



Bournemouth
Town Centre
Citizens' Panel



JESSICA TOALE
MP FOR BOURNEMOUTH WEST



BOURNEMOUTH TOWN CENTRE CO-CREATED ACTION PLAN

January 2026

I live in the town centre, and I feel there's a lot of things that need to be looked at to improve the centre, and it's something I feel very passionate about, so this was a great opportunity for me.

I got involved in the Citizens' Panel because I feel strongly about Bournemouth. This felt like an opportunity, in amongst all of the negativity, for me to have a role and have a voice.

The sessions were quite structured; there was a clear plan in terms of how move ahead with room also for flexibility. It wasn't too rigid, which was really nice.

 I think it's been a very inclusive process!

I think I've learned loads about the town, and I think I've learned a lot about other residents by being involved.

I grew up in Bournemouth, then moved away and when I came back, I saw how much the town had changed in that time, and I wanted to be part of a community project and have my input and my voice heard.

I think it's absolutely amazing to be in a room of 50 other people who care about the town so much and really want to see it improve!

I've found it very enlightening. I feel invigorated about what's happening.

CO-CREATED ACTION PLAN

This is an ambitious, determined and shared plan. It is a plan shaped by Bournemouth, for Bournemouth. It is bold in intent, realistic in delivery, and united in purpose.

“We add our names to this report as a shared commitment to its purpose and its future. We stand behind the work, the conversations and the collective judgement that shaped it, and we recognise it as an honest expression of what Bournemouth’s residents want for their town centre. By signing, we affirm our support for the direction set out here and our determination to help turn these ideas into action, together.”

Jessica Toale,
Bournemouth West MP

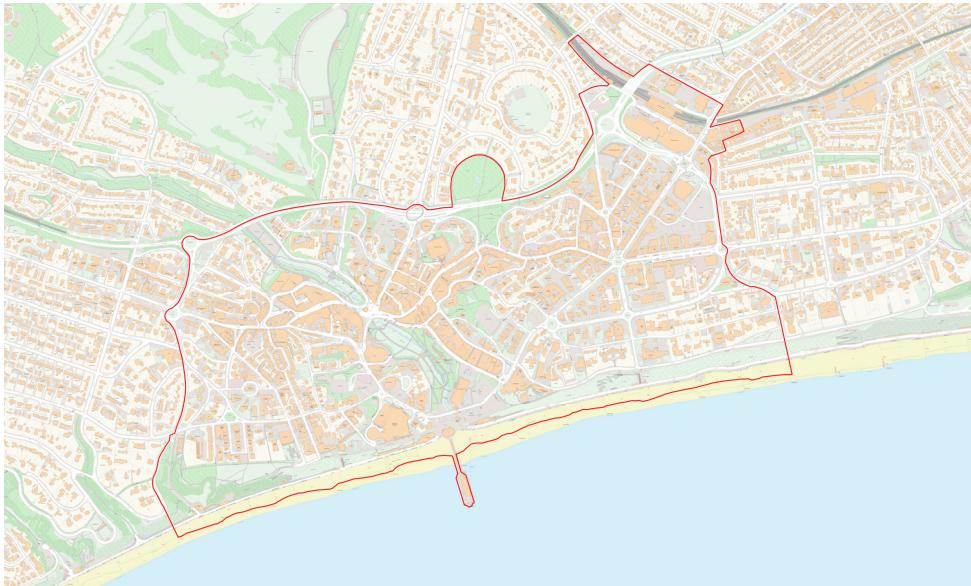
&

Millie Earl,
Leader of BCP Council



Jessica and Millie at our October Panel, 2025

THE PROCESS



This red line is the official town centre boundary and the actions and ideas in this co-created plan only apply to the land and buildings inside the red line.

How This Co-Created Action Plan Came Into Being

This plan emerged from a new and deliberately experimental democratic process designed to place residents at the heart of shaping the future of their town. It is the outcome of a joint initiative between Bournemouth West MP Jessica Toale and BCP Council Leader Millie Earl, the Bournemouth Town Centre Citizens' Panel. Jessica was keen to explore project formats that would give local people genuine influence over decisions affecting the town centre, and the concept of

a Citizens' Panel soon took shape: a structured, multi-session process that would bring together a representative cross-section of residents and empower them to co-design a practical, ambitious plan for change. She approached urban designer Richard Eastham, of local design practice Feria Urbanism, who has good experience working on co-creative processes, to help deliver the project.

