



# Community Governance Consultation

August 2025

Boscombe and Pokesdown

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 setting up a new parish council in Boscombe and Pokesdown.

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 Boscombe and Pokesdown.

183 respondents provided feedback to this question. 61 of these respondents live in Boscombe and Pokesdown, while 122 live outside of the proposal area.

Feedback from Boscombe and Pokesdown residents was predominantly critical, though a small number expressed support. Some respondents felt the proposals could benefit the area by providing a stronger local voice and giving residents more control over neighbourhood priorities.

Those opposing the creation of a parish council argued it would be unnecessary, bureaucratic, and a waste of money. Respondents highlighted increased bureaucracy, questioned whether parish councils have power to influence change, and raised concerns about affordability in a community already facing deprivation.

Boundary issues were raised by residents, with suggestions that Pokesdown should be linked with Southbourne rather than Boscombe, and that areas such as Fisherman's Walk and Portman Parade should be part of Boscombe and Pokesdown.

Concerns were also raised about administration and management. Respondents commented that BCP Council was only recently created to reduce bureaucracy, and that adding another layer of governance would create confusion over responsibilities and perpetuate inequalities between affluent and deprived areas. Some noted that existing councillors already provide representation and that turnout for parish elections is often low.

Many respondents felt a parish council would increase council tax, while respondents were also critical of the consultation process itself.

Feedback from respondents living outside the proposal area was also mainly negative. While some recognised Boscombe and Pokesdown's distinct cultural identity and argued for more local representation, the majority opposed the recommendations. Non-residents argued that parish councils are wasteful, that boundaries cut through communities, and that Boscombe and Pokesdown should instead be included in Bournemouth Town Council or merged with Southbourne.

Similarly to residents, non-residents expressed concern about bureaucracy, reduced accountability for BCP Council, and inequity in service delivery. They also criticised the number of proposed councillors and raised affordability issues with increased council tax.

### Any other comments about the draft recommendations

Respondents were asked to provide any other comments about the draft recommendations for Boscombe and Pokesdown.

104 respondents provided further comments, including 42 from within Boscombe and Pokesdown and 62 from outside the area.

While a small number of respondents expressed support, stating that a parish council would allow more to be achieved locally, the majority opposed the proposals. They viewed the changes as unnecessary, costly, and unlikely to deliver meaningful benefits. Respondents felt that BCP Council should focus on delivering better services rather than creating additional layers of governance. Concerns included confusion about responsibilities, and the potential for inequity between different areas.

Boundary issues were also raised, with some suggesting that Pokesdown should be linked with Southbourne rather than Boscombe, while others felt Southbourne could be merged with Boscombe and Pokesdown to create a larger parish. Fisherman's Walk was mentioned as an area that should be included within the proposed boundaries.

Costs were another concern, with respondents feeling that council tax was already too high.

Some respondents also questioned the consultation process, expressing scepticism that resident views would be considered and noting that the information provided was limited and unclear.

A small number of respondents who live outside the proposal area expressed support, stating that the proposals recognised the distinct identity of Boscombe and Pokesdown and could strengthen local representation and decision-making. Most, however, opposed the draft recommendations. Respondents criticised the proposals as unnecessary, costly, and divisive. Concerns included additional layers of bureaucracy and reduced accountability for BCP Council. Some argued that BCP

should improve its current performance or revert to the previous council structure rather than creating new parishes.

Boundary issues were also mentioned. Suggestions included merging the area into Bournemouth Town Council or adjusting boundaries so that parts of the proposed area were included within Southbourne instead. Some felt the proposed divisions cut across existing communities and would create administrative complications.

Cost was again a key theme, with many stating that increased council tax would place an unfair burden on residents without delivering significant benefits.

The consultation process was also criticised. Respondents questioned the transparency and credibility of the exercise, with some believing the decision had already been made. Respondents also called for the issue to be put to a public vote.

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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 Boscombe and Pokesdown.

183 respondents provided feedback to this question. 61 of these respondents live in Boscombe and Pokesdown, while 122 of these respondents live outside of Boscombe and Pokesdown.

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	4	5	9
General opposition	22	48	70
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	11	25	36
Administration/management of decisions	43	72	115
Cost of delivery	20	28	48
Consultation/decision process	7	10	17
Other	0	0	0

#### 2.1.1 Respondents living in proposal area

4 respondents commented general support for the draft recommendations.

Respondents felt that the changes would **benefit Boscombe and Pokesdown** and enable the area to create a neighbourhood plan.



*“There is a logic to the proposal.”*

*“These changes would be positive for Pokesdown & Boscombe. These changes would inspire and benefit Pokesdown & Boscombe because it would help maintain and regenerate both areas.”*

22 respondents expressed general opposition to the proposals. These respondents felt there was **no need to change**, they do not want a parish council and the changes would be a waste of money.



