



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

16 October 2025

Dear Secretary of State,

Thank you for our discussions regarding the Liberal Democrat plan to establish town and parish councils in BCP—most recently 12 hours after the decision to create a Bournemouth Town Council was approved by a margin of just three votes, despite 76% of respondents to BCP Council's consultation opposing the proposal. I am copying this correspondence to Minister McGovern, with whom I last discussed this matter at No. 10 Downing Street.

Labour councillors present voted against the proposal for a Bournemouth Town Council. The Leader of the Labour Group proposed a way to save up to £1m by deferring elections by one year, but this was also defeated by Liberal Democrats.

It is neither liberal nor democratic to disregard the concerns of the public and a large number of elected councillors—particularly when the proposal is so evidently flawed. At a time when this Government is making local government leaner and tackling the cost-of-living burden, a new Bournemouth Town Council risks:

1. **Higher council tax bills** – Parish-level Band D council tax in Dorset can reach as high as £272.90 annually, with no statutory cap in place.
2. **Reduced democratic representation** – Proposed town councillors would each represent approximately 6,595 electors, compared to the current BCP average of 4,076 per councillor.
3. **A retreat from strategic vision** – Fragmenting governance undermines the whole-conurbation approach BCP Council needs to realise its economic potential.

To my knowledge, this is the first time this Government has encountered such a situation—one that appears entirely at odds with our devolution agenda, through which our economic opportunities and additional funding lie. I write to ask whether this Labour Government has inherited the authority from the previous Conservative Government to intervene in a decision of this nature by a local authority.

I urge you to oppose the creation of new town and parish councils at a time when our Labour Government is focused on reducing bureaucracy and limiting the tax burden. The Liberal Democrat expansion of an obscure, antiquated, and tax-raising tier of government—one that few residents are aware of and even fewer vote in—runs counter to our reform.

Warm regards,

Tom Hayes MP
Labour Member of Parliament for Bournemouth East