



Community Governance Consultation

August 2025

Bournemouth 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 Bournemouth 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 Bournemouth Town.

333 respondents provided feedback to this question. 199 of these respondents live in Bournemouth Town, while 134 live outside the proposal area.

A small number of local residents supported the creation of a town council, arguing that devolved power could bring decision-making closer to the community and allow local representation to address town-specific needs.

However, a greater number opposed the proposals. They felt that creating a town council was unnecessary and costly.

Respondents highlighted that the formation of BCP Council had been intended to reduce bureaucracy and improve efficiency, and therefore adding another layer of governance so soon was a retrograde step. Concerns were also raised about blurred responsibilities, inequity of services between different areas, and the risk of confusion.

Boundary issues were widely discussed. Some residents wanted Bournemouth to be kept whole under a single town council, while others argued the area should be split into smaller parishes to reflect distinct identities. Respondents also questioned disparities in elector-to-councillor ratios across the BCP area, raising concerns about fairness and proportionality.

Many residents objected to the prospect of an additional precept and council tax increases. The consultation process also attracted criticism. Respondents felt it was poorly publicised, overly complex, and lacked sufficient explanation of the benefits.

Feedback from respondents living outside Bournemouth showed similar patterns. A small number supported the proposals, citing the benefits of stronger local representation and more responsive decision-making. However, the majority opposed the recommendations. They described the proposals as wasteful and unnecessary.

Non-residents also raised boundary concerns, with some arguing that Bournemouth should be governed as a single town council, while others suggested splitting it into multiple parishes. Some called for a return to the three original councils rather than introducing new governance arrangements.

Administration and cost concerns echoed those of residents. Respondents feared more bureaucracy, duplication of roles, and inequity in service delivery.

Cost objections again centred on affordability, with many rejecting additional precepts given rising council tax.

The consultation process was also criticised by non-residents, lacking detail and calls for a referendum before any changes are implemented.

Any other comments about the draft recommendations

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

186 respondents provided further comments, including 110 from within Bournemouth Town and 76 from outside the area.

A small number of residents expressed support, stating that a dedicated Bournemouth Town Council could restore local democracy and give residents a stronger voice. The majority, however, opposed the proposals. Respondents felt a new town council would be unnecessary and costly.

Boundary issues were raised, with suggestions that the whole of Bournemouth should be included within the Town Council rather than being split, while others felt the area should be divided into smaller parishes to reflect local identities. Some specific changes were proposed, such as aligning Kinson with Redhill and Northbourne. Concerns about disparities in elector-to-councillor ratios across the conurbation were also highlighted.

Administration concerns were widespread. Respondents feared that introducing another layer of governance would slow decision-making, blur accountability, and contradict the rationale behind forming BCP Council.

Cost was again a recurring theme, with residents objecting to increased precepts, particularly in the absence of detailed financial information or limits on future rises.

The consultation process also drew criticism. Residents argued that the proposals lacked evidence, were poorly publicised, and appeared politically motivated. Many called for a public vote before any decisions are made.

A small number of respondents living outside the proposal area expressed support, suggesting that a town council could give Bournemouth greater control over its governance. Most, however, opposed the recommendations. They described the proposals as unnecessary, bureaucratic, and financially unsustainable. Many argued that Bournemouth did not need another council and that BCP should instead focus on improving existing services or revert to the three original councils.

Boundary concerns were again raised, with suggestions for both a single Bournemouth-wide town council and smaller parishes based on local identities. Respondents also questioned proposed ward allocations and highlighted that councillors already exist to represent local residents.

Further administration and management concerns were again raised, with respondents fearing duplication and confusion over responsibilities and accountability associated with a two-tier system.

Respondents again opposed higher precepts without clear costings or benefits.

The consultation process was criticised as lacking sufficient detail and that such a change should only be made following a referendum.

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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 Bournemouth Town.

333 respondents provided feedback to this question. 199 of these respondents live in Bournemouth Town, while 134 of these respondents live outside of Bournemouth 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	12	11	23
General opposition	57	36	93
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	42	24	66
Administration/management of decisions	139	89	228
Cost of delivery	46	19	65
Consultation/decision process	21	12	33
Other	0	1	1

2.1.1 Respondents living in proposal area

12 respondents expressed general support. These residents felt that there is a need for **local representation** to focus on what the town needs.



“I think devolving power to a more local level is a good thing.”

“I believe that a parish of Bournemouth will allow for more flexibility regarding decisions that affect the local community.”

In contrast, 57 respondents voiced opposition. They argued that the proposal was **unnecessary and costly** and there was no need for parish councils in general.



