



Community Governance Consultation

August 2025

Southbourne

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 Southbourne.

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 Southbourne.

254 respondents provided feedback to this question. 143 of these respondents live in Southbourne, while 111 live outside of the proposal area.

Feedback from Southbourne residents was mixed. Supporters felt that a parish council would give local people more influence over decisions, safeguard Southbourne's distinct identity, and ensure that local amenities and services reflected community needs.

However, a number opposed the draft recommendations. They argued that a parish council was an unnecessary use of public funds.

Concerns were also raised over boundaries, with some arguing that parts of Southbourne had been excluded or incorrectly allocated to the Boscombe and Pokesdown parish.

Administration and management issues dominated responses. Many residents believed a parish council would duplicate existing representation and add bureaucracy without real benefit. Respondents also felt it would lead to confusion over responsibilities, and inequity in service delivery. Some questioned the impact on allotments and worried about restrictions linked to new governance arrangements.

Cost was also a consistent concern. Respondents felt that a parish council would increase council tax and precepts, with no clear safeguards against future rises. The lack of financial detail in the recommendations was criticised, with many arguing that funds should instead be saved from elsewhere within BCP Council.

The consultation process was also challenged. Respondents described a lack of clarity in the proposals and questioned whether decisions were politically motivated.

Feedback from non-residents showed similar themes. A small number supported the proposals, recognising Southbourne's distinct character and arguing that parish status was overdue. However, most were opposed, describing parish councils as unnecessary and a waste of public funds. Many also rejected the broader principle of dividing Bournemouth into smaller parishes.

Concerns from non-residents also focused on boundaries, with some arguing that areas identified as Southbourne had been wrongly included in Boscombe and Pokesdown, or that Southbourne should remain within Bournemouth as a whole.

Administration and governance issues were again prominent, with respondents warning against creating an additional tier of bureaucracy and duplication of roles. Concerns over allotment restrictions were also raised.

Cost objections mirrored those of residents, with fears that new councils would create unaffordable precept rises without clear benefits. The consultation process was similarly criticised, with non-residents questioning the limited information provided, and political motivations. Some called for decisions to be deferred until the next local elections.

Any other comments about the draft recommendations

Respondents were asked to provide any other comments about the draft recommendations for Southbourne.

131 respondents provided further comments, including 81 from within Southbourne and 50 from outside the area.

A small number of residents expressed support for the proposal, highlighting the value of safeguarding Southbourne's identity and increasing local influence. The majority, however, opposed the proposals, describing them as wasteful and unnecessary.

Boundary concerns were again raised, with respondents suggesting changes to align more closely with how locals identify Southbourne. Some warned that splitting streets between different parishes could cause confusion and unfairness in precepts.

Administration and management concerns were widespread. Residents felt that adding another tier of governance would complicate responsibilities, slow decision-making, and reduce accountability. Some pointed to recent reorganisation under BCP Council and questioned the rationale for further changes so soon. Concerns were also raised over allotments, with fears that tenancy restrictions could undermine existing arrangements.

Cost concerns were highlighted by many residents, who opposed increases in council tax and criticised the lack of clarity around financial implications.

The consultation process was also criticised, with respondents questioning the accuracy of information provided, limited publicity, and the likelihood of feedback being acted upon.

A small number of respondents living outside the proposal area expressed support, recognising Southbourne's distinct character and suggesting that a parish council could enhance the area for residents and visitors. Most, however, opposed the proposals. Respondents argued that parish councils were unnecessary and a poor use of public funds.

Boundary issues were also raised, with concerns over areas being allocated to Southbourne rather than Boscombe and Pokesdown.

Administrative concerns again dominated, with opposition to additional bureaucracy, duplication, and inequity of services. Issues around allotment restrictions were again raised.

Costs were also criticised, with respondents opposing additional precepts at a time when households faced financial pressures.

The consultation process was again challenged. Respondents described the proposals as politically motivated and lacking sufficient evidence. Calls were made for decisions to be delayed until the next local elections.

