



Community Governance Consultation

August 2025

Throop & Holdenhurst

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 Throop and Holdenhurst.

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

76 respondents provided feedback to this question. 4 of these respondents live in Throop and Holdenhurst, while 72 live outside of the area.

While there were not many responses from local residents, some expressed satisfaction with the current parish council, highlighting its positive relationship with the community and its role in promoting local interests. Others felt parish councils were unnecessary, a waste of money, and too limited in their influence.

While some respondents who live outside the proposal area supported the continuation of Throop and Holdenhurst's parish council due to its historic identity and perceived value to residents, opposition was stronger overall. Respondents commented that parish councils are an unnecessary tier of government, duplicating services and adding bureaucracy. Many believed responsibilities should remain with BCP Council to ensure consistency, or that the area should revert to the pre-BCP three-council structure.

Some respondents felt the parish area was too small to warrant its own council and should merge with neighbouring areas, while others suggested adjusting boundaries to reflect community links with Muscliff.

Concerns also focused on duplication of services, reduced accountability for BCP Council, potential inequities in service provision across the conurbation, and the proposed number of councillors being too high for the population.

Respondents also opposed any increase in council tax to fund an additional governance layer, highlighting affordability concerns. In addition, some respondents criticised the lack of detail in the draft recommendations, questioned political motivations, and called for a public referendum.

Any other comments about the draft recommendations

33 respondents provided feedback to this question. 2 of these respondents live in Throop and Holdenhurst, while 31 live outside the area.

One resident called for the parish council to be abolished, while another raised a separate local need for improved bus services.

Feedback from respondents who live outside the proposal area reiterated opposition to parish councils, describing them as wasteful and unnecessary. Concerns were again raised over additional bureaucracy, fragmentation of services, and loss of accountability from BCP Council.

A small number of respondents noted inconsistencies in parish and town council distribution across BCP. Objections were again raised with regards to potential council tax increases without clear benefit.

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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 Throop and Holdenhurst.

76 respondents provided feedback to this question. 4 of these respondents live in Throop and Holdenhurst, while 72 of these respondents live outside of Throop and Holdenhurst.

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	2	9	11
General opposition	2	31	33
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	0	10	10
Administration/management of decisions	2	43	45
Cost of delivery	1	17	18
Consultation/decision process	0	5	5
Other	0	2	2

2.1.1 Respondents living in proposal area

2 respondents who live in the proposed area commented that **Throop should be left as it is** and that the current parish council has a good relationship with its residents and acts in their interests.



“The Parish Council has a good relationship with its Parishioners and is active in promoting the good of the Parish.”

“Throop is a lovely quiet village please let it be that.”

However, 2 respondents commented that parish councils are **unnecessary** and a waste of time and money, while they also commented that parish councils have limited scope to have an influence.



“The existing parish council is a waste of time and money.”

“Most people I meet ask the same question... what do they do? They do not review any local planning applications, have not supported any projects in the last 12 months, and due to their meeting schedule of every two months, seem incapable of taking decisions or taking any action.”

2.1.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

9 respondents who live outside of the proposed area for Throop and Holdenhurst expressed support for the draft recommendations, commenting that the area has its own **historical identity** and should be allowed to continue with its own parish council.



“The Parish and its name has historic significance to the local electorate.”

“This is a historic arrangement that serves residents well and doesn't need changing.”

33 respondents expressed opposition to the parish and town councils in general. Respondents described parish and town councils as **unnecessary**, ineffective, and a waste of resources.



“Parish councils are an unnecessary administrative tier. They result in additional costs - without value for money - for council tax payers.”

“I disagree with the continuation of current parish and town councils within BCP Council and I disagree with the establishment of any new parish or town councils in BCP.”

10 respondents commented on boundary and parish allocations. Some felt there should be **equal distribution of areas** and that this **area was too small** to warrant its own council and should merge with neighbouring areas. Other respondents suggested **boundary adjustments** to better reflect community connections with Muscliff.



“The problem with the draft recommendations are their incredible inconsistency. Why should any comparably sized area be treated differently? Such a situation is inherently unfair and undemocratic.”

“It is too small to have separate representation.”

“Should be merged with other parishes.”

“Consideration being given to Muscliff joining the area - is in close proximity to it, children from Throop use local schools, area has more in common with Throop than Bournemouth.”