“Just duplication of what we already have. Complete waste of money and resources.”



“Have not read anything to suggest benefit of new parish or town councils of any kind in current financial environment.”

42 respondents commented on **boundaries**. Views varied, with some calling for Bournemouth to be kept whole under one town council, while others argued the area should be split into smaller parishes to reflect distinct community identities and localised needs. Respondents also pointed to disparities across BCP in elector-to-councillor ratios, questioning fairness and proportionality.



“There is no connection between Winton and Bournemouth town centre, East Cliff or Littledown etc.”

“Bournemouth is part of the larger urban area of BCP. There is not enough difference between the various wards to warrant making the area a separate town council.”

“Why are we doing this. We now will have a situation where a few neighbourhoods will be ridiculously overrepresented while the rest of Bournemouth and Poole have no low level representation.”

139 respondents raised concerns about **administration and decision-making**. The most common themes were the risk of duplicating functions and adding bureaucracy that won't achieve anything. The changes would also create **confusion** over responsibilities and blur **accountability**. Respondents commented that the creation of BCP Council was meant to have solved this and therefore the draft recommendations were a retrograde step. Introducing further structural changes so soon would add **unnecessary complexity**. The proposals would result in inequity of services across the conurbation and limited cohesion between areas. 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.



“Complete waste of money duplicating existing governance structure.”

“There will be a conflict of interests between the BCP Council and all the new parishes.”

“Another layer of bureaucracy which will cost council taxpayer more and achieve nothing.”

“Having gone through the merger of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole councils, I don't think we need the extra cost and bureaucracy of new Town/Parish Councils.”

“Plans will add confusion over which council does which job. The present services should be improved by BCP.”

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

46 respondents commented on **costs**. Concerns centred on the introduction of an additional precept being a means to take more money from local residents, with residents also worried about affordability.



“Why should people pay an additional precept for another level of decision making.”

“We don’t need or want a massive increase in our council tax, get it through your heads normal people don’t earn the sort of money you lot pay yourselves.”

21 respondents criticised the **consultation process**. They felt the proposals had been put forward by a small number of people and there was no evidence that there was a need or desire for changes. Respondents felt that the draft recommendations lack detail with regards to the benefits of the proposals. Respondents also commented that the consultation had not been adequately publicised and it was unnecessary complex.



“No submissions for a Bournemouth Town Council were received and it therefore seems ridiculous that a proposal for a Bournemouth Town Council should progress.”

“Most residents do not even know about these proposals. They have not been democratically chosen.”

“It is not clear aside from increasing council tax and creating more bureaucracy how this will assist and help the town: there appear to be bigger problems than creating more structures.”

2.1.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

11 respondents expressed support. They welcomed the principle of stronger **local representation** and felt that town councils could bring decision-making closer to communities.



“Though with less history, there are lots of issues that could be resolved for Bournemouth with a Town Council.”

36 respondents voiced opposition. They described the proposals as **unnecessary**, costly, and new councils should not be created.



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

“Bournemouth doesn't need a Parish Council.”

24 respondents raised concerns about **boundaries**. While some respondents commented that Bournemouth Town Council should cover all areas of Bournemouth, others felt that it was too large and should be split into smaller parishes.



“The Bournemouth Town Council should include all areas that were included prior to BCP Council being formed.”

“It seems rather unwieldy to lump all the other areas of Bournemouth in one town parish, and I am concerned that this will create some disparity within the conurbation, pitting this dominant parish against other smaller parish councils.”

89 respondents raised concerns about **administration and decision-making**. The most common themes were the risk of duplicating functions and adding bureaucracy that won't achieve anything. The changes would also create **confusion** over responsibilities and blur **accountability**. Respondents commented that the creation of BCP Council was meant to have solved this and viewed the proposals as a retrograde step and admission that the formation of the council had been a waste of money and failure. Introducing further structural changes so soon would add **unnecessary complexity**. However, some respondents commented that the proposals should revert back to the previous three town councils. The proposals would result in inequity of services across the conurbation and limited cohesion between areas. 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.



“Unnecessary layer of bureaucracy.”

“The creation of a Bournemouth Town Council would make a mockery of the recent reorganisation of local government arrangements and the formation of BCP.”

“We had a Borough Council, before a great deal of money was wasted in becoming BCP Council.”

“Get rid of BCP Council and leave just three separate, independent single tier authorities for Christchurch, Poole and Bournemouth.”

“The existing Council should spend time, effort and money on improving services and efficiency for the benefit of the local taxpayers. Adding more

layers of confusion and creating more inefficiency is not what we need. Improving the existing council is needed more than the proposed idea.”