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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 Southbourne.

254 respondents provided feedback to this question. 143 of these respondents live in Southbourne, while 111 of these respondents live outside of Southbourne.

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	19	9	28
General opposition	42	39	81
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	22	18	40
Administration/management of decisions	95	75	170
Cost of delivery	53	31	84
Consultation/decision process	18	12	30
Other	0	0	0

2.1.1 Respondents living in proposal area

19 respondents expressed support. They felt a local council would allow residents to have a stronger say in **decision-making at a local level**, protect Southbourne's **distinct identity**, and ensure that local services and amenities reflected the needs of the community.



"I feel that a parish council will enhance community spirit, will enable local engagement and social interaction within our community."

"Give us a say in local 'low level' issues that matter to our everyday lives."

However, 42 respondents voiced opposition, a parish council is **not needed** and would be a waste of taxpayers' money.



"Shouldn't be changed, no need to become a parish."

“A waste of taxpayers' money and adding more bureaucracy.”

22 respondents raised concerns about **boundaries**. Some questioned whether the proposed boundaries accurately reflected Southbourne's community identity and that of the neighbouring Boscombe and Pokesdown parish.



“The heart of Southbourne is Southbourne Grove. However, this is at the very western end of the proposed Southbourne parish. Homes which are just to the west of Southbourne Grove, such as Woodside Road and Portman Crescent, would not be part of Southbourne parish under these proposals despite Southbourne Grove being their local high street, just around the corner. Worse, roads including Beaufort Road, Herberton Road and Sunnyhill Road would be split between Southbourne and Boscombe & Pokesdown parishes even though there is no obvious natural boundary to divide them.”

“I think the boundary for Southbourne may need looking at - many residents in Wentworth Avenue and Beechwood Avenue plus the roads leading off to the cliff top regard themselves as Southbourne residents as opposed to Boscombe and Pokesdown.”

95 respondents raised concerns about administration and decision-making. Respondents argued that the creation of a new council would create **additional layers of governance** and unnecessary **bureaucracy**, risking inefficiency, duplication, and **confusion over responsibilities** between BCP and any new council. Some felt that **councillors already in place** should be held accountable rather than introducing additional governance. Respondents also questioned the necessity of the proposals, given that **BCP Council was only recently established**. Respondents were also concerned at potential **inequity of services** between different areas, particularly those with higher levels of deprivation. Many argued that BCP Council should be responsible for service delivery and that funds should instead be used to maintain and improve visible services, such as parks, pavements, and community facilities. Residents also expressed concern over potential restrictions on **allotment tenancy** that may occur as a result of the boundaries and controls put in place.



“Additional unnecessary layers. Complicates ownership and accountability. BCP should focus efforts and resources fixing things centrally.”

“The creation of BCP was to streamline the decision making process. The recommendations will add another layer of committee to the mix and cause confusion as to who is responsible for what.”

“I have serious concerns about these proposals, particularly with regard to inequality in local services in different parts of our town – some areas getting better services than others.”

"I do not agree with the need for a community council. In particular it's proposed remit for control of allotments, and the geographic restrictions that are likely to be imposed."

"The only group that would definitely be adversely affected would be the members/tenants of Bournemouth East Allotment Society as the allotment sites would be handed over to the new parish council."

53 respondents raised concerns about cost. Respondents felt that the proposals mean increases in **council tax** and precepts to pay for the additional councillors and administration costs. There was a **lack of detail** about the costs within the recommendations, while some respondents felt that savings should be made elsewhere.



"I believe that at this present time of financial hardship for many people the institution of parish councils (very unnecessary in my opinion) with the extra taxation involved would be a big mistake."

"This is an opportunity for more money to be taken from people living in this area, during a time of financial hardship."

"How much will it cost. What do I get for it?"

"Council needs to reduce their waste within their departments to have sufficient funds."

