



# Community Governance Consultation

August 2025

Poole Town

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 Poole Town.

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 Poole Town.

688 respondents provided feedback to this question. 591 of these respondents live in Poole, while 97 live outside the proposal area.

Feedback from Poole residents was divided. While supporters of the recommendations argued that a town council would restore local pride, civic identity, strengthen community voice, and ensure decisions better reflect local needs, opponents, however, argued that a Poole Town Council would be unnecessary and costly.

Boundary concerns were widely raised. Some respondents felt Poole should be represented as a single town council, with Broadstone included. Others believed the proposed area was too large and should instead be split into smaller parishes to reflect local differences. Particular concern was expressed about Wallisdown being split across Poole and Bournemouth. Respondents also highlighted disparities in representation across the BCP area, questioning fairness and consistency.

Administration and decision-making concerns were dominant. Many pointed out that BCP Council was only recently created to reduce bureaucracy and improve efficiency, and introducing another governance layer so soon would undermine that rationale. Many also felt that BCP Council had already caused disruption and instability since its formation in 2019, and that introducing new parishes would create confusion over accountability. Some called for BCP Council to be disbanded and for Bournemouth, Christchurch, and Poole to be reinstated as separate councils. Respondents also criticised the creation of additional councillor roles, seeing this as duplication without meaningful benefit.

Cost was another recurring theme. Residents expressed strong opposition to paying higher council tax or precepts to fund additional councillors and staff, particularly given a lack of clear costings.

The consultation process itself was also criticised. Respondents described it as unclear, lacking sufficient detail, and politically motivated. Several doubted whether resident feedback would genuinely influence outcomes.

Feedback from non-residents followed similar themes. A small number supported the proposals, recognising the value of restoring Poole's identity and enhancing local representation. However, the majority opposed them, arguing that parish councils were unnecessary. Concerns about boundaries, administration, duplication, and cost were similar to feedback received from residents, as was scepticism over the transparency and credibility of the consultation process.

### Any other comments about the draft recommendations

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

444 respondents provided further comments, including 394 from within Poole and 50 from outside the area.

While some residents expressed support, describing the proposals as a way of restoring Poole's identity and strengthening local voice, most, however, opposed the recommendations.

Boundary issues were again raised, with some suggesting Broadstone should be included within Poole, while others argued the proposed area was too large and should be subdivided into smaller parishes. Concerns were also raised about disparities in councillor representation across the conurbation.

Administration concerns dominated feedback. Respondents warned of duplication, confusion over responsibilities, and further instability so soon after the BCP merger. Some argued for reverting to the three former councils rather than creating new parishes.

Cost objections questioned affordability and criticised the lack of financial detail. The consultation process was described as unclear, politically motivated, or predetermined. Calls were made for any changes to be decided by referendum.

A number of residents also raised other issues, including calls to retain Poole Civic Centre as the home of any future Town Council.

A small number of respondents who live outside the proposed area supported the proposals, citing the importance of restoring Poole's identity. The majority, however, opposed them. Respondents argued that Poole did not need an additional council, describing the proposals as costly and unnecessary.

Boundary concerns were again raised, particularly regarding Broadstone's separation from Poole and the size of the proposed council area.

Administration and governance issues were also highlighted, with respondents opposing another tier of bureaucracy and calling instead for improvements to BCP Council or a return to the original three councils.

Cost concerns were again noted, with many questioning affordability for residents. The consultation process was also criticised as poorly explained, politically motivated, and unlikely to influence decision-making.

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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 Poole Town.

688 respondents provided feedback to this question. 591 of these respondents live in Poole Town, while 97 of these respondents live outside of Poole Town.

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	103	12	115
General opposition	102	20	122
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	81	16	97
Administration/management of decisions	361	55	416
Cost of delivery	164	16	180
Consultation/decision process	88	13	101
Other	6	0	6

#### 2.1.1 Respondents living in proposal area

103 respondents expressed general support of the draft recommendations for Poole Town. Respondents frequently described Poole as having a **proud and distinct civic identity** that was not being respected under the BCP arrangement. Having a Poole Town Council would help restore this identity and ensure that **decisions reflected Poole's specific needs**. They believed a town council would give Poole residents a stronger local voice, enabling decisions to reflect the unique needs and priorities of their community.



*"I agree completely that Poole should have a town Council so we know we all have representation in our area."*

*"Agree that Poole should take back control in whatever way we can. BCP Council does not represent Poole and does not seem to be interested in Poole."*

*“I feel that it would allow more focus and voices from Poole Town centre in affecting things such as events and play areas etc rather than the huge and out of touch BCP Council where things have been taken away.”*

102 respondents voiced opposition. They argued that the proposals were **unnecessary** and BCP Council should stop wasting money on these proposals. Respondents also commented that parish councils more generally are unnecessary.