“BCP already has a set of councillors and we are paying for them and the staff required.”

19 respondents commented on **costs**. They expressed concerns about the lack of clarity around financial implications, and that higher council taxes were not warranted.



“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 described it as poorly advertised, biased towards accepting the proposals and lacking in specific details. Respondents also felt that any change of this scale should be subject to a referendum.



“The case for change has not been made. I have not been given the information to judge whether the proposals are worth it because (1) the proposals don't set out how governance will be more effective. (2) the cost is not known.”

“I am of the opinion if to 'do nothing at all' was an option in the consultation then the majority of the consultation responses would be in favour of a 'change is unnecessary' response.”

“Changes should involve a whole authority referendum not rely on Councillor decisions.”

2.2 Any other comments about the draft recommendations

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

186 respondents provided feedback to this question. 110 of these respondents live in Bournemouth Town, while 76 of these respondents live outside of Bournemouth 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	3	7	10
General opposition	37	24	61
Boundaries and parish/town allocation	17	11	28
Administration/management of decisions	59	39	98
Cost of delivery	23	13	36
Consultation/decision process	24	17	41
Other	1	4	5

2.2.1 Respondents living in proposal area

3 respondents expressed general support for the draft recommendation for Bournemouth Town. These residents felt that a dedicated Bournemouth Town Council would **restore power and local democracy** in Bournemouth.



"I think the draft recommendations will go a long way towards restoring local democracy in Bournemouth."

In contrast, 37 respondents voiced opposition. They argued that creating a new council was **unnecessary** and would be an inefficient use of public money and the proposal should be **scrapped**.



"Don't do it, you spend far too much of our money on fanciful useless schemes as it is."

"The whole ill thought out idea should be forgotten."

17 respondents raised concerns about boundaries. Respondents commented that Bournemouth Town Council should **include the whole of the Charter Trustees for Bournemouth area**, rather than split into separate parishes. However, some respondents felt that Bournemouth Town Council should be **split into more parishes** as different parts of Bournemouth have their own identities. Other **variations of wards/parishes** were mentioned, including adding Kinson to Redhill and Northbourne. Respondents also commented that there appeared to be **disparity between areas** in terms of the size of areas as well as the ratio of electors to councillors.



“Merge with Redhill and Boscombe.”

“Could Bournemouth Town Council include the whole of the Charter Trustees for Bournemouth area, to bring the whole of Bournemouth together as one?”

“Any council for Bournemouth should include all parts of the town including those that have separate proposals within this consultation.”

“Kinson should be moved to the Redhill & Northbourne ward as issues local to Kinson would more likely affect the Redhill & Northbourne area as well.”

“It would be better if Bournemouth could be split into smaller parishes. As a minimum there could be a North Bournemouth Parish and South/Coastal Parish.”

“I am concerned about the disparity in ratios of electors to councillors across the whole of the BCP area. Some parishes appear to have much larger numbers of electors per councillor and this does not seem equitable.”

59 respondents raised concerns about **administration and decision-making**. The most common themes were the risk of adding bureaucracy that would slow down decision-making. The changes would also create confusion over responsibilities and blur accountability. Respondents commented that the creation of BCP Council was meant to have solved this and therefore the draft recommendations were a retrograde step. Introducing further structural changes 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.



“Surely this defeats the premise of the amalgamation to form BCP Council and creates a more unwieldy bureaucratic structure. Wouldn't it be better to work on making improvements to the existing structure than trying to change it again.”

“I see absolutely no need for another level of local government. Cumbersome and will add to cost. We used to have area associations with regular meetings which were interesting but of no use in transmitting local views to the Council. We already have local councillors to whom we can communicate views, complaints etc.”

“I would like to see BCP get on with doing the job they are designed to do and stop coming up with ways take more money out of the pockets of ordinary Bournemouth folk.”

23 respondents commented on costs. They expressed an **unwillingness to pay** an increased precept and the burden this could place on households already struggling financially. There was also dissatisfaction at the **lack of detailed costings** and no clear indication of how increases would be controlled in future years.



“I am not prepared to pay more for this. As it is we pay far too much council tax for a failing town.”

“The fact that there will be no limit on the council tax charge means that any discretionary spending will be loaded onto the new town council.”

24 respondents criticised the consultation process. Respondents felt that there was **little evidence** presented that justified the proposed changes. Respondents felt that the consultation was rushed and **inadequately publicised** in order to get the changes pushed through without being disputed. Respondents felt that any changes in the proposals should result in a further consultation and that the decision should be put to a **public vote**. Respondents also commented that the proposals felt **politically motivated**.