18 respondents criticised the consultation process. They described a **lack of information** for residents to make an informed decision, while the survey questions asked respondents whether they agree with the parish consisting of four wards, whereas there were only three stated within the recommendations. Respondents also felt that the proposals were **politically motivated**.



"This proposal only exists because the Liberal Democrats hope to maintain influence."

"The proposals do not make the case for how the proposals will make governance more effective than what we have now."

"Confused as the map seems to show 3 wards, but the question refers to 4 parish wards."

2.1.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

9 respondents expressed support, arguing that Southbourne **deserves recognition** as a distinct area with unique characteristics and that it is a suitable area for a parish council.



“Southbourne has become a very desirable and attractive place for residents and visitors. It really is about time that Southbourne was given the appropriate Parish council / recognition that it deserves.”

However, 39 respondents voiced opposition. They described the proposals as **unnecessary** and a waste of money. Respondents also reflected that no area should have its own separate parish.



“I do not agree that any area requires a parish council.”

“I don’t think Bournemouth should be split into parish councils.”

18 respondents commented on **boundaries**. These included concerns about how Southbourne had been defined as an area, with respondents critical that Pokesdown should be included in the Southbourne parish and not Boscombe, while others disagreed with Southbourne being made a parish on its own and should be part of Bournemouth.



“I think a lot of people (myself included) who would form part of the Boscombe and Pokesdown council area, say, think and feel that we live in Southbourne.”

“I disagree with all of these as I don’t agree with Southbourne being made into a Parish Council on its own. If town councils were to go ahead then Southbourne should be a part of Bournemouth.”

75 respondents raised concerns about administration and decision-making. Respondents argued that the creation of a new council would create **additional layers of governance and unnecessary bureaucracy**, duplication of roles, slow decision-making, and create **confusion** over responsibilities between BCP and any new council. Some felt that **councillors already in place** should be held accountable rather than introducing additional councillor positions. Respondents also questioned the necessity of the proposals, given that **BCP Council was only recently established**. Respondents were also concerned at potential **inequity** of services between different areas, particularly those with higher levels of deprivation. BCP Council should retain responsibility for service delivery and funds should instead be used to maintain and improve existing services. A number of respondents expressed concern over potential restrictions on **allotment tenancy** that may occur as a result of the boundaries and controls put in place.



“This extra layer of local government is superfluous and will be powerless and useless but very expensive.”

“I strongly disagree with the need for parish councils when we already have an amalgamated council.”

“Creates general confusion as to who is responsible for all services. Does not help community cohesion. Improve your own performance before creating additional bureaucracy.”

“I live in Boscombe and have an allotment in Southbourne (Bournemouth East Allotment Society). Allotments are one of only two statutory areas that would fall within the remit of the proposed parish council. As there is a proposal that allotment holders would need to live within one mile of the boundaries, this means that many current potholders could lose their plots. This has a significant impact on wellbeing (it is well known that gardening greatly improves mental health) and the strong BEAS community. We would also lose the support of the dedicated BCP officer.”

31 respondents commented on cost. They felt that new councils would lead to **additional precepts and higher council tax bills**, at a time when many households could least afford it. The lack of detailed costings was highlighted as a particular concern.



“I do not agree there should be a second council tax just for the sake of the new parish and town councils. There have been no costings whatsoever as to how much this will cost so how can anyone agree when no information given on exactly 1) what the new town and parish councils will do and 2) how much tax with NO ceiling increase will cost.”

12 respondents criticised the consultation process. They argued that proposals contained **limited information**, had been **poorly publicised**, were politically motivated and had been developed based on limited evidence.



“There is insufficient information to be able to make an informed decision on any of these draft recommendations. There is no indication of what services will be provided via the new parish/town councils.”

“a) The proposals have been put forward by a small number of individuals and groups. b) Most residents do not even know about these proposals.”

“I strongly believe it's just a matter of creating 'jobs for the boys' Or should I say girls in this instance!”

