



Community Governance Review – Whitstable

Consultation responses

1. Introduction

Following receipt of a petition with enough signatures from local residents to trigger a Community Governance Review (CGR), consultation on whether Whitstable should have a town council took place between Friday 5 January 2024 and Friday 1 March 2024.

This proposal was not initiated by Canterbury City Council. However, the city council is responsible for carrying out the CGR on behalf of local residents.

This formal process involves two stages. The first stage is to establish whether or not there is support for a Town Council and the second stage would be to consider proposals, depending on the outcome of stage one.

This report summarises the findings of the first stage of consultation.

Using the electoral register as a guide, the proposals set out in stage one would have affected 23,499 residents. While the number of overall Whitstable residents on the electoral register is greater (by 2,648), this proposal does not affect those residing in the parished area of Chestfield.

A total of **1,847 responses** were received.

The following points should be noted:

- The initial petition was a separate exercise from the consultation. The signatories were calling for the review to be conducted, this consultation was in response to the petition.

- This consultation process was not a vote, nor a referendum. There is no ability for the council to hold a referendum on the matter.
- While the town council proposal would impact Whitstable residents primarily, due to the precept, everyone was welcome to respond to this consultation.
- This report outlines the numbers expressing certain views. While only a fraction of overall Whitstable residents responded to this consultation (approximately 8%), the response rate was high when compared to other council consultations. There is no 'acceptable' response rate. Councillors will draw their own conclusions from the responses received.
- Approximately 1% of responses received were duplicate entries submitted by people who had already had their say once. Where possible, subsequent submissions were deleted or combined with a respondent's initial response. Given the low percentage of people that did this, we can say that this has not skewed the final results of the consultation.

2. Executive summary

The main findings from the consultation are:

- Overall, across Whitstable as a whole, 56% of respondents feel that Whitstable should not have a town council while 38% think it should.
- More people are against the idea of a town council than for, in all but one of Whitstable's postcode areas (CT5 1).
- At ward level, over half of respondents in the Harbour and Tankerton wards are in favour of a town council. However, the majority of respondents in the other four wards said that Whitstable should not have a town council.
- Among those against the prospect of a town council, the main reasons cited for this include the financial burden it presents and an unwarranted level of bureaucracy.
- Those who feel Whitstable should have council state that locally-focused autonomy is needed. Many of these respondents feel that the precept would help improve facilities and address Whitstable-centric priorities as opposed to just Canterbury.
- Reasons for support and objection do not vary significantly across the different postcode areas.
- Approximately 98% of respondents live in Whitstable, while only 1% work or visit the area.

3. Consultation methodology

Consultation took place between Friday 5 January 2024 and Friday 1 March 2024. The following methods were used to seek views:

- an online questionnaire, which received 1,750 responses
- a paper version of the questionnaire, of which 59 was returned
- a total of 38 written representations were received.

The consultation was promoted in the following ways:

- an article on the council's newsroom site, including frequently asked questions
- an online video presentation published on our website
- posts on the council's social media channels
- a letter and information brochure posted to all those residing in the CT5 area
- three in-person public information sessions.

Additionally, the following stakeholders were emailed directly to encourage them to respond to the consultation:

- Parish councils
- CCC councillors
- Relevant KCC councillors
- Residents' associations
- Local 'Friends of' groups
- Canterbury Connected Business Improvement District (BID)
- Canterbury Archaeological Trust
- Canterbury Green Party
- Canterbury Inter Faith Association
- Canterbury Society
- Canterbury Society
- Canterbury Action for Sustainable transport
- Canterbury College
- Cathedral Court Residents Association
- C4B
- CPRE Kent
- CPRE Kent
- East Cliff Neighbourhood Panel
- English Rural Housing Association
- Ethnic Minority Independent Council (EMIC)
- Ethnic Minority Independant Council
- Herne Bay and District Chamber of Commerce
- Hi Kent
- Hilltop Community
- Home Builders Federation
- Chamber of Commerce
- Invicta Chamber of Commerce
- Local Democracy Forum
- Moat Housing
- Mono Consultants Limited
- SPOKES East Kent Cycle Campaign
- St Mildreds Area Conservation Society SMACS
- The Crab & Winkle Line Trust
- The Canterbury Academy Trust
- The Gardens Trust
- The Georgian Group
- The Ickham, Littlebourne and Wickhambreaux Society

