

Public Spaces Protection Order – Consultation report

Introduction

1. Southampton City Council undertook consultation with residents and stakeholders regarding proposals to initiate a range of Public Spaces Protection Orders between 30 October and 11 December 2015.
2. The council has the power to make Public Spaces Protection Orders (PSPOs). These orders allow for further control of activities which can have a detrimental effect on the quality of life of those living and working within the local area. The orders give police officers and PCSOs (police community support officers) additional powers to tackle begging and street drinking. This includes seizing and disposing of alcohol which is being consumed within the designated PSPO areas.
3. The consultation was carried out to canvas local opinion on the plans to introduce Public Spaces Protection Orders in five key locations where begging and street drinking has caused problems in the past. These locations are: the City Centre, Portswood Broadway, Shirley High Street, Woolston High Street and Bitterne Precinct. Prior to the formal public consultation key, stakeholders were involved in developing the proposals. These included; The Police, homeless charities, and Street Homeless service.
4. The proposal was discussed at The Cabinet member for Housing and Sustainability's Cabinet Member Briefing in November and December 2015 and it was agreed that there should be consultation with key stakeholders and the public before a final decision is taken.

Consultation principles

5. The council takes its duty to consult with residents and stakeholders on changes to services very seriously. The council's consultation principles ensure all consultation is:
 - Inclusive: so that everyone in the city has the opportunity to express their views.
 - Informative: so that people have adequate information about the proposals, what different options mean, and a balanced and fair explanation of the potential impact, particularly the equality and safety impact.
 - Understandable: by ensuring that the language used to communicate is simple and clear and that efforts are made to reach all stakeholders, for example people who are non-English speakers or disabled people.
 - Appropriate: by targeting people who are more likely to be affected and using a more tailored approach to get their feedback, complemented by a general approach to all residents, staff, businesses and partners.
 - Meaningful: by ensuring decision makers have the full consultation feedback information so that they can make informed decisions.
 - Reported: by letting consultees know what was done with their feedback.
6. The council also aims to ensure that consultations are conducted in a timely fashion, so that there is time for proposals to be influenced by the outcome of the consultation, and time for decision makers to see the full results and understand the views of consultees before taking any final decisions.

Approach and methodology

7. The consultation on the introduction of Public Spaces Protection Orders sought views on the proposals from residents and visitors to the city. The consultation ran from 30 October to 11 December 2015, a total of six weeks. This consultation period is the same as when Southampton City Council consulted on the Designated Public Places Order in 2007. It was judged to be a sufficient period of time to gather the views of a range of stakeholders, and is in line with reasonable expectation for this type of proposal.
8. The agreed approach for this consultation was to use an online questionnaire. This approach enables an appropriate amount of explanatory and supporting information to be included in a structured questionnaire, helping to ensure that residents are aware of the background and context to each of the proposed areas by including maps. It is therefore the most suitable methodology for consulting on issues such as the adoption of Public Spaces Protection Orders.

Promotion and communication

9. Throughout the consultation, every effort was made to ensure that as many people as possible were aware of the proposed changes and had an opportunity to have their say. Particular effort was made to communicate the proposals in a clear and easy to understand way.
10. The consultation was promoted in the following ways:
 - E-alerts, sent to subscribers of the council's email marketing service. These featured hyperlinks to further information about the consultation and the questionnaire itself.
 - Information and media support were provided to the regional media to help them cover the consultation. This resulted in coverage on BBC South Today and in The Southern Daily Echo and local news websites.
 - A link to the Public Spaces Protection Order consultation web pages was included on the council website 'have your say' page for the duration of the consultation.
 - Emails were sent to a range of support organisations and stakeholders.
 - The council's Facebook and Twitter accounts were used to signpost people to the consultation information and questionnaire.

