

Parish Councillor Responses

'The impacts of austerity measures on local services (2015)'

197 Parish Councillors responded to the survey on the impacts of austerity measures on local services.

Q1. Compared to 3 years ago how would you rate current public services?

Much Better	0.5%
Slightly Better	0.5%
Unchanged	25.9%
Slightly Worse	48.7%
Much Worse	24.4%

Q2 a) In respect of specific services how have these changed over the last 3 years?

	Much Better	Slightly Better	Unchanged	Slightly Worse	Much Worse	Don't Know
Recycling collection	4.1%	22.6%	59.5%	11.3%	1.5%	1.0%
Parks and open spaces	1.1%	4.9%	60.7%	13.1%	4.9%	15.3%
GP surgeries	1.0%	14.4%	42.8%	25.8%	13.9%	2.1%
Refuse collection	0.5%	14.9%	71.8%	8.7%	4.1%	0.0%
Local hospitals	1.6%	8.5%	46.0%	19.0%	14.8%	10.1%
Schools and colleges	0.0%	5.7%	30.9%	13.7%	5.1%	44.6%
Bus services	0.5%	3.2%	20.5%	36.8%	22.7%	16.2%
Street lighting	0.5%	3.7%	60.4%	12.3%	7.0%	16.0%
Libraries	0.5%	4.9%	32.4%	20.9%	16.5%	24.7%
Street cleaning	0.0%	2.2%	34.6%	31.4%	24.3%	7.6%
Police	0.0%	2.7%	25.0%	35.1%	23.4%	13.8%
Care for the elderly	0.0%	0.0%	11.2%	14.0%	12.4%	62.4%
Road maintenance	0.5%	8.9%	13.6%	29.3%	46.6%	1.0%
Meals on wheels	0.0%	1.2%	5.8%	2.9%	3.5%	86.6%
Social services	0.0%	0.6%	8.0%	14.2%	6.8%	70.5%
Housing Advice services	0.0%	0.6%	12.2%	6.4%	1.7%	79.1%
Planning services	0.0%	4.9%	33.0%	28.6%	18.9%	14.6%

Environmental Health services	0.0%	2.8%	24.3%	17.7%	7.7%	47.5%
Sport and Leisure facilities	0.6%	4.5%	43.6%	17.9%	5.0%	28.5%

Q2b)

Respondent were asked whether they used the list of services above. The responses below therefore show the same areas of service with responses from the users of the services:

	Much Better	Slightly Better	Unchanged	Slightly Worse	Much Worse	Don't Know
Recycling collection	4.2%	22.5%	59.7%	11.5%	1.6%	0.5%
Parks and open spaces	1.4%	6.1%	72.3%	14.9%	4.1%	1.4%
GP surgeries	1.1%	14.7%	43.2%	26.3%	13.2%	1.6%
Refuse collection	0.5%	14.9%	71.6%	8.8%	4.1%	0.0%
Local hospitals	1.8%	8.9%	47.9%	20.7%	14.8%	5.9%
Schools and colleges	0.0%	11.8%	51.5%	25.0%	10.3%	1.5%
Bus services	0.0%	4.3%	24.7%	44.1%	25.8%	1.1%
Street lighting	0.7%	5.2%	71.1%	12.6%	9.6%	0.7%
Libraries	0.0%	7.1%	41.1%	26.8%	23.2%	1.8%
Street cleaning	0.0%	2.7%	36.2%	32.2%	27.5%	1.3%
Police	0.0%	3.0%	26.5%	40.9%	25.8%	3.8%
Care for the elderly	0.0%	0.0%	24.4%	35.6%	26.7%	13.3%
Road maintenance	0.6%	8.7%	14.0%	30.2%	45.9%	0.6%
Meals on wheels	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	33.3%	0.0%	33.3%
Social services	0.0%	0.0%	24.0%	48.0%	20.0%	8.0%
Housing Advice services	0.0%	0.0%	20.0%	60.0%	10.0%	10.0%
Planning services	0.0%	5.8%	36.5%	31.4%	23.4%	2.9%
Environmental Health services	0.0%	4.1%	31.1%	29.7%	17.6%	17.6%
Sport and Leisure facilities	0.9%	4.5%	56.8%	27.9%	6.3%	3.6%

Q3. Have you noticed any changes in the accessibility of services provided by your local Council(s) over the last 3 years in terms of:

a) The opening times when a service is available:

Yes- longer hours	1.6%
-------------------	------

Yes –shorter hours	28.7%
No Change	70.2%

Shorter Hours included:

- Impossible to get through on the phone
- Leisure Centre has been cut
- Library has shorter opening hours x13
- Buses less frequent
- Toilets closed
- Reduced hours at recycling sites
- Difficulty making Dr appointment
- Almost all services cut back

Longer hours included:

- Combining library and customer services means library is open longer

b) How frequently a service is provided:

Yes- More often	1.6%
Yes-Less often	42.0%
No Change	56.9%

Less often comments included:

- Reduced bus service x 8
- Repairs to road and pavements much worse
- Litter on streets
- Fewer police to manage events and drug use
- Long time to get GP appointment
- Planning staff decimated
- Planning slower and all online so not inclusive to older people to participate

c) The location from which services are provided?

Yes - Wider range of locations	2.1%
Yes - Smaller range of locations	34.3%
No Change	64.6%

Comments received included:

- Libraries closed
- Police station closed
- Mobile libraries reduced
- Council Info point transferred to library, reduced in siz and hours reduced
- CAB reducing locations
- More difficult to talk to an officer direct, have to go through call centre with long delays
- Services centralised, accessed via the phone to personnel not familiar with details of particular services

d) The charges made for particular services?

Yes – Increased charges	29.3%
-------------------------	-------

Yes – Decreased charges	3.9%
No Change	66.9%

Increased charges included:

- Bus services for school children 16-18 increased by 50%
- Green waste chargeable
- Parking fees
- Recycling charges increased
- Pre-planning advice fees introduced
- Home owners pay Council tax for services but the precept has increased to pay for the devolution of these same services, so the home owner is paying double to have the grass cut

Q4. Please list the three most significant impacts of changes in service provision affecting your local area over the last 3 years.

There was a large response rate to this question with a wide range of responses. These have been collated into the following areas:

<p>Healthcare</p> <p>Over 20 respondents raised the issue of pressure on appointments and long delays of several weeks to get to see a GP Hospital waiting times was also an issue Reduction of community hospitals concerned some respondents</p>	<p>Bus Services</p> <p>46 respondents raised the issue of reduced bus services. This is a key issue with many knock on effects for example: no bus at optimum time for workers</p> <p>A key area for concern is the removal of subsidised school transport or reduction in service. This can lead to more parents using cars – congestion, College children now cant get to college on public transport, ‘Son was in 6th form college and unable to get any transport so I had to reduce hours at work to enable him to attend’</p>
<p>Police</p> <p>The police service concerned a large number of respondents with the key issues being:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Police stations closing • Reduced police presence • Service is reactive not proactive 	<p>Planning</p> <p>A number of issues were raised in relation to planning services including: Less efficient Planning enforcement is non existent Planning is online only Planning officers have been reduced, not enough capacity Local Plan still not adopted One respondent thought however that there was a greater awareness of planning issues</p>
<p>Library Services</p> <p>Respondents were very concerned about library services with issues raised including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Library hours reduced or closed • Mobile Library Service reduced 	<p>General</p> <p>There were a number of concerns raised on the following topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth Services Cut • Time taken for council to answer phones • Refuse/Recycling collections reduced • Downgrading of Post Office Services • Care for elderly • Green Waste Charges

- Cuts to gritting
- Reduction in social services
- Absence of broadband is a key issue when services are online
- Failure of superfast broadband

Public Realm

This area included the most highest response rate of all. There were a number of issues raised including:

- Street lights not repaired
- Reduction in grass cutting/verge cutting x 20
- Potholes not repaired x 9
- Lack of road repairs / poor road condition x 46
- Public toilets shut x 3
- Traffic congestion
- Street sweeping reduced / not existent x 10

This is clearly a key area where reductions in service delivery have been made and are being felt by rural communities.

Q5) Looking forward are you aware of any planned changes to local services that have yet to be implemented?

41% responded yes to this question and below are they're responses in more detail.