PANEL COMPOSITION

The Citizens' Panel was formally launched in April when almost 250 residents applied to take part, and 50 were selected at random to ensure a balanced mix of ages, backgrounds and lived experiences, with demographic checks used to maintain representation throughout the process.

The project team gathered full demographic data during the application process and, using the latest ONS data, looked at how many people would be needed from each group to mirror the composition of the local area, to ensure coverage of people who lived and worked in the town centre, as well as visitors from across the conurbation.

People were then grouped into age categories, giving them each a number and an online random number generator was used to select the appropriate amount for each category to give a randomly selected list of 50 panellists out of 250 applicants. This was then cross referenced with other data (e.g. gender, ethnicity, sexuality, religion etc) to ensure sufficient representation for those characteristics.

In instances where not, the random number generator was used to de-select someone from the required characteristic group, before using the random number generator to remove someone else of the same gender who'd initially been selected in their age category.

After each session, the attendance register was reviewed to ensure appropriate representation.

After checking on plans for attending future sessions with the missing candidates, substitutes were made, if needed, and always cross-referenced with the wider data.

The result was that 49 panellists attended at least one session, with a core group of around 30 panellists engaging consistently throughout, attending all or most sessions. This core group was checked against the demographic data to ensure appropriate representation and, if necessary, substitute applicants were invited to join later in the process. By the end of the process, just five substitute panellists were involved.



WORKING SESSIONS

The group met across five structured Saturday sessions, each lasting three hours. Each was carefully designed to be engaging, collaborative and progressive in nature.

Every session built directly on the outputs of the one before, creating a responsive feedback loop that allowed ideas to evolve, strengthen and gain collective ownership over time.

The sessions took place at Patch, a community space in the heart of the town centre, in June, July, October & November 2025.

The sessions in June and July 2025 focused on understanding the town centre as it is today: its strengths, weaknesses, challenges and opportunities. Panellists worked with maps, photographs and facilitated discussions to identify issues such as safety, identity, empty shops, transport, public realm quality and the need for year-round activity.

Guest speakers, from Dorset Police and the Bournemouth Town Centre BID, contributed specialist insight to help residents understand the wider context and constraints. Town centre councillors joined for some of the sessions.

SESSION 1

Understanding the town centres strengths and weaknesses as it is today

SESSION 2

Guest speakers offers specialist insight to help understand restrictions & possibilities

SESSION 3

Generating ideas for improvements and thinking outside the box



WORKING SESSIONS

As the sessions progressed, the panel moved from diagnosis to creativity. Participants generated ideas for improvements across themes such as culture, retail, wellbeing, youth provision, transport and public space.

These ideas were captured, refined and tested through structured exercises, with the facilitation team ensuring that every voice was heard and that discussions remained constructive and inclusive. The process was intentionally designed to avoid tokenism: residents were not simply consulted but were given real influence over the direction and content of the emerging plan.

By the fifth and final session in November 2025, the panel had produced a substantial body of ideas, priorities and proposals. This final workshop focused on reviewing a Draft Action Plan, based on a compilation of ideas from all previous sessions, testing its clarity, ambition and realism, and agreeing the priorities that should shape the final document.

Residents were asked if they wished to remain involved beyond the 2025 process and, remarkably, every participant raised their hand, signalling a strong desire to help start to deliver the plan they had co-created in 2026 and beyond.

SESSION 4

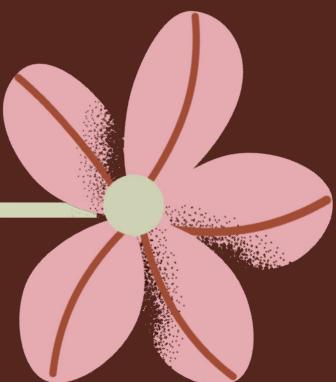
Compiling the ideas from all previous sessions, and agreeing a Draft Action Plan.

SESSION 5

Refining and testing the ideas through structured exercises, ensuring all viewpoints were heard.

ACTION PLAN

The full body of work collated to an ambitious, robust action plan.