- The Open Spaces Society
- The Society of Sturry Village
- The Talk of Tankerton
- The Twentieth Century Society
- Theatres Trust
- Whitstable Improvement Trust
- Visit Kent
- Canterbury Climate Action Partnership
- Canterbury Christchurch Student Union
- University of Kent Student Union
- UCA Student Union
- Age UK Canterbury
- Canterbury Inter-Faith Association (CANDIFA)
- Disability Advisory Panel (DAP)
- Ethnic Minority Independent Council (EMIC)
- HiKent
- Nigerian Community Association
- Polish Educational Club in Kent (PECK)
- Karibu Community Action Kent
- Kwan Ngei Chinese Association
- Canterbury and District Jewish Community
- Canterbury Muslim Cultural Centre
- Kent County Council - Highways
- Stagecoach
- Whitefriars
- Marlowe Society
- English Heritage
- World Heritage Committee
- Pride
- Visit Kent
- Canterbury Cathedral
- Canterbury Festival
- Continental Drifts
- Kent Cultural Transformation Board
- Canterbury Tales of England
- Canterbury Archaeological Trust
- Whitstable Rocks *
- Harbour Market *
- Bretts *
- C Attenborough *
- Wheeler Restaurant *
- Chris Hunt Fishing Hut *
- Foad Fishing *
- South Quay Shed *
- Dani Shellfish *
- Glyn *
- Graham West *
- Ocean Marine Fishing Hut *
- Barnes Offshore *
- Crab and Winkle Restaurant *
- Harbour Garage *
- Oyster Coast Water Sports *
- Whitstable Marine *
- Phil Edwards Fishing *
- Neil Shilling Fishing *
- Whistable Yacht Club *
- Richard Judge *
- Cooper Fishing *
- Ryan Attenborough Fishing *
- RNLI Whitstable *
- Sailmaker Fishing Hut *

* *Whitstable Harbour stakeholders*

** *(If you are not included above but would like to be contacted about future corporate consultations, please contact consultations@canterbury.gov.uk).*

4. Findings

NB: Percentages have been rounded to the nearest decimal point

4.1. Questionnaire responses

A total of 1,809 completed questionnaires were submitted, 59 of which were online.

4.1.1. Respondent profile - overall

The overwhelming majority of respondents are residents of Whitstable.

Respondent type	Percentage
A resident of Whitstable	98% (1,763)
A visitor to Whitstable	0.4% (8)
A worker in Whitstable	0.3% (6)

32 (1.8%) respondents answered 'Other', and their self-described respondent type is shown below

- Resident of Chestfield: 6 comments
- Born in Whitstable: 4 comments
- A business owner in Whitstable: 4 comments
- Property owner in Whitstable: 4 comments
- Resident of Canterbury: 3 comments
- Frequent visitor to Whitstable: 2 comments
- A councillor: 2 comments
- Ex-resident of Whitstable: 1 comment
- A parish clerk: 1 comment
- Whitstable Parkrun Event Director: 1 comment
- Moving to Whitstable in the future: 1 comment
- Resident of Hersden: 1 comment
- Resident of Seasalter: 1 comment

The majority of people responding were aged between 55 and 74.

Age	Percentage
Under 18	0.3% (5)
18 to 25	1% (20)
26 to 34	4% (67)

35 to 44	9% (164)
45 to 54	16% (287)
55 to 64	23% (407)
65 to 74	26% (469)
75 to 84	14% (259)
85 and above	2% (37)

NB: 94 (5%) respondents did not give their age

There was a relatively equal split between males and females, with slightly more females responding than males.

Gender	Percentage
Male	46% (834)
Female	48% (871)
Prefer to self-describe (for example, non-binary, gender fluid etc)	0.2% (4)

NB: 100 (6%) respondents did not give their gender

4.1.1. Respondent profile - Whitstable (by postcode area)

For the purposes of this consultation, when turning to residents of Whitstable, four character postcodes (CT5 1, CT5 2, CT5 3, CT5 4) have been utilised to illustrate levels of support and objection to the proposal, as Appendix 1 illustrates.

A higher number of responses were received from those living in CT5 4 followed by those in CT5 1. Significantly less people from CT5 3 responded when compared to Whitstable's other postcode areas.

Postcode area	Percentage
CT5 1	29% (522)
CT5 2	26% (468)
CT5 3	12% (210)
CT5 4	32% (582)
All other postcodes	2% (27)

NB: This does not include responses made via written representation as postcode data for these respondents is unknown

4.1.2. Should Whitstable have a town council?

Respondents were asked if they felt Whitstable should have a town council.

Overall, more than half of respondents said that they did not want a town council for Whitstable.

Level of support	Percentage
Yes	38% (691)
No	56% (1,014)
Not sure	6% (104)

When comparing by postcode area, in CT5 1 more residents are in favour of the town council proposal than against, by 2%. Of those who responded to the consultation from CT5 2, half of them object to the proposal. A high volume of opposition to the town council proposal can be noticed by those residing in CT5 3 and CT5 4. Finally, over half of those who responded from outside of the Whitstable area oppose the idea of a town council in Whitstable.

	CT5 1	CT5 2	CT5 3	CT5 4	All other postcodes
Yes	52% (271)	44% (204)	19% (39)	29% (166)	41% (11)
No	42% (219)	50% (235)	73% (154)	67% (392)	52% (14)
Not sure	6% (32)	6% (29)	8% (17)	4% (24)	7% (2)

The data set out above has been applied on a ward level. Please note, for the purposes of this analysis, the current 'Gorrell' ward has been split into the previously known 'Harbour' and 'Lower Gorell' wards and are presented separately below.