*“Do not agree with proposed changes, just a waste of taxpayers’ money.”*

*“There is no apparent benefit for the additional cost.”*

81 respondents raised boundaries concerns. Some residents insisted that Poole **should be represented as a single town council** and questioned why Broadstone was deemed appropriate for its own parish separate from the rest of Poole. Conversely, others felt that the proposed area for Poole was **too large** and that different parts of Poole had distinct needs and should therefore be split into smaller parishes. Respondents also expressed concern that Poole was being **treated differently to Bournemouth**, with disparities in scale and representation. Respondents also commented that **Wallisdown** was being split between Poole and Bournemouth and would create confusion and divisions within the immediate community.



*“I believe that Poole Town Council should cover the entirety of Poole, and that Broadstone should not be singled out to have its own Parish. This will lead to a severance of that community and a disconnect across the historic borough of Poole.”*

*“I support the idea of parishes, but the parish suggested for Poole is far too large, does not recognise substantial differences between Poole town and the other areas, and is not in keeping with the size of the other parishes put forward.”*

*“By simply adopting the old Bournemouth/Poole boundaries, it is still leaving Wallisdown cut across two areas, which has been a consistent issue for getting parity in the area with other areas of BCP.”*

361 respondents raised concerns about administration and decision-making. A significant proportion of comments reflected dissatisfaction with the **merger of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Councils** in 2019. Many respondents felt Poole had lost out in this arrangement, describing the town as “overshadowed” or “ignored” in favour of Bournemouth. They suggested that decision-making had become centralised, with Poole’s unique identity and needs **sidelined**. Respondents commented that constant restructuring had caused **disruption** and instability, and that BCP Council, despite its flaws, should be allowed to settle before any further changes were made. For these respondents, introducing a town council would only add more **bureaucracy** and **confusion**, with blurred responsibilities between the



different levels of governance. Respondents felt that creating a Poole Town Council was simply adding **another tier of politicians** rather than addressing the real issues facing residents. Respondents believed **BCP councillors already had the responsibility to represent the community**, and that introducing a new council would duplicate roles without solving problems. However, some respondents called for **BCP Council to be disbanded** and the area should revert to the previous three town councils and their original boundaries.



*"In 2019 Poole, Bournemouth and Christchurch were joined as a unitary authority and Dorset Council unitary authority was also formed at the same time. Residents were told that these larger councils would be more efficient and make financial savings due to economies of scale."*

*"I think that setting a 'council' for Poole just complicates who is responsible for what service in Poole. We have just gone through amalgamating the three councils into BCP. I do not wish the creation of another layer of local government."*

*"I don't really see the need for yet more councillors/representatives as surely the present councillors are perfectly capable of doing the work."*

*"We already have one council. We don't need lots of other councils. There will be too many councillors all doing the same job."*

*"This would only be a valid option if BCP was dissolved and all functions of BCP transferred to a (new) authority."*

164 respondents commented on costs. Many raised concerns about **affordability** and that the proposals were a way of introducing increases in council tax. Respondents commented that the proposals **lacked detailed costings** and that the cost of setting up the various parish and town councils would be extremely high and passed on to residents.



*"I disagree with the idea of charging even more money on top of the council tax we pay."*

*"Nuclear set up cost and ongoing cost for 40+ new councillors and additional workers that will be needed to run the administration."*

*"This whole debacle is just another means of raising taxes through the back door."*

*"I disagree with the proposal since there appear to be no costings given with respect to changes in Council Tax levels."*

88 respondents criticised the consultation process. Respondents felt that the proposals lacked detail of what the recommendations actually involve and so were **unable to offer an informed opinion**. Some questioned whether the outcome had already been predetermined and expressed scepticism that resident feedback would

influence decisions. Respondents also felt that the proposals were **politically motivated** to suit individual agendas.



*“I object to the idea of a Town Council being created on the grounds that important factors are unknown at this point. Residents cannot make informed decisions about something as important as this, without all the information and we just don't have it.”*

*“I don't agree with what you are proposing. You are basically pretending to be democratic by publishing this paper but you do not listen to the people e.g. closure of Poole Park, resistance to cycle lanes etc and obviously creation of BCP!”*

*“This is quite clearly becoming a dictatorship. Where do you think everyone is going to get the money from to pay for the extra fees. You think you can do what you like and we all have to jump!”*

### 2.1.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

12 respondents expressed support. They recognised the importance of **restoring Poole's identity** and saw value in strengthening local representation. Some felt that parish and town councils across BCP would give residents more say and increase accountability.