45 respondents opposed the creation of another layer of governance, warning it would increase **bureaucracy** and cause **duplication of services**. Respondents commented that the reason for the **formation of BCP Council** was to reduce bureaucracy and duplication and that responsibilities should remain with BCP Council to ensure consistency and efficiency. Respondents also commented that **BCP Council should manage and deliver services** locally. If the previous merger has not proven to be beneficial the area should **revert to the previous three town councils**. The creation of new and continuation of existing parish councils will result in **inequity of services** being delivered across the conurbation. Respondents also commented that the proposed **number of councillors** was too many for the population size and there is **already councillor representation** for the area. Respondents were also concerned if candidates would have the **required expertise** and be representative of the local demographic.



“Our area doesn’t need another level of bureaucracy.”

“Disagree with an extra tier of Local Government having had reorganisations in 1997 and 2019. Extra tiers of authority results in additional bureaucracy, duplication and cost.”

“If we need parish councils to have our community listened to, then maybe BCP should be disbanded instead and go back to individual town councils.”

“Ratio of electors to councillors too low and therefore undemocratic.”

“Divisions into parish/town councils across the conurbation is likely to increase differences in levels of provision.”

18 respondents raised concerns about the **financial impact** of parish councils, commenting that the additional level of governance increases costs for local residents and increases council tax that they cannot afford.



“I do not think that the constituents can afford to pay more than they already are for council tax.”

“I do not agree with another layer of local bureaucracy costing local tax payers more money.”

5 respondents criticised the consultation process, commenting on **limited information within the recommendations**. Respondents also questioned the motivations behind the proposals and that the changes should go to **referendum**.



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

Two respondents made **other comments**. One respondent commented that the decision should be made by local residents, while the other respondent commented that BCP Council should invest in the town centre.



“I think it is unnecessary having the parish but it is not really for me to say. If the residents want a parish then 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 Throop and Holdenhurst.

33 respondents provided feedback to this question. 2 of these respondents live in Throop and Holdenhurst, while 31 of these respondents live outside of Throop and Holdenhurst.

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	0	0
General opposition	1	18	19
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	0	2	2
Administration/management of decisions	0	16	16
Cost of delivery	0	7	7
Consultation/decision process	0	4	4
Other	1	0	1

2.2.1 Respondents living in proposal area

One respondent who lives in Throop and Holdenhurst commented that the parish council **should be abolished**, while the other respondent commented that there needs to be a **bus route** in the area.



“Abolish them now.”

“We need a bus here lots of older people finding it hard to walk to nearest bus stop.”

2.2.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

18 respondents opposed the proposals, many of them restating that parish councils are **unnecessary and represent a waste of money**.



“A drain on public funding and no substance offered for improved services.”

“Abolish all parish councils across BCP and certainly do not set up any new ones. Stop wasting council tax funding on additional levels of governance that is not required.”

2 respondents commented on boundaries. One respondent commented that there is **inconsistency in the distribution of parish and town councils** across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, while the other respondent suggested that the proposals **make local elections easier** to administer.



“The boundaries of “Poole” council are clear – however the town will be disadvantaged and overwhelmed, if the whole of the town is 1x parish – when the town of Bournemouth is “represented” as 4x separate parishes.”

“Amending the boundary to include Wood Farm in the Muscliff and Strouden Park Ward instead of the Commons Ward is supported as it will make administering local and parish elections more straightforward.”

16 respondents were concerned about extra **bureaucracy**, **fragmentation** of services, and lack of **accountability** and **responsibility** for BCP Council who should focus on efficient service delivery.



“Parish councils are damaging for BCP Council, enabling greater fragmentation, inequality between areas, and corruption, preventing the change the area needs.”

“No need for any additional council the concept of BCP was to reduce costs and administration.”

“We should either have BCP or parish councils, not both.”

7 respondents criticised the potential cost, noting that **council tax is already high** and should not be increased.



“For all that is good and holy, just abolish everything that requires additional fees to residents and focus on the basics, providing a value for money service to residents.”

4 respondents commented on the consultation process. Respondents felt the consultation **lacked sufficient details** and questioned the **motives** behind the proposals. In addition, respondents suggested that the consultation be paused until **after central government reorganisations** and that there should be a **public vote** before any change.



“Once the government has completed its latest round of local government reorganisation then this should be revisited particularly as we do not know whether the national government as part of the efficiency reorganisation may abolish them nationally.”