*“Pointless to have yet another council with additional costs.”*

*“I am unsure as to what value this proposal will add to local residents.”*

11 respondents raised concerns about the proposed boundaries. Respondents commented that **Pokesdown aligns more with Southbourne** and so should be included within that proposal rather than linked with Boscombe and that the boundary cuts through areas considered to be part of Southbourne. In addition, respondents commented that **Fisherman’s Walk** and Portman Parade should be included with the Boscombe and Pokesdown area. Respondents also felt that the conurbation was too large to warrant splitting it into separate parish and town councils. Respondents also questioned the appropriateness of the proposed **parish names**.



*“I think it makes much more sense for Pokesdown to be attached to Southbourne, given Pokesdown melds into Southbourne along Seaborne Road. Pokesdown itself is a small, contained, quiet place, which has its own unique character that is completely different from the demographics and urbane entertainment of Boscombe.”*

*“The boundary of Boscombe and Pokesdown should include Fisherman’s Walk and Portman Parade as these are historically part of Pokesdown and not Southbourne.”*

*“I think the Portman and Central Pokesdown ward name needs to be changed. I live in the proposed Boscombe North and Pokesdown ward. Portman Road is in our patch. I just think it will be confusing. It ought to be called the Parkwood Ward because Parkwood Road will be the main road running through there.”*

*“BCP is not that big an area that it needs splitting into little areas. The whole idea of a unitary authority is that it’s ONE level.”*

*“The name St Clements and Boscombe hospital - the hospital closed 30 years ago. These names are dividing in an unpleasant way - I do not like to have this put upon my area.”*

43 respondents commented on administrative issues. The majority of these respondents commented that the proposals create too much **red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy** that the creation of BCP Council was meant to reduce. It would also cause unnecessary **confusion** with regards to the public knowing which each council was responsible for, while **councillors already represent** the local area. Parish and community councils will **not have sufficient powers** to influence change. In addition, the changes would result in **inequity of service** delivery between areas, with areas of higher deprivation such as Boscombe being **unable to afford** to provide services to its residents.





*"We do not need another layer of bureaucracy."*

*"Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole have only recently been amalgamated allegedly for simplification so why now introduce further layers of responsibility?"*

*"Confusing for residents and just a recipe for obfuscation."*

*"My main concern about having a separate area including Boscombe is that as a deprived area I imagine council tax take is lower. What I don't know is would that mean the funding for this council would be lower than other areas - thus perpetuating the cycle of deprivation in Boscombe and limiting the scope of the potential council compared to more affluent areas?"*

*"Our current local councillors already do a great job."*

*"If you create a Community Council that only has an advisory role there is little point and you will create a bureaucracy that has no real value as it can be disregarded by councillors and the council."*

*"There will be a risk of 'buck-passing' and uncertainty regarding who is responsible for what."*

20 respondents highlighted **affordability concerns** and were worried that a new parish council would increase council tax.



*"I'm worried that as soon as Pokesdown becomes a parish, we will be charged more council tax."*

7 respondents criticised the **consultation process**. They felt the information provided was both insufficient and confusing.



*"I don't understand what you are talking about. This is not an easy survey to follow. Also I am quite well read and had to look up 'coterminous'. How do you expect ordinary local people to get involved?"*

### 2.1.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

5 respondents commented general support for the draft recommendations. Respondents felt that Boscombe and Pokesdown has a **rich cultural heritage** distinct from surrounding areas and it will help bring more **local representation** and ownership of decisions that impact the area.



*“Boscombe and Pokesdown have a rich cultural heritage, distinct from surrounding areas, and deserve a formal local council to represent their unique character and needs.”*

*“We believe that establishing a community council would strengthen local democratic voice, support grassroots engagement, and allow residents to take more ownership over decisions that affect the area - particularly around planning, public realm, and community priorities.”*

48 respondents expressed general opposition to the proposals. These respondents felt there both this parish council, as well as parish councils more generally, were **unnecessary**, unwanted and would be a waste of money.



*“I don’t see any need for a parish council. It is unnecessary and will simply cost the residents more.”*

*“I strongly disagree to a Parish Council being formed and would like it kept as it is.”*

*“I don’t want parish councils in Bournemouth.”*

25 respondents raised concerns about the proposed boundaries. Respondents commented that the **boundary cuts through the middle of built up areas** with residents on the same street being divided. Respondents also commented that **areas identify as part of Southbourne** rather than linked with Boscombe. In addition, respondents commented that parts of **Littledown and Iford** should be included and that the area should be part of the **larger Bournemouth Town Council**. Respondents also questioned the appropriateness of the proposed parish names.