Across these six wards in Whitstable, overall support for Whitstable having its own town council can be seen in two of the wards - Harbour and Tankerton. In these wards, over half of respondents show support for the proposal.

Higher levels of opposition can be observed in Chestfield, Seasalter and Swalecliffe wards where over half of respondents in their wards said Whitstable should not have a town council.

	Chestfield	Seasalter	Swalecliffe	Harbour	Lower Gorrell	Tankerton
Yes	23% (53)	25% (118)	32% (67)	60% (210)	37% (113)	53% (119)
No	71% (161)	70% (323)	61% (128)	34% (120)	57% (173)	42% (94)
Not sure	5% (12)	5% (23)	8% (16)	6% (20)	6% (19)	5% (11)

4.1.3. Reasons why - CT5 1

Respondents were asked to give a reason for their response and the following comments were received:

‘Yes’:

- Locally-focused autonomy is needed: 193 comments
- Whitstable priorities are different to Canterbury's: 86 comments
- Precept will help improve events, facilities and local issues: 82 comments
- Other towns have Town Councils: 13 comments
- Secure extra grants: 10 comments
- Improved organisation of voluntary groups: 6 comments
- Mistaken comment (should be a no): 1 comment

‘No’ and ‘Not sure’:

- Financial burden: 129 comments
- Unnecessary level of bureaucracy: 78 comments
- Waste of money: 69 comments
- CCC already fulfil the duty: 36 comments
- A TC doesn't have any real power: 20 comments
- No scrutiny over town council/unrepresentative: 18 comments
- Not enough information: 10 comments
- Idea initiated by a small group of people: 11 comments
- A TC gives local representation: 4 comments
- Insufficient notice/meetings were at a bad time: 3 comments
- A TC is more cost effective: 1 comment

4.1.4. Reasons why - CT5 2

Respondents were asked to give a reason for their response and the following comments were received:

‘Yes’:

- Locally-focused autonomy is needed: 146 comments
- Precept will help improve facilities, events and local issues: 66 comments
- Whitstable priorities are different to Canterbury's: 49 comments
- Secure extra grants: 7 comments
- Other towns have Town Councils: 4 comments

‘No’ and ‘Not sure’:

- Unnecessary level of bureaucracy: 111 comments
- Financial burden: 101 comments
- Waste of money: 86 comments

- CCC already fulfil the duty: 60 comments
- No scrutiny over town council/unrepresentative: 18 comments
- A TC doesn't have any real power: 15 comments
- Not enough information: 13 comments
- Insufficient notice to judge proposal: 6 comments
- Idea initiated by a small group of people: 5 comments
- More local voice is good: 2 comments
- Other TCs are bad: 1 comment

4.1.5. Reasons why - CT5 3

Respondents were asked to give a reason for their response and the following comments were received:

'Yes':

- Locally-focused autonomy is needed: 22 comments
- Precept will help improve facilities, events and local issues: 15 comments
- Whitstable priorities are different to Canterbury's: 10 comments
- Needed to support local charities and volunteer groups: 1 comment
- Mistaken yes: 1 comment

'No' and 'Not sure':

- Financial burden: 95 comments
- Waste of money: 56 comments
- Unnecessary level of bureaucracy: 40 comments
- CCC already fulfil the duty: 33 comments
- A TC doesn't have any real power: 13 comments
- Idea initiated by a small group of people: 7 comments
- Not enough information: 6 comments
- No scrutiny over town council/unrepresentative: 5 comments
- Voluntary groups already do the job: 3 comments
- Not enough notice or advertising of consultation: 2 comments
- The TC shouldn't apply to Chestfield: 1 comment

4.1.6. Reasons why - CT5 4

Respondents were asked to give a reason for their response and the following comments were received:

'Yes':

- Locally-focused autonomy is needed: 123 comments
- Precept will improve facilities, events and local problems: 58 comments
- Whitstable priorities are different to Canterbury's: 49 comments

- Secure extra grants: 7 comments
- To improve communication with residents: 1 comment
- Mistaken yes?: 1 comment

'No' and 'Not sure':

- Financial burden: 210 comments
- Waste of money: 124 comments
- Unnecessary level of bureaucracy: 121 comments
- CCC already fulfil the duty: 88 comments
- No scrutiny over town council/unrepresentative: 24 comments
- Insufficient notice to judge proposal / 5pm meetings are bad for working people: 20 comments
- A TC doesn't have any real power: 11 comments
- Idea initiated by a small group of people: 7 comments
- Not enough information: 6 comments
- A TC gives local representation: 1 comment
- A TC will improve local services: 1 comment
- Secure extra grants: 1 comment

4.1.7. Reasons why - All other postcodes

Respondents were asked to give a reason for their response and the following comments were received:

'Yes':

- Locally-focused autonomy is needed: 8 comments
- Whitstable priorities are different to Canterbury's: 5 comments
- Precept will improve facilities, events and local problems: 3 comments

'No' and 'Not sure':

- Financial burden: 6 comments
- CCC already fulfil the duty: 6 comments
- Waste of money: 6 comments
- Unnecessary level of bureaucracy: 5 comments
- No scrutiny over town council/unrepresentative: 2 comments
- Idea initiated by a small group of people: 1 comment
- Needed if a unitary authority is formed: 1 comment

4.2. Written representations

A total of 38 written representations were received.