2.2 Any other comments about the draft recommendations

Respondents were asked to provide any other comments about the draft recommendations for Southbourne.

131 respondents provided feedback to this question. 81 of these respondents live in Southbourne, while 50 of these respondents live outside of Southbourne.

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	5	5	10
General opposition	27	24	51
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	8	4	12
Administration/management of decisions	44	25	69
Cost of delivery	18	9	27
Consultation/decision process	14	8	22
Other	5	2	7

2.2.1 Respondents living in proposal area

5 respondents expressed support for the proposals, **safeguard Southbourne's identity** and give residents more influence over local decisions. Conversely, 27 respondents opposed the proposals and that the proposal should be **scrapped**.



"I agree that decisions should be taken at as low a level as practical but with great care not to increase costs."

"As above, scrap the whole process for all of BCP."

8 respondents raised **boundary concerns**. Respondents questioned the designation of areas into the Boscombe and Pokesdown parish when they consider them to be part of Southbourne, while amendments to the boundary were also suggested.



"The designation of Southbourne does not, as I understand it, cover the whole of what we locals consider to be Southbourne, especially along Seabourne & Southbourne Roads."

“The proposal to include part of the Boscombe East Ward in this 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. This could be resolved by requesting a related alteration from the Local Government Boundary Commission for England to the boundary between the Boscombe East and West Southbourne BCP Council wards to make this coterminous with the proposed parish boundary. If a related alteration cannot be approved, then parts of BE2 and BE3 should not be included in the proposed parish.”

“As far as I can recall, Fisherman's Walk has always been considered part of Southbourne.”

“Boundary to Beaufort Ward could be changed to include the roads down from Beresford Road to Beaufort. Would straighten the boundary line down rather than missing a block.”

“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.”

“If the councils have to go ahead, the boundary should follow that of the Boscombe & Pokesdown Neighbourhood Plan for practicality. Woodside Road car park should be in the same council as the shops on Seabourne Road that rely on it. Fisherman's Walk should be in the same council as Cafe Riva and the cliff lift as the maintenance should be joined-up.”

44 respondents raised concerns about **administration and decision-making**. The most common themes were the risk of adding bureaucracy, creating confusion over responsibilities, and slowing down decision-making. Respondents suggested that governance had only recently been reorganised with the creation of BCP Council, and introducing further structures so soon would add **unnecessary complexity**. Respondents felt that BCP Council should direct resources towards improvements to services, rather than developing unnecessary and costly layers of administration. Other respondents commented that there are **already councillors** elected responsible for the local population. Residents also expressed concern over potential **tensions between different areas**, with a lack of cohesion as well as potential restrictions on **allotment tenancy** that may occur as a result of the boundaries and controls put in place.



“These draft proposals will just add confusion over an already confused scenario. We should be keeping things simple without adding more and more layers of bureaucratic red tape. BCP should be improving their own services rather than creating new Councils to do their job for them. These

plans will not help community cohesions by having multiple layers of councils for each area.”

“I would add that this is just another Government side step in its responsibility to fund local authorities at the correct level.”

“The process of forming a unitary authority combining Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole has only just been completed, promised to save on overheads thereby reducing costs to us the ratepayers, with apparent reduction of efficiency and higher bills.”

“The boundaries will create a tension between the "parishes" of Pokesdown and Southbourne with some streets divided down the middle. Residents may well end up paying different precepts but using the same playgrounds, allotments etc.”

“I am concerned how Bournemouth East Allotment Society fits into the new Parish Council structure as the existing lease is provided by BCP Council and there is an existing good relationship between the two. I am strongly against any proposal in which a new Southbourne Parish Council can dictate or set new rules on behalf of the Bournemouth East Allotment Society as to limiting plot holders to only those living within the boundaries of the Southbourne Parish Council.”

18 respondents commented that they disagree with the proposal due to **additional costs for residents**. Respondents also criticised the lack of financial clarity and argued that additional funds would be better directed towards frontline services.