*“The area appears to split Southbourne 'high street' in two and doesn't feel naturally self-identifying as Pokesdown. The Boscombe part dominates the Pokesdown part.”*

*“The proposed boundary cuts right through a built-up area, drawing a line through a community between otherwise identical streets houses e.g. on Beaufort Road, Portman Crescent, or Southbourne Road. This is not in line with the Government Guidance on Community Governance Reviews which states: “83. As far as boundaries between parishes are concerned, these should reflect the “no-man’s land” between communities represented by areas of low population or barriers such as rivers, roads or railways. They need to be, and be likely to remain, easily identifiable.””*

*“Should be part of an Independent Bournemouth Council or a ward of BCP.”*

*“I believe that, culturally, polling districts LI2 and LI3 should either belong to this ward or the Southbourne ward over and above their current designation of Littledown & Iford.”*

*“The proposed boundary is not sustainable on its own as the proposed wards contain areas of deprivation. The names and exact boundaries are not logical or consistent.”*

72 respondents commented on administrative issues. The majority of these respondents commented that the proposals create too much **red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy** that the creation of BCP Council was meant to reduce. BCP Council should **concentrate on providing improved services** rather than creating additional layers of governance. It would also cause unnecessary **confusion** with regards to the public knowing which each council was responsible for and unable to hold councils to account. Parish and community councils will **not have sufficient powers** to influence change. In addition, the changes would result in inequity of service delivery and division between areas. In addition, respondents commented on losing access to an **allotment officer**. Respondents also commented that there are **already elected councillors** to represent the area, while there was concern for **low election turnout**.



*“I was under the impression that creating the BCP Council was to reduce the overheads in local government. Introducing a new town council would seem to be an increase in costs and involve additional council tax for residents.”*

*“BCP should improve their own services rather than creating new town, parish or community councils to do their work for them.”*

*“I would find it more difficult to make contact with the appropriate service provider and would feel less able to hold them to account if service provision was split across BCP Council and a local council.”*

*“I disagree with the segregation of our community. It has the potential of causing harmful division.”*

*“If the new changes happen we will lose a dedicated allotment officer which as a keen allotment owner I think would have a negative impact.”*

*“We do NOT need more councillors in the BCP area! The existing councillors should be trained to do a better job & not waste our taxes!”*

*“This is likely to suffer from the same democratic deficit of existing parish councils - abysmally low turnouts and uncontested elections. Both are deeply undemocratic.”*

28 respondents commented on the **costs** of parish councils and that it is just creating expenses that will increase council tax.



*“This whole thing is wrong! I do not agree there should be a second council tax just for the sake of the new parish and town councils.”*

*“Your just creating jobs for people that are not needed, which will push up local taxes.”*

5 respondents criticised the **consultation process**. They felt the information provided lacked detail of how it would benefit the local area and the proposals had been drawn up with little supporting evidence. The decision should be made by a public vote rather than a consultation. Respondents also felt that there had not been enough publicity of the consultation.



*“You haven’t shown how this would benefit the local population or BCP as a whole.”*

*“The proposals have been put forward by a very small number of individuals.”*

*“There is no rush to make a decision today or next year. If any party has reason to believe Community Governance is needed that subject can be part of the manifesto at the next local elections in May 2027.”*

## 2.2 Any other comments about the draft recommendations

Respondents were asked to provide any other comments about the draft recommendations for Boscombe and Pokesdown.

104 respondents provided feedback to this question. 42 of these respondents live in Boscombe and Pokesdown, while 62 of these respondents live outside of Boscombe and Pokesdown.

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	3	3	6
General opposition	18	31	49
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	7	9	16
Administration/management of decisions	22	28	50
Cost of delivery	7	10	17
Consultation/decision process	3	11	14
Other	0	1	1

### 2.2.1 Respondents living in proposal area

3 respondents commented general support for the draft recommendations. Respondents felt that the **changes were appropriate** and enable things to get done locally.



*"I feel that these changes would be proportionate and appropriate."*

*"We desperately need a Parish council because I will gladly pay a bit more on my Council Tax to get things done locally."*

18 respondents expressed general opposition to the proposals. These respondents felt the proposed changes were a bad idea and an **unnecessary waste of money**.



*"Please don't waste our money on any parish councils in the BCP area."*

*"This is not the change that is needed for this area."*

7 respondents raised concerns about the proposed boundaries. Respondents felt that **Pokesdown should be included within the Southbourne proposal** rather

than linked with Boscombe. In addition, respondents commented that **Fisherman's Walk** should be included with the Boscombe and Pokesdown area. One respondent suggested that if Pokesdown and Southbourne could not be combined then Southbourne should be merged with Boscombe and Pokesdown to create one larger parish.