4.2.1. Representations in support of a town council

Overall, those in favour of a town council suggested that the precept would help improve facilities and local issues. Written representations also cited a need for locally-focused autonomy, highlighting that Whitstable's needs are different to Canterbury. Others make mention of other towns having town councils, drawing attention to the benefits they have received as a result.

You can read the full representations below.

- *'I have not completed the questionnaire but having carefully read your consultation document I would wish to record my support for the proposed Whitstable Town Council.'*
- *'In regards to establishing the Whitstable Town Council, I believe it should indeed be set up. The funds would then be allocated to the Whitstable Town Council, allowing it to prioritize its own interests such as road maintenance, community activities, and welfare initiatives. For quite some time, it's been unclear what actions the Canterbury City Council has taken for the Whitstable area. I suspect their focus is primarily on Canterbury itself rather than Whitstable.'*
- *'As a long standing resident of Marine Parade in Whitstable, which once had an active residents association, I think Whitstable either having its own council or residents having a logical route to have their say is essential. One case in point, several years ago Canterbury Council proposed to make Marine Parade paid for parking. The residents association didn't agree at the time and the council took that on board. Fast forward a number of years and the parking spaces are not always being used as intended. Currently there is at least one person already known to you, who parks a camper van every single day for the whole permitted hours, and alarmingly the same person seems to have now bought an additional much larger camper van that he's doing the same thing with. He's done this for 2 years so far, for almost the whole year, and presumably will continue with 2 large vans for as long as he's permitted. This stops residents or visitors who want to use the beach, or shop locally, bringing money to the high street. It is a blatant disregard of what the residents imagined when agreeing to long-term free parking and a lot of us are upset about it. Putting a four hour limit would seem reasonable, or some measure, so that people don't take advantage in this way. It would be important that the council is representative however, for instance it wouldn't be right for either there to be either a one-sided negative or pro-holiday let view. If there is to be a council however, it is important that it is able to make rules for the area that are*

enforceable. Additional campaigning and the ability to raise funds to promote Whitstable as the the unique area it is would be a wonderful benefit of the council.'

- *'Please add my name to any votes. Whitstable is a specific and valuable location and should be regarded and represented by local people who live in the area.'*
- *'I see your letter to Whitstable residents regarding the matter of the creation of a town council was dated Monday 8th January. This has reached us (and I suspect many other local residents) today Monday 12th February. This is long after your "information sessions" have apparently been carried out. If there was a low turnout and limited interest I suspect this delay in receiving notice would be why. This is clearly why Whitstable needs it's own council, as clearly the Canterbury council don't see our town as something that requires attention. If you decide to run these information sessions again, I would like to attend so please let me know the new date.'*
- *'I am very much in favour of a Town Council for Whitstable and fully support the aims and objectives. With our own council we could improve our local community from crime reduction to cleaning the beaches, improving the surfaces of the roads which are not good and providing benefits for the whole of Whitstable community. I think it is a very good idea for Whitstable to have a Town Council'.*

The CT5 Forum submitted the following comments at the Community Governance Review Task and Finish Advisory Group:

[...] 1. The Voice for Whitstable group very much welcomes the opportunity to set out its case to the Task and Finish Advisory Group.

2. The group is part of the CT5 People's Forum which was established after Canterbury City Council's (CCC) previous administration decided to abolish the Whitstable Forum in October 2020, the last remaining forum where residents of our town could speak freely with Councillors about the issues which mattered to them.

3. A group of residents decided to set up a new forum, the CT5 People's Forum – organised and run by local people, providing a forum where residents could link up with Councillors. It has expanded this wider role as suggested by participants to supporting, enabling and sometimes organising local activities to improve the town. Apart from this Town Council group, the two other groups are Eco which runs the now annual Wild About Whitstable biodiversity week and the Traffic and Active Travel group which has focused on speed and safety and is moving towards the broad active travel agenda re help for cyclists and Whitstable Walk Day. The Forum is always developing its information exchange and links with other organisations to support informed participation in the local community and, funded by CCC, is developing an information hub.

4. The Forum is non-party political and governed by a board of trustees. The town council group was responsible for obtaining the required number of signatures of the local electorate to trigger a Community Governance Review (CGR) into the possible establishment of a town council for the unparished areas of the CT5 postcode area. Although still part of the Forum, we have rebadged ourselves A Voice for Whitstable to make it clear that we are campaigning for a town council to be established in Whitstable.

Why should Whitstable have a town council?