Consultation respondents

11. In total, 827 responded to the Public Space Protection Order (PSPO) consultation, through completing online questionnaires. All the questionnaire submissions that had at least one question completed were included in the analysis. It was important to include all responses even if only a single question was answered as this was still feedback on the proposal. However, this does mean that the demographic information outlined may not cover all respondents, as some may not have completed this section.
12. In total:
 - a. 90% of respondents were local residents who wanted to have their say on the PSPO proposal
 - b. 6% were people interested in what goes on in Southampton
 - c. 2% were affiliated with a Southampton charity or organisation
 - d. 1% of respondents were Southampton business owners
 - e. The final 1% were included in the category of 'Other'
13. This section shows the demographic makeup of respondents to the main questionnaire, enabling us to see which groups were represented. As consultations should be open for anyone to answer, they will not necessarily be representative of the whole population of Southampton. It is however important that as wide a range of people as possible were engaged and given the opportunity to share their views on the proposal.
14. Figure 1 shows the age breakdown of the consultation respondents. The least represented groups were under 18 and 18-24 year olds, with 0% and 3% respectively fitting into these age categories. The group represented the most was the 55-64 year olds, with 23% of the overall respondents belonging to these age categories. This is in line with normal expectations as the over 45s tend to participate in greater numbers. As an example, in Southampton City Council's budget consultation for 2014/2015, 48% of respondents were between 50-69 years old and 7% were between the ages of 17 and 29. Within this particular questionnaire, 62% of those who engaged with this consultation were over the age of 45, and 38% were 44 or under. However the age group of 35-44 contributed 20% of the total respondents: this was the second highest represented group. See Figure 1 for the full breakdown.

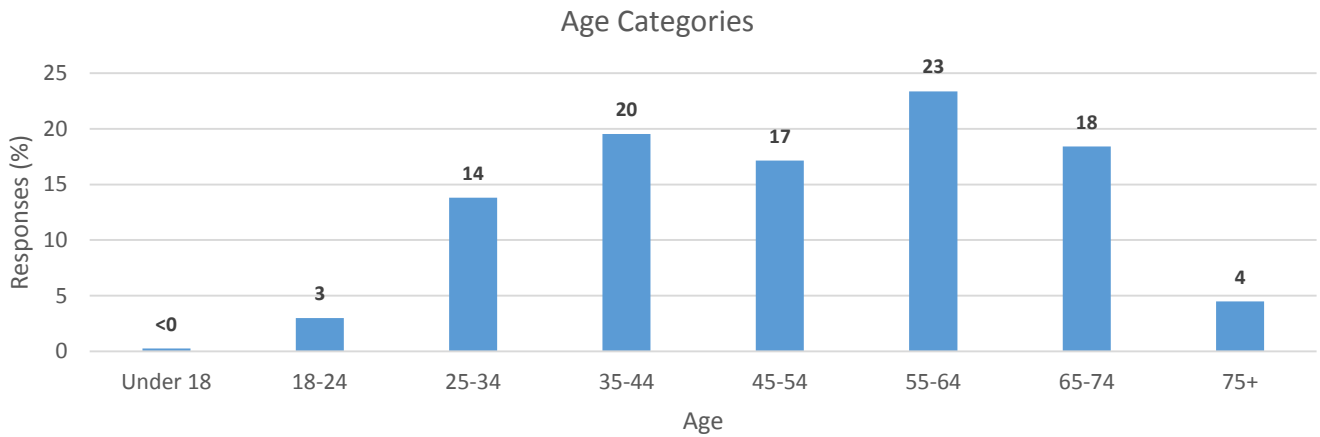


Figure 1

15. Respondents have been mapped to look at the geographic distribution of views on the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order in relation to the proposed areas. As seen in Figure 2 there is a fairly even distribution of agreement and disagreement across the city.

