

Community Governance Survey Results Summer 2023

Over the summer we conducted a consultation about Community Governance. The responses below show that the respondents valued most highly our management of outdoor spaces but there wasn't a huge difference between which services should be prioritised.

1. VALUING LOCAL SERVICES PROVIDED BY TOWN & PARISHES From the list of local council services below, please identify those services, currently provided by Town or Parish Councils, that you most value by ranking them from 1 to 6; Where 1 = highest priority and 6 = lowest priority.		
Item	Total Score ¹	Overall Rank
Practical management of green spaces, allotments, recreation and play areas	538	1
Representing residents in the local and national planning process	480	2
Supporting community events and activities, eg community grant schemes, annual fairs, Festivals etc	463	3
Running the twice weekly Street Market	459	4
Practical management of buildings, eg Town Hall, Salt House, WI Hall, Village Halls	439	5
Car parks, public toilets and cemetery services	394	6
Supporting the work of local community groups through grants and staff resources	375	7
Preparing and co-ordinating emergency plans, eg floods, pandemics etc	360	8
Running Bridport Tourist Information Centre	358	9
Don't know	147	10
	79	11
	answered	62
	skipped	2

¹ Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts.

2. IMPROVING SERVICES IN THE BRIDPORT AREA From the list of activities below, please identify your priorities for improving service provision across the new Bridport Area by ranking them 1 to 6 Where 1 = highest priority for improvement and 6 = lowest priority. Feel free to add your own improvement ideas using the comment box.		
Item	Total Score ¹	Overall Rank
Greater emphasis on managing green spaces for people and wildlife	276	1
Greater emphasis on initiatives that promote active travel and public transport	256	2
Greater emphasis on initiatives that drive the economic prosperity of the Bridport Area	251	3
Greater emphasis on initiatives that will support reduction in the carbon footprint of the Bridport Area	221	4
Greater emphasis on initiatives that support local community group development	170	5
None of the above, the new council should focus on reducing costs and the council precept	128	6
	answered	62
	skipped	2

¹ Score is a weighted calculation. Items ranked first are valued higher than the following ranks, the score is a sum of all weighted rank counts.

Add Other service improvement ideas below (24)

When asked about other service improvement ideas there were many comments which have been summarised to indicate where there was strength of feeling:

Appearance of town

This had the most numerous comments, centred on weeds and litter making the town feel unloved, particularly the bus station. There was a desire to see all businesses tidying up their facades and the areas outside their properties to encourage more investment and footfall. Many would like to see the re-opening of empty shops on the main streets through subsidies to local, independent businesses, if only on a temporary basis.

Street lighting, pavements and roads

Concerns were raised over the lack of street lighting and pavements in parishes over the current Bridport boundary. A recurrent request was for pavements to be safe, smooth and accessible for all, as wheelchair users have difficulty on the bumpy pavements. Mention of speed limits outside school and safer junctions.

Arts venues

A request to strengthen links with the providers of cultural activities and facilitate lower prices for vulnerable people and those on lower incomes to broaden the base of those who can enjoy such

activities. The Arts Centre and other buildings should be made viable and affordable venues for local drama groups/performances/musical groups/singers/poets or other community non-profit activities for their rehearsals, weekly clubs and societies.

Tourist Information

Responses demonstrated a significant degree of misunderstanding about the role of the Tourist Information Centre, assuming it was just for tourists and represented a high cost to the town.

Lobbying

There were requests for greater lobbying of higher bodies, e.g. Dorset Council and Westminster and to collaborate with other councils to influence decisions that affect Bridport. "Unfortunately, we are subjected to the vagaries of the Dorset Council, which seems to waste a lot of money and ignores local requirements." This would include pushing planning for better management of building proposals and insist they reflect the green ethos of Bridport e.g. permitting solar panels, insulation, built-in collection of rainwater run-off. "It is really important to focus on environmental issues at local level – give information and encouragement".

Council tax

There are strong feelings around Bridport having one of the highest council taxes in the country, with a call on concentrating minds on providing value for money and improvement to services (a cap was suggested to aid this). "Spend more wisely and think long term, not just trends, bearing in mind current hardship and poverty."

It is felt that the anticipated large increase in the cost of council tax to those in the Parishes will just add to the already difficult financial situation many of the residents are experiencing and there was suggestion there should be no large rise. "BTC's precept will increase considerably with more homes and this increase in funds should be used to keep the precept at the existing level or below."

Democratic accountability

There was a call to maintain BTC's current culture of openness and the ability to listen, seeking peoples' views on what is affecting them and the town - both digitally and non-digitally. Hold more innovative public events where residents can consult the council on matters of concern.

"Real prosperity and enduring wellbeing begin with equal opportunity and access". Requests to prioritise engagement with the overlooked, deprived and marginalised so that the viability, cohesion and vibrancy of our community does not depend on second home and other visitor income that is seasonal and vulnerable to fluctuations in the wider economy. A desire for more diverse councillors, younger blood.

There were some ideas from respondents about accountability:

- Improve the advertising of council meetings and what's on the agenda of meetings
- Hold local referenda 2 or 3 times a year on specific or contentious items
- Organise open meetings 2 or 3 times a year with the local MP so that residents can hold him (or her) to account
- Arrange for comms boxes to be located in key places which advertise what issues the council is looking at and invite the public to give their views.
- Get 'out there' and consult and interact with residents and make the council more accessible to the public, promote who the councillors are and how to contact them

Impact on current parishes

Concern was expressed that services in the newly incorporated parishes will decline or the town centre would be prioritised. Some want the parishes to keep distinct identity whilst others support the changed boundaries as their connection is with Bridport rather than current parish.

There was concern that reduced councillor numbers would lead to a heavier workload resting on fewer shoulders, and power vested in fewer hands. "We need constant dialogue between wards". Councillors need to scrutinise work and ensure that standards are maintained across the parish areas and improved within the town centre.

One resident of Pymore felt that the Council should take on more of the tasks that residents there currently pay their annual management fee towards.

Any other requests

- Removal of all illuminated signage on huts at West Bay
- More dog control; i.e. promotion of owners clearing up after dogs. Perhaps a local council of registered dog walkers as have seen them with 3 or 4 dogs off lead and out of control on public paths.

"Thank you councillors and officers, your efforts are much appreciated."