Outsourcing services to Council-owned companies
childrens centre soon to close
Further cut backs
Public toilets review- no money
No maintenance to open spaces
Withdrawal of grass cutting services on public spaces.
Reduction provision of grit for de-icing roads
More closures of local police stations
Substantial cuts to public transport are expected which will put pressure on voluntary/community transport
More financial cuts
Changes to the recycling provisions at Ardley will make disposal of recyclable waste very much more difficult in future. People will not travel but will either burn rubbish or dump it.
PCSO's will become rare
Threemilestone yellow lines in Chyvella road and the bus gate
Removal of village recycling bins.
I believe there are likely to be even fewer buses
There are to be cuts to many services do not yet know which ones
Our hospital, doctors surgery and adult social care in all aspects
Rubbish & bulk rubbish charges
Transport review is underway
Reduction of support for older people and greater reliance on web sites which are completely inappropriate for many older people
Withdrawal of support for public toilets from April 2016
Reductions in adult social care and libraries and police
Reducing everything
Reduced police coverage.
Implementation of Voluntary Village Warden scheme.
Staff reduction and increased computerisation...not helpful to rurally disadvantaged and elderly.
Library and bus less frequent

Reductions across the board.
Major changes pending in terms of "Devolution" with the possibility of combined services across up to 9 districts / boroughs within Dorset.
There may be changes to the bus service.
Proposed transfer of council headquarters out of our town.
Poss charge re green bins
Changes to Local Plan
Reduction in bus service
More reductions in bus service
More outside providers of services which normally would be provided by the local council. Impact of this yet to be felt. It might be better it might not, but there will be less local control.
Bus timetables.
Improved play parks
Loss of Sunday bus services
Plans to force some householders to take bins to collection points
We have been warned that most resources will be directed towards caring for the elderly and therefore all other services will be affected.
More cuts in the county and council budgets. Not sure of where and/or impact, all doom and gloom. All wide-ranging, police, emergency services. People who work for these services are stretched to the limit. Outreach is now virtually non existent. I understand that WSCC in an internal audit cannot account for £22m spent with their highway maintenance contractors, yet they are not publically addressing this matter, most disconcerting: Esp as the rest of us are scrambling to provide services.....
Charging for recycling - not adopted after local concern.
Charges for recycling centres
More local hospitals to close
Further reduction in police numbers
Cuts in social services
Budget cuts impacting on services with many more proposed to be devolved to local i.e. parish/town councils
Health and social services cuts to bus services
Major cuts in bus services which will, among other things prevent some youngsters attending Petroc in Barnstaple. Obviously there are other cuts to come to comply with the June budget announcement. We are now cutting into the bone of services
Not really engaged in the process we usually receive information by way of a shit across our bows once the powers to be have decided something.
Change is constant! If the proposed right-to-buy changes go through our District Council will be forced to sell off its large family homes in our part of the District
Hospital beds lost, care in the home to replace
Closure of Category 2 Libraries (if not saved as Community Libraries)
Nothing specific but MDDC and Devon County Council are planning more cut backs.
More cuts to police services, lack of finance for homeless shelter, road surface maintenance cuts etc etc.
Council ceasing to provide dog waste bins
Revised waste collection
Proposed closing of a recycling centre which we feel will result in more fly tipping and 2 mile round trip becomes a 50mile round trip to recycle
The Saturday bus service may stop
In the atmosphere of 'localism' we (the Town Council) are not informed of changes until they happen - usually.
Further cuts to services. This allied to the huge increase of new dwellings given planning permissions in the last 12 months will leave many unable to access essential services let alone inessential services.
More reduction of services. e.g. Funding for youth activity has virtually dried up
Changes to refuse and recycling collections. Disappearing public transport network. Social care for those with mental health issues will be cut further.
A and E service is in process of change. Many changes to emergency medicine are about to take place
Savings from more mergers in local councils with head count reduction
More of the same austerity nibble nibble.
Bus Lane in Threemilestone against the wishes of the inhabitants.

Footpath maintenance handed over to parish councils or volunteers
Another bus revision/reduction six months after the major reductions. One very local bus stop is to be eliminated - quite a long walk to the nearest bus stop.
More cuts
Closure of local library.
Reduction in play areas and reduction in maintenance of play areas
Reduced spending on roads
By-pass through part of the parish, which will affect many households. Proposed building of many hundreds of additional new homes
Further cuts. Library to be closed if town council do not take on. Leisure centre and swimming pool to close
Cut backs in social care Loss of PCSO's There is a dependency on volunteers who may not be available in the future
New Draft District Plan has no funding for infrastructure and the targets will overwhelm local resources.
Shopping buses, police availability and response
Another reduction to refuse/recycling collections Thousands more houses without any new GP surgery
Installation of fibre optic to remote rural areas Police services cut even further.
Bus service reduction