5. In a nutshell:

- Whitstable is a great place to live and work. Our town is unique and many people work hard in support, but it often feels that we are overshadowed by Canterbury City and our own personality gets lost in the big picture. We have very different needs to the City and the town could be a whole lot better if it had the ability to care for itself.*
- Whitstable is in a minority. Outside the Canterbury City Council district every urban area in East Kent has a town council, apart from Margate (where a plan to create one is currently under consideration). The map at Appendix I shows gaping holes in community governance arrangements throughout the district, including the unparished areas of CT5.*
- What voice we have now could be lost, as there is the real possibility that in the future Canterbury City Council will be subsumed into an even larger unitary authority, the preferred route in central government. Any informal forum such as ours is dependent on a small group of people to keep it alive so is intrinsically vulnerable and anything led by CCC, as we have seen, could fall away to changing politics or simply cuts.*

6. In addition, we feel that a town council could:

- represent the needs of our diverse community.*
- help to administer day to day life in our town.*
- improve the quality of life for all who live, work and visit our town.*
- help fulfil the place-shaping aim as detailed in the core commitments of CCC's Parish Charter.*
- benefit the town through Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funds generated by the Neighbourhood Portion of CIL receipts as also detailed in the Parish Charter.*

7. We also strongly feel that Whitstable is losing out:

- town councils can access funding that CCC and Kent County Council cannot. They have a town clerk who is expert in the legal framework for local activities and in seeking funding for the plans the elected town councillors draw up.*
- currently there is no Whitstable community organisation with which CCC is legally obliged to consult on planning matters, including new developments. A town council would have to be consulted.*
- it could add value to the hard work of CCC and KCC councillors.*
- so many great things already happen in our town through the amazing efforts of local groups and individuals. A town council could bring these efforts together providing a community hub they could use, expert help, coordination and help bid for more funding [...]*

You can view the full submission in Appendix C.

4.2.2. Representations against a town council

Overall, those objecting to a town council for Whitstable stated that it was an unnecessary layer of bureaucracy and a significant financial burden for local residents.

You can read the full representations below.

- 'I have read the documentation supplied and I have been aware of the activities of the Whitstable CT5 Group who initiated this measure. The CT5 group only came into existence as a result of the Council decision to abandon the Area Members Panels which were expensive in terms of officer time and poorly attended other than when issues relating to dogs were on the agenda. I have attended the CT5 meetings on occasions where attendance is not much better and many of those attending are what I would call political activists. Petitions are rarely a measure of public support. A persuasive canvasser can get all sorts of people to sign something if the full facts are not put across. In that sense this consultation is useful but I suspect that the majority of local residents will not participate. Things cited in the documentation are already catered for by the District and County Council, by some ward Councillors and importantly by local voluntary groups and I include in that some of the local churches who actually get out and do things in the community and at no cost to the Council Tax Payer. Such groups also attract outside funding like Lottery money and can work in tandem with District Council officers. I know this to be a fact as for the last 18 years I have been leading the voluntary group that manages what is now known as the Gorrell Valley Nature Reserve. We have trebled the area from the original Duncan Down of some 30 acres and have gained 18 consecutive Green Flag Awards for excellence. Last year volunteers gave in excess of 1,000 volunteer hours and in the past on two occasions we have gained lottery funding for initiatives and have fund raised by many other methods. The Seasalter Christian Centre does splendid work with young people locally and is expanding in that area. At Tankerton a voluntary group has magnificently carried out work to make the main street attractive and welcoming, and another group resurrected the carnival. Viable well motivated groups like this merit support from the District Council but the current Council now seeks to end the member Opportunity Fund allocations of £1,000 per member which enabled fast track support to such groups. For many years the Whitstable Society has acted as a statutory consultee on planning issues. This has been valuable and they have wealth of experience in this area. I am also aware that their willingness to rattle cages has on occasions had a salutary effect on the periodic shortcomings of the planning department. That is a useful function notwithstanding the fact that in the current climate any attempt at democracy in planning is undermined by the planning inspectorate, the vacillations of government policy, developer wealth and the appeals process. My maxim has always been "If it works don't fix it" and whilst the current system is not perfect there is no evidence that those in the CT5 group who aspire to duplicate what is already provided by the groups I have described above can do any better. What this District needs is action and not words I cannot and will not support needless duplication and a further charge in the region of £80 per household for the creation of a further tier of government, more hot air, and the establishment of a mere talk shop controlled by a narrow group of local busybodies, political "has beens" and hobbyists. It's simply just not good value for money.'*
- 'I am opposed to the idea of Whitstable having a Town Council. Canterbury Council is big enough to carry out all necessary functions. Having another spin off is more*

expense adding to the already high cost of council tax People are finding it hard to make ends meet without more added costs to their council tax.. Not for me.'