*“Value in having effective local governance, more attuned to local issues where applicable.”*

*“Agree with overall proposal, as a way of celebrating the long history of Poole, and addressing local issues that BCP council aren't funded to cover.”*

However, 20 respondents voiced opposition. They believed a Poole Town Council was **unnecessary** and risked wasting money. Respondents suggested that instead of creating multiple smaller councils, efforts should focus on strengthening BCP Council's ability to deliver effectively.



*“Poole doesn't need a Parish Council.”*

*“I am happy for the existing parish councils to continue but disagree with the creation of any further parish councils being created within the BCP area.”*

16 respondents raised concerns about boundaries of the proposed council. Some residents insisted that Poole should be represented as a **single town council** and questioned why Broadstone was deemed appropriate for its own parish separate from the rest of Poole. Conversely, others felt that the proposed area for Poole was

**too large** and that different parts of Poole had distinct needs and should therefore be split into smaller parishes. Respondents also expressed concern with disparities in scale and representation between the different proposed areas.



*“Poole Town Council MUST include Broadstone. Broadstone is very much part of the former town and borough of Poole and is currently within the boundary of the Poole Charter.”*

*“This isn't Poole town it's just whatever's left over from the old Poole council area. Why are these proposals sticking to old pre-BCP boundaries. Talbot and Wallisdown would be a more cohesive area than where this boundary lies. Hamworthy should have its own town council. I don't see what Canford Cliffs has in common with Oakdale.”*

*“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.”*

55 respondents raised concerns about administration and decision-making. Many of these respondents also referred to the **BCP Council merger**. Respondents commented that constant restructuring had caused disruption and instability, and that BCP Council, despite its flaws, should be allowed to settle before any further changes were made. For these respondents, introducing a town council would only add more **bureaucracy** and **confusion**, with blurred **responsibilities** between the different levels of governance. Respondents also argued that introducing more councils would simply **fragment governance** further. Respondents believed BCP councillors already had the responsibility to represent the community, and that introducing a new council would **duplicate roles** without solving problems. The proposals included too many new councillor positions. However, some respondents called for **BCP Council to be disbanded** and the area should revert to the previous three town councils and their original boundaries.



*“The creation of parish councils is adding another layer of bureaucracy to the unitary authority of BCP which the bringing together of the 3 councils said it would avoid. We have local councillors that are elected to represent the views of the area they are elected too, and therefore this additional layer will add authority to those who are elected to represent our areas to the large unitary authority.”*

*“It an unnecessary level of bureaucracy and an informal council parish council could be created under the existing charter system.”*

*“I do not agree that any area requires a parish council. I believe that all functions should be carried out by BCP council. Anything more is an unnecessary complication and a waste of money.”*

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

*“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!”*

*“3 councillors per ward sounds excessive for hyper-local politics and governance.”*

16 respondents commented on **costs**, reflecting that residents cannot afford increases to their council tax and there was a lack of detail regarding the costings of the recommendations.



*“I do not think that the constituents can afford to pay more than they already are for council tax. In the current economy people are already struggling to pay their overheads let alone fork out more, for what seems to be the same service they already receive, with no monetary cap on what can be charged. It's a terrible idea.”*

13 respondents commented on the **consultation process**. Respondents felt that they had been presented with insufficient information to be able to make an informed decision. Respondents also felt that they were politically motivated and a way of protecting politicians jobs.



*“I am currently unable to make an informed decision either way about this change as I have been given very little information about what changes would actually take place in the event that this goes ahead.”*

*“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 Poole Town.

444 respondents provided feedback to this question. 394 of these respondents live in Poole Town, while 50 of these respondents live outside of Poole Town.

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	35	4	39
General opposition	116	12	128
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	39	9	48
Administration/management of decisions	185	29	214
Cost of delivery	85	5	90
Consultation/decision process	82	10	92
Other	32	2	34

### 2.2.1 Respondents living in proposal area

35 respondents expressed support. They highlighted the symbolic importance of reinstating Poole's **civic identity**, which they felt had been diminished under BCP Council. Supporters believed a Poole Town Council would **give residents a stronger voice**, enable more responsive decision-making, and provide better focus on local needs and priorities.



*"It would be wonderful for Poole to have back its own identity."*

*"I believe that the historic town of Poole should decide on its own matters."*

However, 116 respondents voiced opposition. Respondents described the proposals as **unnecessary** and **financially irresponsible**.



*"The whole idea is a waste of residents money."*

*"This is totally unnecessary and will be a costly waste of time."*

39 respondents raised boundaries concerns. Some residents questioned why **Broadstone** was deemed appropriate for its own parish separate from the rest of

Poole. Conversely, others felt that the proposed area for Poole was **too large** and that different parts of Poole had distinct needs and should therefore be split into smaller parishes. Respondents also expressed concern that there are **disparities in scale and representation** between the different proposed areas.