Photographs by Saeed Rashid from our working sessions through 2025



Photographs by Saeed Rashid from our working sessions through 2025

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Following the final session, the project team began the task of synthesising the full body of work – a multitude of ideas, comments, maps, discussions and priorities – into a coherent, ambitious and measurable action plan. The result is this document.

The contributions from all panel members were assessed, and the results used to inform the suggested actions. Common themes quickly emerged during this assessment, leading to the eight themes that structure this Action Plan. The common issues, recurring ideas and frequently mentioned topics were used to shape the Vision Statement and the Shared Values, that represent a consensus position.

This is a genuinely co-created action plan: not written for residents but written with them. It reflects six months of shared learning, debate, creativity and civic commitment, and stands as the first initiative of its kind for Bournemouth: a model of representative, collaborative planning that has already strengthened trust, built new relationships and demonstrated the power of giving residents real influence over the future of their town.

This is a professional document but is suitable to be shared with many partners, including residents, business and partners. A commitment was made to ensure it is readable, accessible and grounded in the collective voice of the people who shaped it.

It is recognised that for this document to have an impact and make a difference, it requires significant buy-in from many partners active across Bournemouth as the suggested actions necessitate a cohesive commitment from many different organisations. The energy and momentum generated by the co-creative process will carry the project forward into this next phase.

This version of the Action Plan has been prepared for the launch event in January 2026. It contains a series of “Kick-Off Actions” and “Flagship Actions” which will be reviewed and updated regularly by the groups tasked with overseeing delivery and implementation. The Action Plan is therefore a living document and is not fixed.

Please look out for updated future versions over the months ahead at jessicatoale.com/btccp25.

THE VISION

Bournemouth town centre will become a confident, dynamic, safe and inclusive destination shaped by the collective voice of its people. It will celebrate its heritage while embracing bold new ideas, champion wellbeing, attract meaningful investment and ignite civic pride.

The town centre will be recognised not simply as a seaside place, but as a connected, creative and ambitious urban centre: a town of talent, culture and year round energy, driven by the determination of its residents to build a better future.



SHARED VALUES

These shared values represent the common ground that was built over the working sessions and are presented here as the foundations of this action plan:

- A place shaped by its people. Where diverse voices guide decisions, influence change and strengthen a shared sense of belonging.
- A town centre where everyone feels protected, supported and confident, day and night.
- A welcoming environment where every age, background and community feels represented, valued and at home.
- A south coast cultural powerhouse with a clear identity, a celebrated heritage and a bold, continuous programme of events that reflect the town's ambition.
- A resilient, diverse and future-focused economy that nurtures independent businesses, attracts national brands and welcomes new investment.
- A town centre that actively supports physical and mental wellbeing through green spaces, active travel routes and clean, uplifting public areas.
- A town centre that is simple to reach, easy to navigate and seamlessly connected to surrounding neighbourhoods and destinations.
- A culture of open communication, shared responsibility and visible delivery. Where commitments are honoured and progress is clear.



THE ACTION PLAN

1. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CIVIC PRIDE

Strategic Aim

To build a culture of active participation, collaboration and shared ownership, celebrating local achievements and strengthening pride in Bournemouth's identity and future.

Flagship Action

Launch a collaborative “Bourne and Bred” identity campaign with local media and universities to celebrate Bournemouth’s people, stories and shared sense of place.

Kick-Off Actions

- Publish quarterly newsletters of achievements
- Support hands on volunteer projects for greening and public space care
- Share good news stories through local press and social media

These actions reinforce transparency, nurture civic pride and keep the community actively involved in shaping the town centre.

2. REGENERATION & PLACEMAKING

Strategic Aim

To deliver a town centre that is attractive, high-quality and ready for the future, with strengthened gateways, distinctive places and public spaces that reflect the ambition of the community that shaped them.

Flagship Action

Facilitate new larger scale street art projects on privately owned sites and trial creative window dressing in empty shop units, transforming blank spaces into visible signals of renewal.

Kick-Off Actions

- Improve the physical environment through small scale colour interventions e.g. painted utility boxes
- Encourage AUB students to decorate public spaces
- Clear and clean key pedestrian routes such as Dalkeith Steps

These actions deliver immediate visual uplift and signal momentum while larger regeneration projects progress.