- *'I am not in favour of the setting up of a Whitstable Town Council in view of the extra financial implications.'*
- *'My husband and I think that Whitstable does not need a town council as we are represented through the Canterbury Town Council. Also, we are not happy to pay more council tax as what we pay now is already exorbitant for the services we receive. Thank you.'*
- *'Good day. Further to your above consultation document requesting our comments. My wife and I are against this proposal. We feel in a cost of living crisis an extra burden of bureaucracy is not necessary, especially with an additional council tax to be levied, indicated at £60-£80 per annum. We also feel that Whitstable does not need extra cultural events of the type indicated in your document, and if these were to come here they should be funded by their supporters rather than the local residents. Therefore our view is that the status quo should be maintained and Whitstable remain part of the Canterbury City Council for its administration and services.'*
- *'I received the pamphlet dated Monday 8th January 2024, pm today Friday 26th January, taking over 3 weeks to arrive here at Whitstable. I refer to the pamphlet which states that it is response to a petition received. I have seen not seen nor heard of such petition until now, or its source. I am therefore against this, currently, support for such a Whitstable Town Council on the grounds that it is undemocratically proposed via the previously unknown petition and it's instigators.'*
- *'We do not see the need for a Town Council in Whitstable. We are well enough represented through Canterbury City Councillors although we wait to see how well the new administration performs. Now is not the time to add to the financial burden of local residents who are without doubt facing substantial increases in their council tax bill in the very near future.'*
- *'Good Morning, I write to you as I am a concern resident of WHITSTABLE. I today received a letter initiation dated 08 January to consultation meetings about the town council proposal. This is after the meetings of the 18 January and 22 January have been completed. I suggest to you that democracy is not being serviced and public notice of such meetings should be in advance of the events and not after them. I also suggest that the correct way to proceed in this issue would be a local referendum, with the for's explaining what the rate supplement of 60-80 pounds a year would be spent on, and if we are not already paying Canterbury for these services. Anything provided by any future Whitstable council must be beyond that already provided for by the KCC or CCC! and those against wishing to maintain the current status quo NOT needing to defend their position. I have read other articles on line and Whitstable has had a town council in the past before it was absorbed into Canterbury. We are supposed to live us in a democratic area. Your email address advocates that you believe in democracy, Give us a VOTE on this issue to all the rate payers and residents and not just those political activist that wish to enhance their own political ambitions locally. It has been said ""No Taxation without*

- representation"" the will of the people must be heard. Give us a chance to VOTE on this with the next local elections, with either a YES/NO question on the ballot paper.'*
- *'Against introducing further layer of government. Pointless organisation. Further costs for residents of Whitstable.'*
 - *'Thank you for the information you have provided regarding setting a new town council in Whitstable. I am a resident living in Whitstable. I do not agree with this proposal and would certainly not want to pay for it. I do not think we need one and I can see no benefits.'*
 - *'As a young family trying to save money, the extra £60+ a year is not something we are happy with. I don't trust that anything will be done to benefit ourselves, and we are strongly against the proposal.'*
 - *I have served in senior leadership roles on Unitary, County and National government bodies and never once heard the suggestion that adding another layer of bureaucracy will increase efficiency or effectiveness. This is tackling the symptoms and not the cause.'*
 - *'I have read the article in the Whitstable Community Magazine. Are you willing to pay for a new town council. The answer is NO. A lot of people on lower income cannot afford this with council tax going up again this year to already high levels, next year with probably another 5% rise plus your £80 Whitstable town council tax this will probably mean something like a total of £200 a year which I find totally unacceptable I would rather donate the £80 pound to an animal sanctuary.'*
 - *'Thank you for your letter dated 08/01/24 received end of January. Rather late for the meetings, but I did attend the Seasalter meeting. Most of the people were probably of retiring age as younger people were at work or travelling home. I would not support this as most councils are claiming they are short of money, why do we require an other council that would increase council tax by £80 only to possible end up in the same situation. With the increase of council tax at about 5% per year by 2025 this would add another roughly £200 per year on already a high tax. Some older people and those on low income simply cannot afford this. At the meeting one lady claimed she had a friend who was very worried as she could not afford the extra cost. At the meeting I asked how much revenue this raised and what the money would be used for I did not get an answer. I think Canterbury City Council are doing a reasonable job, Is this another way of just creating more income. As the old saying goes if it ain't broke don't fix it. Regarding the questionnaire form I am still talking to people who have not received one, not everyone has a smart phone or a computer. I think ever house hold should receive one in the post, It is not to late to do this and maybe extend the dead line of the 1st of march. As I feel this would have been the most democratic way of doing this.'*
 - *'Regarding the above proposal, we have given the matter some thought and have come to the following conclusions: 1. We can see no net benefit in having a Town Council as all the proposals in the leaflet have and should be dealt with by Canterbury City Council; 2. This is what some of our Council Tax currently pays for; 3. This adds another layer of political bureaucracy; 4. This adds additional expense for no perceivable net gain over and above the services and amenities already*

provided by Canterbury City Council; 5. Your consultation leaflet states, "" A town council could not replace the City Council or the County Council"" and ""You currently have an MP, County Councillors and City Councillors""; 6. According to your consultation leaflet, it lists similar organisations already in the area as being a. Community groups, b. Residents' groups, c. Business groups; 7. We are aware that the Canterbury City Council is selling their offices, relocating a minority of staff to Whitefriars' Shopping Centre in Canterbury and the remainder are working from home. With all these savings and the monies from the sale of their offices (all taxpayers' funds built) in Military Road there should be plenty of slack in their funds, even potentially a net reduction in the Council Tax precept: these extra monies could enhance the facilities already being provided for. We can see no net benefit to Whitstable and its residents with the proposed increase to our Council Tax precept to cover any costs, so we will not be supporting proposals to establish a Whitstable Town Council.'