*“The proposed boundaries are illogical. The old Poole borough should be subdivided into smaller parish council areas. There is no logic in removing one area namely Broadstone out of the previous Poole area but leaving all the surrounding areas in a single council area.”*

*“Poole Town covers a large area and unless you live in Canford Heath you don’t understand how the heathland comes with unique needs.”*

*“It is of concern to note that the precept for Christchurch Town Council (with 19 councillors for an electorate of 25,000 residents) is twice that of the Parish Councils, whereas Poole Town Council would have 42 councillors for an electorate of 112,000.”*

185 respondents raised concerns about administration and decision-making. Many felt that a Poole Town Council would create **duplication** and **confusion**, with blurred lines of **accountability** between local and overarching governance structures. Several questioned the wisdom of **reorganising governance so soon after BCP was created**, warning that constant structural changes undermined stability and effectiveness. Others argued that if governance reform was necessary, it should **involve re-establishing the former Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole councils**, not introducing smaller parish-level bodies. Respondents also felt that **existing councillors** should already be representing their communities effectively, and that adding another tier would do little to improve outcomes for residents.



*“The establishment of town councils with arbitrary boundaries would result in a lot of meetings/ negotiations between neighbouring town councils. If having one BCP council was considered more efficient and less parochial, we should stick with that.”*

*“Another tier seems a step back. I thought BCP was set up to reduce duplication of costs.”*

*“These plans will add confusion over which council does which job, please keep it simple. BCP should improve their own services rather than creating new Councils to do their job for them.”*

*“Disband BCP Council and revert to individual councils for Bournemouth, Poole and Christchurch.”*

85 respondents commented on costs. Many raised concerns about **affordability** and that the proposals were a way of introducing increases in council tax. Respondents commented that the proposals **lacked detailed costings** and that the cost of setting



up the various parish and town councils would be extremely high and passed on to residents.



*"I think under the problems of finance at the moment it should not go ahead in making another stream of councillors and staff we cannot afford."*

*"I do not agree to a parish council. As far as I can see it's just another way of local council getting more money out of residents for nothing."*

*"Without costings it is unfair to ask the residents to vote in a particular way."*

82 respondents criticised the consultation process. Respondents felt that the proposals lacked detail of what the recommendations actually involve and so were **unable to offer an informed opinion**. Some questioned whether **resident feedback** would influence the outcome of the consultation. The proposals should also go to a **public vote** before any changes are made. Respondents also felt that the proposals were **politically motivated** to suit individual agendas.



*"I think the whole draft is extremely confusing and made deliberately so to prevent residents from commenting about the proposals so local government can make changes without residents fully understanding the implications."*

*"A full referendum should be offered. Recommendations for Poole haven't been promoted by an independent/impartial group. Local media have not made a front page. We need a full referendum ASAP."*

*"This proposal seems to be already decided by the council and rather than a consultation which will be ignored the electorate should be granted a referendum."*

*"This is short sighted proposal chosen by a chosen council."*

32 respondents commented on other issues not covered by the draft recommendations, including the need to **retain Poole Civic Centre**.



*"Space should be allocated within the vacant Poole Civic Centre for the Town Council, the Mayor's Office and all civic regalia, as well as the function room."*

## 2.2.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

4 respondents expressed support, arguing that Poole deserved a council of its own to reflect its **historic identity** and to strengthen local decision-making.



*“It would be nice to have Poole’s identity back.”*

However, 12 respondents opposed the proposals, describing them as costly, **unnecessary** and that they were happy with the current structure.



*“We do not need parish councils as well as BCP. That is unnecessary, costly and would lead to certain matters not being considered by either.”*

9 respondents raised **boundaries concerns**. Respondents questioned why Broadstone was not included with the rest of Poole, while others felt that the proposed area was too large.



*“I am confused as to why it has been put forward for Broadstone to become its own separate council rather than be included with the rest of the areas in Poole?”*

*“This makes sense for Poole town centre but not for the wider conurbation.”*

29 respondents raised concerns about **administration and decision-making**. They highlighted duplication of effort, confusion of roles, and the risk of fragmented governance across the wider conurbation. BCP Council should concentrate on providing services to residents rather than creating unnecessary recommendations. Some felt that reestablishing the three original councils would be a more effective solution and that they were opposed to the previous merging of town councils.



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

*“Should never have formed a unitary council (BCP) with Christchurch and Bournemouth. The original 3-Councils worked perfectly well for the residents.”*

*“I would like to see improvements to Poole town centre.”*

5 respondents commented on **costs**, questioning the additional cost to residents and where the money to pay for the changes would come from.



*“Who is going to foot the administrative bill for creating all these new areas?”*



10 respondents criticised the **consultation process**. They described it as poorly explained, politically motivated and expressed concern that residents views would not be listened to.



*“Listen to your residents and their wishes!! The majority of residents don’t want parish councils.”*