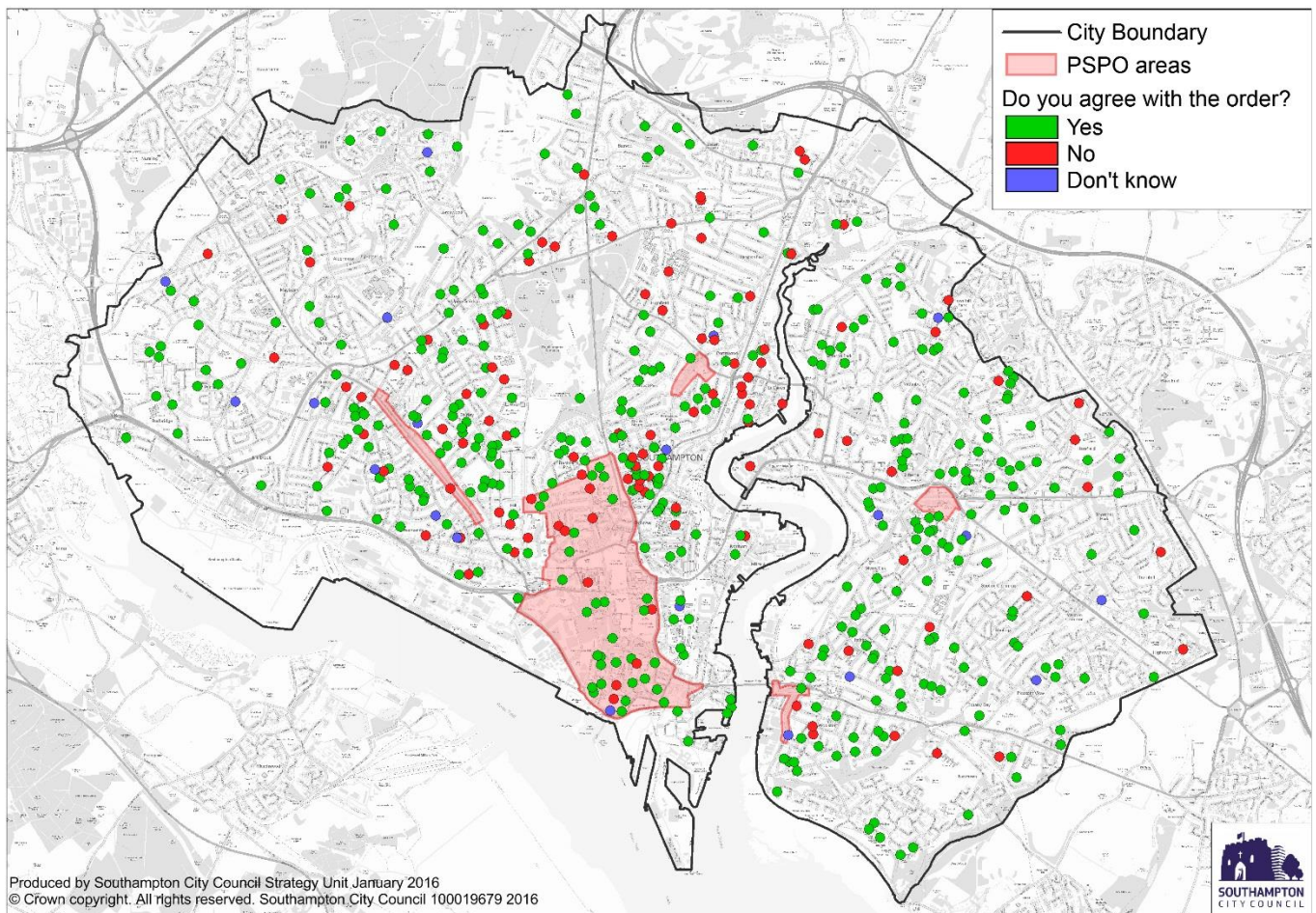


Figure 2

Consultation results

16. Respondents were asked for their views on the newly proposed PSPO. Consultees were given the opportunity to give their overall opinion as well as commenting on the areas that the order would affect. Five distinct areas were

presented and for each, the respondents could state whether they agreed or disagreed with the boundaries and were offered the chance to explain and express their thoughts.