- 'One is the cost. People are struggling to pay essential bills as it is. There's no guarantee the cost will not increase every year. Another is there are too many layers of local government already. Then there's the question of how it would be funded and how effective it would be in terms of local representation. We already have local councillors costing quite considerable sums, they should be our representatives. How much notice would the City Council take of decisions taken by a town council? Going by the past local forums, not much. The election of town councillors would be carried out how? It will end up as just Party political, aping CCC. Lastly none of the main political parties are keen on properly funding Local Authorities, meaning funds will be cut whoever wins the upcoming election. So a NO THANKS.'
- 'Dear XXXXXXXXX XXXXXXXX, I have lived in Whitstable for over 50 years and strongly disagree that we need a town council. It is a thriving town that does not need one. There seems to be a very strong, vocal lobby group working to install a council, but I question their real motives. I wonder whether they have their own interests to promote rather than the best outcomes for the town. I also wonder whether we will end up with a small cabal running the council for a long time in a quasi- autocracy. I do not see the need for a council, we have plenty of representation already via councillors etc. It just adds another layer of bureaucracy and most importantly cost. Many ratepayers struggle to afford the council tax at present let alone with an extra precept added. It may be that those who do not pay council tax do not see this as an issue. I think that the people who decide whether we have a town council should be the people who will have to pay for it.'
- 'My view of the proposal for a Whitstable Town Council is against. The people (whoever they are) behind this are unknown to me and they only just got the signatures of 7.5% of the CT5 electorate. The 92% that weren't interested or even approached seem to count for nothing. It is feasible that if the 7.5% vote yes but the 92% are apathetic then we could have a situation that the dog is wagged not by the tail but the arse end! Also at this time when most councils (local and county) are in financial difficulty then the likelihood of Council Tax increasing by 5% (county) and

- 3% (local) is very likely. Add to this the increase of mortgage rates thanks to the financial genius of Liz Truss and the general increase in the cost of living (food banks etc) this is not the best time to increase the financial burden on families.'
- 'We, XXXXX and XXXXX, wish it to known that we would not have signed the original petition if we had been told there would be a charge to have a town council. We realise that we cannot withdraw our signatures at this stage but feel you should be aware that we wasn't given the full facts. We fully object the formation of a Town Council now all information has been released.'
 - 'I am not in favour of a Town Council for Whitstable. I see no advantage in having another 'arm' of Government. The issues they will be able to influence are somewhat limited and trivial and are already being dealt with, in one form or another, anyway. The cost is prohibitive - £60 to £80 for a band D and how long will it stay at that cost? At a time when there is a cost of living crisis; with alarming rises in mortgage repayments, fuel bills and the cost of some foods now approaching twice as much as they were 2 years ago and regular price rises still relentlessly marching on: how many families who have to rely on food banks to help the family budget will consider paying an additional £60 to £80 per year for what a Town Council can offer, to be money well spent? So, no,no,no. If it ain't broke don't fix it.'
 - 'Hello, I do not want a Whitstable Town Council.'
 - 'I live at XX Kemp Road and do not want a town council as I think we pay enough as it is.'
 - 'I do not agree to a Whitstable Town Council'.
 - 'Hello, Please understand that I am very much against the setting up of a town council for CT5. Thank you'.
 - 'My husband, XXXXX XXXXXXXX, and myself, XXXXX XXXXXXXX wish to register our choice/vote of NO to the formation of a Whitstable Town Council. We do not want a Town Council.'
 - 'I hereby object strongly to the suggestion that a Town Council should be set up for Whitstable. I do not want another layer of democracy and the cost that this entails. The area is already adequately served by City and County Councillors. I do not wish to be charged an additional precept in order to enable a few people to exercise extremely limited powers which are already sufficiently covered by the existing Authorities. It would be a most unwelcome additional financial burden on residents at this very difficult time. I urge that no further action be taken.'
 - 'I strongly oppose the idea of setting up another Council for our area. We already have two Councils covering Whitstable and another Authority would simply increase the amount of Council Tax that residents have to pay. There would be no real benefit and the extra financial burden on people at this time cannot be justified. I trust that no further action will be taken.'
 - 'I would like to raise my objection to the formation of a Town Council in Whitstable. I am very concerned by the potential cost of these proposals, and the fear that it will become just another committee. The fact that there will be no cap on what a town council is likely to add to the existing council tax is most worrying. Furthermore, people who are elected are likely to take affirmative actions, to justify their position,

rather than give a perceivable benefit. I cannot understand what decision that this committee might take will have a beneficial outcome that might be achieved via other means or current forums. I have not heard any positive reasons from residents of Whitstable as to why a Town Council is needed or will be beneficial to the town of Whitstable.'