“I think we're better off without this community governance, it'll just end up costing us, the residents more money.”

14 respondents criticised the **consultation process**. Respondents felt that it had been poorly publicised, lacked sufficient information to enable respondents to provide an informed opinion and that information provided was contradictory. Some questioned whether residents' views would actually influence decisions.



“What will it cover. Why would it cost more than it does now as it seems it will.”

“Presumably there will be only 3 parish wards rather than the 4 mentioned in the proposal. There are only 3 on the map and in the list?”

“Consultation not well advertised-deliberately so few people could comment. Documents not easy to understand.”

“Given the number of households in the Southbourne area I have been very disappointed at the small amount of engagement & general apathy towards this consultation, with some stating 'well the councils going to do it anyway'!”

2.2.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

5 respondents expressed overall support for the proposed Southbourne parish, with reasons being that it has a **unique character**, focuses on local autonomy and would enhance the area for both residents and visitors.



“Happy to see a council put in place if it mainly focusses on making the area look and feel better and more events.”

“These changes would enhance Southbourne for its residents and for visitors.”

However, 24 respondents voiced opposition. They described parish councils as **unnecessary** and a waste of public funds.



“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.”

4 respondents raised **boundaries** and designation concerns, questioning whether the proposed Southbourne boundaries reflected what the local population identifies as Southbourne.



“On the subject of boundaries, I agree with the natural feature of the river as natural, distinct, definitive, feature boundary. However, the Christchurch Road is not such a natural community boundary.”

“Fisherman's Walk is a distinct natural feature of green space. This green space has belonged to the ward boundaries for Pokesdown dating back to the Pokesdown Urban District Council of 1895 and the Pokesdown Parish Council was one of the first to exist. This was long before Southbourne and the Grove existed as we know it today. This 'land grab' of this green space which is confirmed by the Boundaries Commission (and map) lie fully in the Boscombe East and Pokesdown ward. Such a land grab would remove the say of not only BCP Council, and the ward councillors but also the residents of Boscombe East and Pokesdown ward to have a say to the management and amenity usage of this ward asset.”

25 respondents raised concerns about administration and decision-making. Respondents argued that the creation of a new council would create **additional layers of governance**, unnecessary bureaucracy and stall decision-making. It would also create **confusion over responsibilities** between BCP and any new council. Some felt that **councillors already in place** should be held accountable rather than introducing additional councillor positions. Respondents also questioned the necessity of the proposals, given that **BCP Council was only recently established**. Respondents were also concerned at potential **inequity of services** between different areas, particularly those with higher levels of deprivation. BCP Council

should retain responsibility for service delivery and funds should instead be used to maintain and improve existing services. A number of respondents expressed concern over potential restrictions on **allotment tenancy** that may occur as a result of the boundaries and controls put in place.



"It's an unnecessary level of bureaucracy."

"The money should be spent in the local area not wasted on extra councillors who cannot make any decisions because it is blocked by red tape."

"Creates general confusion as to who is responsible for all services."

"The creation of a parish council here would damage community cohesion and set a more affluent area against others that are less so."

"Boscombe residents currently hold allotments within the Southbourne Parish, with no guarantee that this would continue under a Southbourne Parish Council whose only mandatory responsibility is allotments."

9 respondents commented that they disagreed with **increased council tax costs** that residents could not afford.



"I do not want to pay extra on my council tax."

"I do not agree there should be a second council tax just for the sake of the new parish and town councils."

8 respondents criticised the **consultation process**, describing documents as lacking in detail, the proposals were politically motivated and decisions should be delayed and put to public vote at the next set of local elections.



"The draft recommendation fail to explain any benefit whatsoever to the residents, workers or visitors to the area."

"People are trying to circumvent the elected authority to suit their own politics."

"There is no hurry to create town or parish councils, so leave the decision until the May 2027 Local Elections when the public will have time to consider their attitude toward the proposals in much greater detail and without being influenced by councillors seeking more power."