17. It is clear from the breakdown of the overall results, based on whether the respondents agreed with the order in its totality, that a significant majority were in favour of the proposed order:

- Yes, I agree with the order restricting these activities – 73%
- No, I don't agree with the order restricting these activities – 23%
- Don't know whether I agree or not – 4%

18. If respondents answered in the negative they were offered an opportunity to voice concerns and comments. 183 comments (22% of all respondents) were made about the proposed wording of the PSPO that was presented (full breakdown in *Figure 3*). (Note that the percentages may not add 100% as some comments fell into several categories)

- a. 67% of respondents expressed concern that the PSPO wouldn't treat the cause of the problems and felt that support and help should be offered instead.
- b. 20% felt the PSPO was either unnecessary or overly severe and insensitive to the needs of others.
- c. 16% were worried that those being removed from the PSPO areas would just be displaced to a new area, some commenting this may be more dangerous as they may move to residential areas.
- d. 10% partially agreed with order, however felt that certain activities (begging or drinking in public) shouldn't be heavily restricted.
- e. 7% felt that the existing laws should be enough to deal with any problems would be controlled by the PSPO.
- f. 10% of respondents' comments were categorised as "Other".

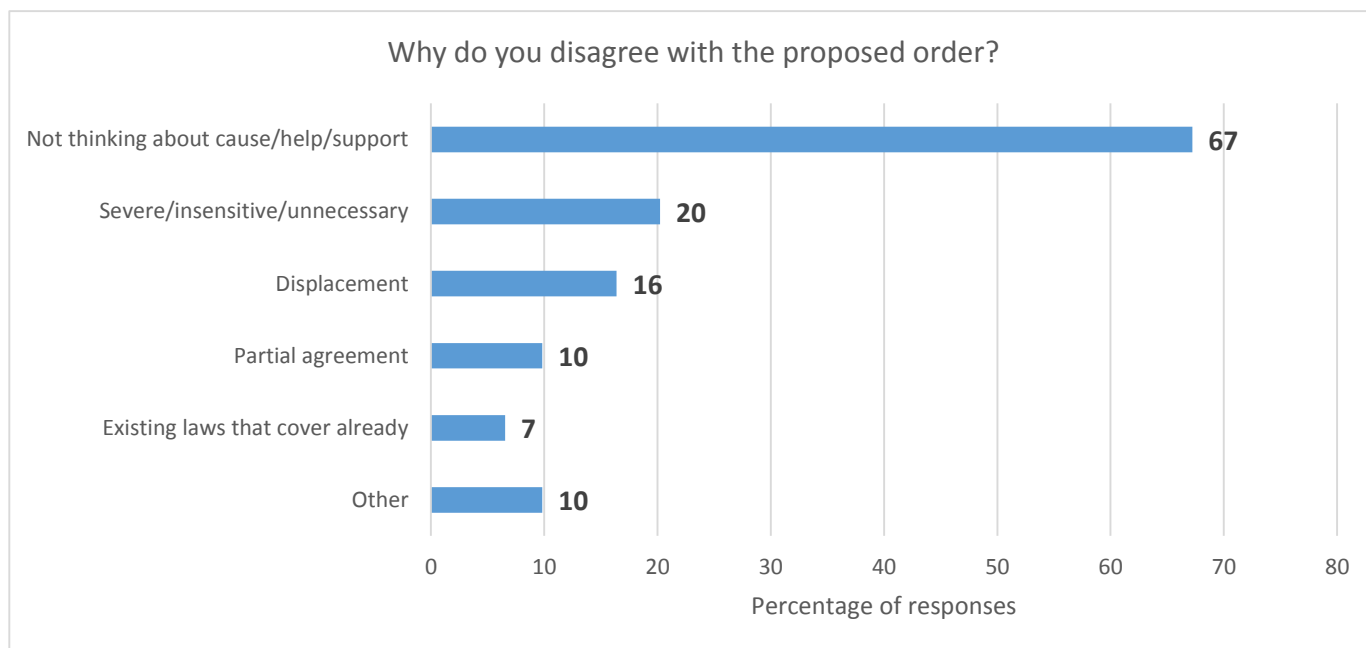


Figure 3

19. Below is a breakdown of results based on whether the respondents agreed with the order in each distinct area.

- a. City Centre
 - i. Yes, I agree with the proposed boundary – 63%
 - ii. No, I don't agree with the proposed boundary – 29%
 - iii. I don't know whether I agree or not – 8%
- b. Portswood Broadway
 - i. Yes, I agree with the proposed boundary – 59%
 - ii. No, I don't agree with the proposed boundary – 23%

- iii. I don't know whether I agree or not – 18%
- c. Shirley High Street
 - i. Yes, I agree with the proposed boundary – 61%
 - ii. No, I don't agree with the proposed boundary – 26%
 - iii. I don't know whether I agree or not – 13%
- d. Woolston High Street
 - i. Yes, I agree with the proposed boundary – 54%
 - ii. No, I don't agree with the proposed boundary – 22%
 - iii. I don't know whether I agree or not – 24%
- e. Bitterne Precinct
 - i. Yes, I agree with the proposed boundary – 58%
 - ii. No, I don't agree with the proposed boundary – 24%
 - iii. I don't know whether I agree or not – 18%.

From this, it is possible to see that a significant majority of respondents agreed with the proposed order in every area. The highest number of positive responses were for the proposed city centre boundary (63%), and the lowest for the proposed Woolston High Street boundary (54%).