“There seems to be no compelling reason, in all the documents and videos, for creating another layer of government.”

“Any such change in local government as big, and potentially costly as this, should be put to the vote by the electorate. I only heard of this change from word of mouth by other concerned residents and as such, nearly missed out on my chance to have a say. Nothing was advertised or put through our door. This feels like an attempt to push through this change quietly without opposition.”

“Any substantial changes to the proposals presented here must be consulted on again.”

“To me this smacks of someone's expensive vanity legacy project and there is no local demand for it in this area.”

2.2.2 Respondents living outside proposal area

7 respondents expressed support for the draft recommendations and that it would allow the town to have **control** over its own governance.



“I just hope it isn’t a lot of talking about reorganisation and fuss but a way to actually get things done by people who understand the local area.”

However, 24 respondents voiced opposition. Respondents commented that the area **does not require a second tier of governance** and the proposals were a waste of money.



“Bournemouth does not need another council.”

“Sounds like a money wasting exercise. If it ain’t broke, don’t fix it!”

11 respondents commented on boundaries. Respondents commented that there should be **equal distribution** and representation across the towns and parishes. In addition, Bournemouth Town Council should include the **whole of the Bournemouth area**, rather than split into separate parishes. However, some respondents felt that Bournemouth Town Council should be **split into more parishes** as different parts of Bournemouth have their own identities. Other variations of the allocation of wards/parishes were also mentioned, including the potential of increased **margins of error in elections** in the current proposals.



“Include the whole of Wallisdown so that it comes under Bournemouth Council, not Alderney Ward.”

“The following polling districts shouldn’t be included in Poole Town Council, and should instead be part of Bournemouth Town Council (if established): BM6 - Bearwood & Merley; BM7 - Bearwood & Merley; 7 (excluding BM7-A which is in Poole); CC3-A - Canford Cliffs 3A; TB1 - Talbot & Branksome Woods 1 (part); All of TB5 - Talbot & Branksome Woods 5, not just a part, should be in the Bourne Valley and Branksome East ward of Poole Town Council. None of it is in Bournemouth; WB1-A - Westbourne & West Cliff 1A should also be included in the Bourne Valley and Branksome East ward of Poole Town Council, as it is in Poole.”

“1. The proposal to divide TB1 and TB5 between the proposed Poole and Bournemouth parishes raises concerns. There would be electors voting for different parish areas... 2. The proposal to include part of WB4 in the proposed Poole parish council raises concerns... Whilst this could be resolved by altering the boundary between WB4 and TB6, we would question whether that would be appropriate considering the community identity of electors in that area... 3. We believe that if either the Bournemouth or Poole Parish proposal is approved while the other is not, the boundary along the dividing line should be reviewed. This would help

ensure that no properties or areas are adversely affected or left isolated due to partial implementation.”

“The population is too large for one parish and could have been sub-divided. While it will be Bournemouth Town Council - the area of the Town Centre is remote for some of the wards. In fact, they have their own centres of identity. Quite suitable for parishes of their own.”

39 respondents raised concerns about **administration and decision-making**. The most common themes were the risk of adding bureaucracy that would slow down decision-making. The changes would also create confusion over **responsibilities** and blur **accountability**. Respondents commented that the creation of BCP Council was meant to have solved this and therefore the draft recommendations were a retrograde step. Introducing further structural changes so soon would add **unnecessary complexity**. However, some respondents commented that the three town councils should be reinstated and **BCP Council disbanded**. The proposals would also result in **inequity of services** across the conurbation. 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.



“6 years ago Bournemouth council was merged with Poole and Christchurch, on the grounds of efficiency. What has changed over the last 6 years to mean that governance needs to change?”

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

“Parish councils are damaging for BCP council, enabling greater fragmentation, inequality between areas, corruption and prevention the integrated transformation that the area needs.”

“Do something about the sad state of Bournemouth town centre instead of wasting money on Parish Councils.”

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

“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!”

13 respondents were concerned about the impact on residents that the **cost** of the recommendations would have, with limited detail provided in the proposal.



“How can it possibly be recommended if its “impossible to say what the costs are”. The ONLY option is to reject the proposal.”

17 respondents criticised the consultation process. Respondents felt that the draft recommendations **failed to explain the benefit** to residents, more engagement was required to publicise and explain the draft recommendations, and the decision should be put to a **public vote**. Respondents also commented that the proposals felt **politically motivated**.



“The draft recommendation fail to explain any benefit whatsoever to the residents.”

“Pause the consultation which has been heavily criticised as being weighted towards the answers the administration want. Hold public meetings, consider a referendum. Pause any decisions until residents are fully informed in an unbiased way.”