*“Boscombe North and Pokesdown Hill are very different areas, thus grouping them together seems arbitrary.”*

*“If it is not possible for Pokesdown and Southbourne to be one ward, how about a bigger ward made up of Pokesdown, Southbourne and Boscombe.”*

22 respondents commented on administrative issues. The majority of these respondents commented that the proposals create too much **red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy**. Respondents felt that BCP Council should **concentrate on improving their own services** rather than creating new councils to do their job for them. It would also cause **unnecessary confusion** with regards to the public knowing which each council was responsible for. In addition, the changes would result in **inequity of service** delivery between areas.



*“Multiple layers of council will not benefit anyone. BCP should be concentrating on improving their own services rather than creating new councils to do the job for them.”*

*“I believe these plans will add confusion over which council does which job. Just keep it simple. I don't think it helps community cohesion by having multiple layers of councils for each area.”*

7 respondents commented about the associated **costs** of the proposal. While the majority of these were concerned about increased council tax and a lack of details provided about the costs, one respondent commented that they would be happy to pay more council tax if it meant the local area was improved.



*“Council tax for the area is already a large enough proportion of my income for what I consider to be low value returns.”*

*“The lack of info easily available is shameful. Further information and FULL costing should be issued so an informed decision can be made.”*

3 respondents criticised the **consultation process**. They felt the information provided was insufficient and were sceptical that the views of residents would be considered.



*“If the task and finish group can take these sort of decisions without consultation and a formal recommendation for decision, what is the point*



*of having a consultation about creating representative groups when it seems clear that councillors can just make decisions without a formal process.”*

## 2.2.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

3 respondents commented general support for the draft recommendations. Respondents felt that Boscombe and Pokesdown has a **distinct identity** and the draft recommendations will help bring more **local representation** and ownership of decisions that impact the area.



*“I would like to reiterate our strong support for a community council that reflects the unique identity, history, and ambitions of this area.”*

31 respondents expressed general opposition to the proposals. These respondents felt there both this parish council, as well as parish councils more generally, were **unnecessary**, unwanted and would be a waste of money.



*“Please just leave things as they are.”*

*“I just feel that creating parish councils is a completely unnecessary and costly operation.”*

9 respondents raised concerns about the proposed boundaries. Respondents commented that the area should be **part of the larger Bournemouth Town Council** and that the boundary should be moved so to include parts of the proposed area in **Southbourne** instead.



*“Merge it with Bournemouth Town Council.”*

*“I think Seabourne Road shops restaurants flats and houses up to Ashbourne Road should be moved from 'Boscombe and Pokesdown' to 'Southbourne'. The current 'Welcome to Southbourne' sign is just east of Ashbourne Road.”*

*“The proposal for part of polling districts BE2 and BE3 to be excluded from the parish and instead be part of the proposed Southbourne Parish raises concerns. This would create new very small polling districts containing electors voting for different BCP Council wards. This would increase the margin for error in polling stations and make administering the elections more complex.”*

28 respondents commented on administrative issues. Respondents commented that the proposals create too much **red tape and unnecessary bureaucracy**. BCP Council should concentrate on providing **improved services** rather than creating additional layers of governance. If they are unable to do this then they should **hand**

**responsibility back to the three town councils.** In addition, the changes would result in **inequity of service delivery** and division between areas, with areas of higher deprivation segregated. Respondents also commented that the proposals include **too many councillors** for each ward and that there are already councillors elected to represent the area.



*“Less bureaucracy and transparency is required from BCP with more action from those already elected, not more.”*

*“If the central Local Authority cannot function in its current format, then you must disband BCP and hand responsibility back to the separate localities.”*

*“These proposals hack off the “nice areas” and leave the less affluent/ less beautiful areas all lumped together.”*

*“Spend the money dealing with drug dealing and crime in Boscombe instead of wasting it on a Parish Council.”*

*“Too many parish Councillors - could be cut down by 4.”*

10 respondents commented on the **costs** of parish councils and that it will increase council tax for little benefit.



*“It will cost more for minimal benefits.”*

11 respondents criticised the consultation process. They felt the information provided **lacked detail** of how it would benefit the local area and the proposals had been drawn up with little supporting evidence. The decision should be made by a **public vote** rather than a consultation. Respondents also felt that the **decision has already been made** regardless of the consultation response.



*“There has been no democratic input in to these proposals.”*

*“Any decision should be by vote at the Local Elections to be held during May 2027. It is clear the Leadership of BCP Council together with the councillors with the biggest majority have already made their decision so this ‘consultation’ is nothing but a farce.”*