20. After each map, consultees were offered the opportunity to comment on any changes they would make to the borders. Each comment was grouped into one of four categories. Below is the breakdown of the responses for each of the areas. Many of the comments relating to a change to the proposed boundary were suggesting that the size of the boundary should increase. (Note that the percentages may not add 100% as some comments fell into several categories)

- a. City Centre
 - i. Keep the boundary the same – 8%
 - ii. Change the boundary (make it larger or smaller) – 57%
 - iii. Remove all boundaries – 27%
 - iv. Other – 10%
- b. Portswood Broadway
 - i. Keep the boundary the same – 8%
 - ii. Change the boundary (make it larger or smaller) – 42%
 - iii. Remove all boundaries – 42%
 - iv. Other – 10%
- c. Shirley High Street
 - i. Keep the boundary the same – 5%
 - ii. Change the boundary (make it larger or smaller) – 50%
 - iii. Remove all boundaries – 39%
 - iv. Other – 7%
- d. Woolston High Street
 - i. Keep the boundary the same – 5%
 - ii. Change the boundary (make it larger or smaller) – 35%
 - iii. Remove all boundaries – 47%
 - iv. Other – 13%
- e. Bitterne High Street
 - i. Keep the boundary the same – 6%
 - ii. Change the boundary (make it larger or smaller) – 49%
 - iii. Remove all boundaries – 37%
 - iv. Other – 9%

21. Respondents were also asked to express any issues that they felt could be caused by the introduction of the PSPO. 478 separate comments were given. The results are given below. (Note that the percentages may not add 100% as some comments fell into several categories) (*Figure 4*)

- a. 38% of respondents to this question stated that those who are moved from within the borders would just be displaced to another area, and that this could put those who are being displaced and other residents at greater risk.
- b. 23% stated that the order was criminalising those who are considered “undesirable”. Included within this category was also any comment which stated people would be marginalised or victimised by the PSPO.
- c. 16% stated either that there were no other issues to be considered, or the only outcomes for this order would be positive ones.
- d. 14% of respondents used this section to offer suggestions. These were either in the form of alternatives or ways to amend the PSPO to make it more suitable.
- e. 9% expressed concern about how the PSPO will be enforced. Alongside this concern, certain respondents noted that this could provide a negative view on those who are enforcing the order (e.g. the Police).
- f. 7% stated that the order was inflexible and needed to be explained or amended further. Common examples given were whether alcohol could be consumed during picnics in parks or special events such as Christmas markets.
- g. 5% felt that cost could be an issue. The main concern over cost was the increase in staff (Police or PCSOs) that might be needed to patrol the areas within the order.
- h. 3% stated that charities could be affected by the PSPO. Within this 3% people believed that if vulnerable people are moved to more secluded areas they would be unable to receive support from local charities.
- i. 6% of respondents’ comments were categorised as “Other”.