THE ACTION PLAN

3. RETAIL, BUSINESS & ECONOMIC GROWTH

Strategic Aim

To support a balanced, thriving mix of independent businesses, creative enterprises and national brands, encouraging investment, innovation and long-term economic resilience.

Flagship Action

Use High Street Rental Auctions (HSRAs) to unlock long term empty shops and bring new activity, high profile youth-orientated clothing brands, independent traders and fresh energy into the town centre.

Kick-Off Actions

- Improve business opening visibility and communication
- Support new independent shops or pop ups through incentives
- Encourage validated parking ticket schemes to support local spending

These actions strengthen the business environment and help create a more vibrant, supportive retail ecosystem

4. CULTURE, EVENTS & YEAR-ROUND ACTIVATION

Strategic Aim

To establish Bournemouth as a cultural destination with a rich, diverse and continuous programme of events, using storytelling, heritage and creativity to reinforce the town's identity.

Flagship Action

Commit to supporting one new flagship activity, such as Bandstand Sundays or a World Ocean Day celebration, to add visible, year round cultural vibrancy but very much linked to Bournemouth unique location on the coast and its town assets.

Kick-Off Actions

- Support pop up activities such as yoga, book clubs and dance sessions
- Increase use of the Bandstand with improved advertising
- Deliver frequent activations in the Square, Gardens and Horseshoe Common.

These actions animate the town centre, build cultural energy and create regular reasons for people to visit.

THE ACTION PLAN

5. SAFETY & SECURITY

Strategic Aim

To create a town centre where people consistently feel safe, supported and reassured, backed by visible action, clear communication and shared responsibility across partners and communities.

Flagship Action

Bring partners together to launch a coordinated women's safety initiative, creating a visible, town centre commitment to safer streets and shared responsibility.

Kick-Off Actions

- Improve communication about positive safety initiatives
- Increase awareness of CCTV effectiveness
- Conduct a lighting audit of the town centre to identify high light and low light areas

These actions strengthen reassurance, build trust and make safety efforts more visible without requiring major infrastructure changes.

6. MOVEMENT & ACCESSIBILITY

Strategic Aim

To champion sustainable travel and make movement into and around the town centre easier, safer and more intuitive, strengthening connections between key destinations and neighbourhoods.

Flagship Action

Introduce new shuttle bus services to the town centre from the station and the airport. Champion the protection of existing bus routes into town to maintain essential connections and support accessible, sustainable movement.

Kick-Off Actions

- Improve signage and digital wayfinding
- Enhance pavements and crossings to support easier walking
- Improve accessible routes into the town centre

These actions make movement simpler, safer and more intuitive without requiring major transport investment.

THE ACTION PLAN

7. WELLBEING, PUBLIC REALM & ENVIRONMENT

Strategic Aim

To enhance green spaces, promote active lifestyles and improve environmental quality, creating a town centre that supports health, happiness and everyday enjoyment for all.

Flagship Action

Organise a large scale community planting day, with donated bulbs and volunteer support, to create a high impact, high profile “green town” event led by local residents.

Kick-Off Actions

- Introduce more planters and greenery in high streets
- Support community led maintenance of planting
- Promote the town’s wellbeing offer through visible, low cost initiatives

These actions enhance environmental quality and create a more uplifting, health supportive town centre.

8. ENGAGEMENT, GOVERNANCE & ACCOUNTABILITY

Strategic Aim

To maintain transparent communication and clear decision-making, ensuring that stakeholders remain involved, responsible and united around shared goals, with the community’s voice at the heart of every step.

Flagship Action

Hold quarterly town centre meetings to maintain momentum, coordinate partners and keep the co created programme on track. Promote the meeting outcomes at a national level to raise the town’s profile.

Kick-Off Actions

- Publish quarterly progress trackers
- Hold regular meetings to review progress
- Use clear frameworks to clarify roles and responsibilities

These actions strengthen accountability, maintain momentum and ensure that delivery remains aligned with the community’s shared goals.



Photographs by Saeed Rashid from our working sessions through 2025

NOTES & COMMENTS

WITH THANKS

With thanks to the 50 Bournemouth residents who gave up their time generously. Without those ideas and enthusiasm, this project would not have been possible.

And to the hundreds of people who applied, and shared their views as part of a wider survey.





Run in association with Feria Urbanism with support from
Pier Journal, Patch and Russell-Cotes Art Gallery & Museum

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