1 mile apart and have a similar community. Christchurch is further away and is a town."*

*“Reasons for this change is that Friars Cliff and Highcliffe have similar issues, being on the coast/beach, Highcliffe is the nearest shops/GP/Dentists to Friars Cliff. Currently Friars Cliff is relatively ignored by Christchurch Town Council and being on their eastern extremity has nothing in common with the Town Centre.”*

Administration and management of decisions was mentioned by 14 respondents, with concerns about added **bureaucracy**, duplication and **fragmentation of services**. Respondents also commented that **BCP Council should be responsible** for service provision, especially given the recent merging of the three town councils.



*“BCP unitary authority, amalgamating Poole, Christchurch and Bournemouth, was supposed to improve transparency, costs and bureaucracy. Creating parish/town councils will be adding another level of unnecessary bureaucracy and cost with no tangible benefit and worse accountability.”*

*“The creation of parish councils will be damaging for BCP Council, enabling greater fragmentation and corruption, preventing the change the area needs.”*

*“Highcliffe and Walkford should be abolished. Everything should be delivered by BCP Council itself.”*

4 respondents commented on the potential cost implications, linking these to **affordability concerns** during a cost-of-living crisis. 4 respondents commented on the **consultation process**, suggesting the need for a referendum, easier to understand information about the proposals, and questioning the political motives behind the proposals.



*“Leave things as they are as despite the hollow words from BCP council, this is clearly going to end up costing residents money that simply cannot be afforded in a cost of living crisis.”*

*“It's unacceptable that you would do something like this without a referendum (which you clearly won't as you already know what the outcome would be and you don't like listening to people who disagree with you).”*

*“People are trying to circumvent the elected authority to suit their own politics.”*