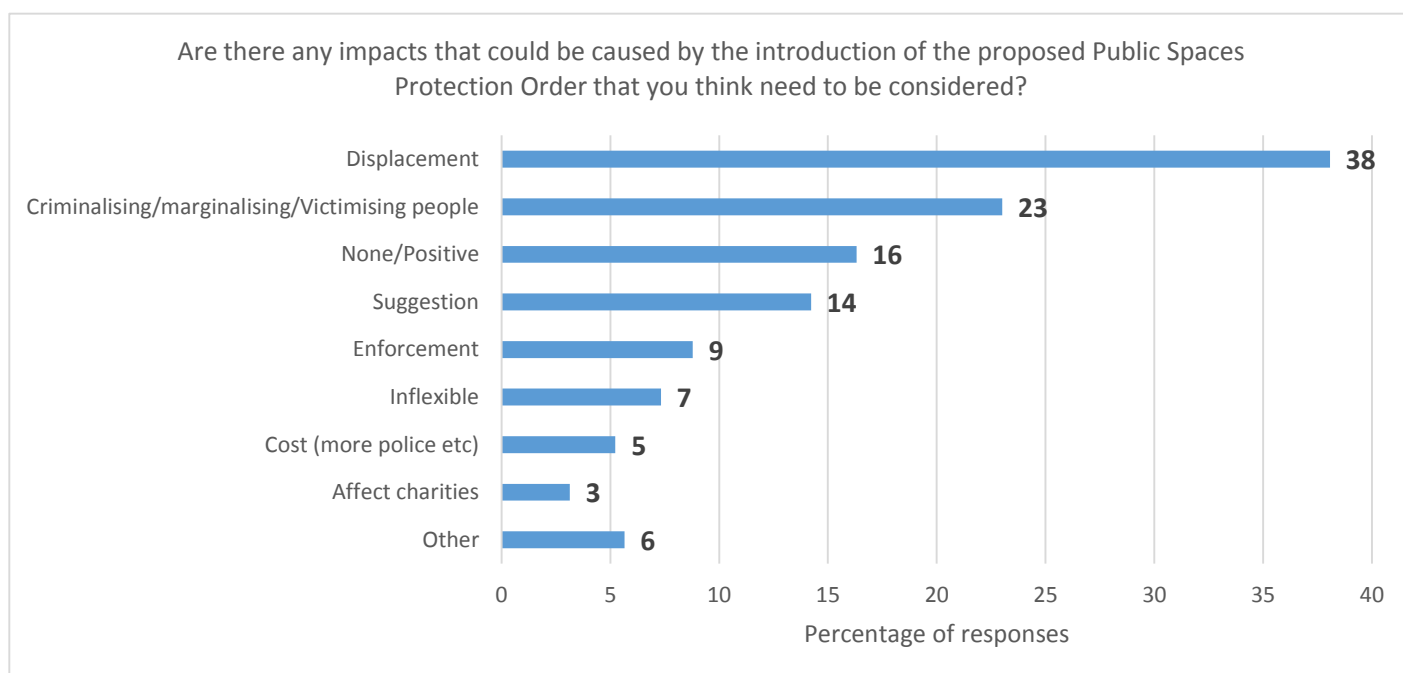


Figure 4

22. The final area where respondents could comment allowed them the opportunity to raise any other concerns or issues about the proposed PSPO. 398 separate comments were given. Below is the breakdown of these comments. (Note that the percentages may not add 100% as some comments fell into several categories) (Figure 5)

- a. 26% of respondents to this question generally agreed with the PSPO itself, many commenting that the order was overdue or should be implemented as soon as possible.
- b. 15% disagreed with the PSPO and the instigation of any sort of borders banning these activities.

- c. 15% stated that more support should be offered to vulnerable people to try help them out of the situation in which they find themselves.
- d. 14% offered modifications to the borders or asked for the PSPO to be city or even, in some cases, county wide.
- e. 12% stated that the PSPO does not deal with the cause of the issues facing vulnerable people.
- f. 8% stated that the monetary cost of the PSPO (both in terms of policing and enforcement) has to be considered carefully.
- g. 7% said that they wanted to see more activities restricted by the PSPO, such as skateboarding, cycling on pavements and noise considerations.
- h. 3% stated that the PSPO would only displace people to a different area.
- i. 1% asked for begging to be removed from the PSPO as they felt it was not a problem.
- j. 9% of respondents' comments were categorised as "Other".

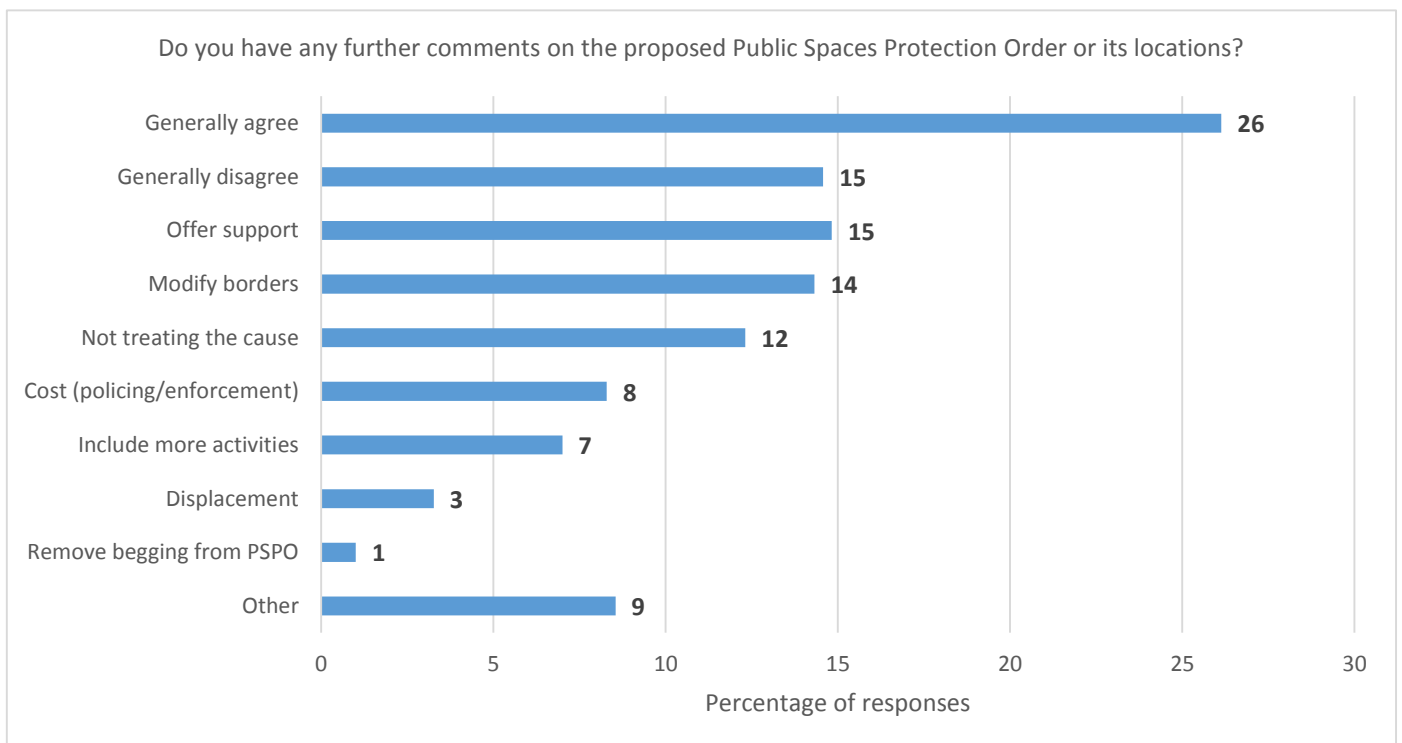


Figure 5

Feedback on the consultation process

- 23. The council is committed to make the whole consultation process as transparent as possible. As a part of this, any feedback on the consultation process itself received during the course of the consultation is gathered together here.
- 24. Overall, out of the 827 people who took part in the consultation, 11 commented on the consultation process itself, representing less than 2% of total consultation responses.
- 25. The comments made regarding the consultation process are shown in table 1.

You're consulting about the boundaries but very little on the complicated issue of street drinking and begging.
I think it's completely unfair to put forward this consultation where people are unable to put forward different opinions about begging and the consumption of alcohol. These two separate issues are being combined into one question, which will lead to confusion and ultimately to illegitimacy of any data that you try to pull from this consultation. I implore you to stop this survey and edit the questions so that these two separate issues are addressed separately.
Does anyone read or take seriously any public feedback on these consultations? Are records kept of all feedback and made available to the public?
First question explained what the order will do, I said yes as I agree with b,c,d but think (a) should be split out. I don't feel being in possession of alcohol in an open container should be a restricted activity. If someone is simply passing through sipping from a beer can I have no objection its when they are passed out sleeping on benches or being aggressive when it is socially unacceptable. I feel the begging is a bigger issue.
First question had multiple points, such as a b c. I would've like to vote for each one separately.
I would like to see a public consultation carried out to see if the public are even on side on this issue.
I would like to know how much time and money is spent on these 'surveys' after all is said and done, with all the goodwill in the world, nothing is ever acted upon and nothing changes. So please donate council funds to more worthwhile things like street cleaning etc.
The wording is not clear that you are genuinely consulting i.e. "detail of the proposal and any impacts the proposal may have before it is implemented." "Out of sight, out of mind" is not an effective policy approach to a serious issue.
This survey presents these Orders as a given and merely requests input on their structure. This is not a consultation worthy of the name
Yes...who reads this s*** and gives a damn?
I'm not really sure how you can call this a consultation, you've already decided what you are doing. Where was the consultation to propose alternatives to the criminalisation of the homeless? Might as well just put down a load of spikes and be done with it.

Table 1

26. There were several comments about the fact that drinking in public is a separate issue to begging, and the consultation should have asked about these two issues rather than combining them.
27. There were also general comments about consultations and whether the results were published, used or even looked at. This feedback is mostly suggesting that the decision has already been made and this exercise will have limited impact on the outcome.

Conclusion

28. Over 800 stakeholders have engaged with the consultation process and given their views on the proposals. The consultation has engaged with a range of individuals to allow residents in Southampton to give their views on the potential introduction of Public Spaces Protection Orders in Southampton. As Figures 1 and 2 of this report have outlined, there was a good range of engagement with the consultation both demographically and geographically.
29. The main findings show that 73% of respondents feel that the proposed Public Spaces Protection Orders should be adopted, only 23% of respondents disagreed with the proposal.
30. Across the five proposed PSPO areas there was an average agreement of 59% with the proposed boundaries.

31. This consultation has ensured compliance with local and government standards. This report, the Cabinet report and appendices outline the full picture of the consultation results and will be used to inform decision makers.
32. In conclusion, this consultation allows Southampton City Council's Cabinet to understand the views of residents and stakeholders on the proposed Public Spaces Protection Orders. Therefore it provides a sound base on which to make a decision.