- *'I would like to register my opposition to the setting up of a further council group for the town. We are relentlessly asked to pay more for less, so the idea that we would want to finance another room full of talking heads (with very few responsibilities or powers) at the council strikes me as ridiculous. Among my circle of friends and colleagues this seems to be a view shared - I haven't yet met anyone who seems to be in favour of this proposal.'*
- *'I am not in favour of a Whitstable council.'*
- *'I am strongly opposed to a town council: (1) Yet another bureaucratic layer to supplement the local councillors (2) An added cost to the ever rising council tax (3) Most of what a town council hopes to achieve is covered by existing organisations and local government.'*
- *'In three words "No Thank You". I can see no gain for Whitstable to have a town council, all it will do is increase our council tax and has a disabled person unable to work I can't afford to pay more than I do. I would also like to say how badly this proposal has been promoted. I have lived in Whitstable all my life, no one asked me would I like to be considered, so please how did you define this need? If it goes ahead, which I really hope it doesn't will there be a opt out clause for those of us who don't want it and are happy as things are? If it happens, I will deduct the amount I am charged for it when I get my council tax bill. Why can't all those incomers and do gooders leave well alone and allow those people who are proper Whitstable people to try and enjoy our town. This needs to be made public property, with everyone knowing about public meetings and such before the event not weeks after.'*
- *'I am writing as I have received a leaflet on consultation on proposal for a Whitstable Town Council. To which I strongly oppose due to reason being I am already struggling to pay my council tax and if this proposal goes ahead it will increase my council tax bill. So please add me to the list of people not in favour.'*

The parish clerk for Chestfield Parish Council submitted the following comments via email:

Chestfield Parish Council is of course supportive of parish and Town councils and the benefits that this third tier of local government bring, being closest to the people of the areas that they represent. However, we feel that the CT5 area proposed is too large an area - there will be marginalised areas/roads (such as Seasalter, Pean Hill, and Yorkletts) that will pay a precept but get nothing back for doing so. The area should be reduced and cover just the central area of Whitstable and the Harbour - provided this consultation shows an appetite and support for a Whitstable Town Council. Alternatively a better option would be for several smaller parish councils to be created – these would

have a better sense of identity for residents paying towards them and have parish councillors in those areas that know their needs better and can make more of a difference to those new parishes areas. Smaller parish councils could work extremely well for example for areas like Swalecliffe and Tankerton -we feel that this will further serve to keep their own particular identity, rather than be 'swallowed up' into a Whitstable-centric Town Council.

Brooklands Farm was a strategic site for housing in the previous administration's Canterbury District Local Plan (Policy W5 refers) with 1300 homes being proposed. Regardless of whether it remains a strategic site in the next draft Plan it is likely to move forward to a planning application. Chestfield Parish Council would put forward a representation now that rather than see a divided governance between a parish and Town council, that the whole site should come to/become Chestfield Parish. A divided governance would be illogical for this area. We appreciate that the mechanism for this parish boundary request will need to be at the next community governance review by the Local Government Boundary Commission to finalise/decide this request rather than from this current internal CCC Community Governance Review triggered by the petition. We will be seeking at the next opportunity that the Brooklands Farm site, whether it is built on, or equally if it remains unbuilt on, should pass to Chestfield Parish. We feel that any potential new residents of Brooklands Farm would feel more part of Chestfield than Whitstable. Similarly, we would hope that the current households in that area would welcome becoming part of Chestfield Parish. We therefore ask that if a town council for Whitstable as proposed is agreed, that its boundary does not at this stage encompass the Brookland Farm site whatsoever, but rather be drawn to exclude it.

At its consultation events, CCC put up a series of PowerPoint slides, among which there was the following: "What is a community governance review? A community governance review enables a principal council such as Canterbury City Council to review and put in place or make changes to community governance systems and structures e.g. by creating, merging, abolishing or changing parish or town councils in the review area. Chestfield Parish Council would seek an assurance that it would not be merged with a new town council for Whitstable. Several of our residents have sought clarity from us on this – they do not wish to see any change from their third tier of governance currently. There have been comments that we do a good job for them and they would not want to see a merger with wider Whitstable. May we have a clarification and assurance that our Parish Council remains unaffected in any proposals formed through this governance review please.

4.3. Public sessions

Three public information sessions were held during the consultation period. Details of these are below:

- Swalecliffe & Chestfield Community Association, 18 January 2024, 5pm to 7pm
- Seasalter Christian Centre, 22 January 2024, 5pm to 7pm
- Whitstable Umbrella Centre, 1 February 2024, 5pm to 7pm

All three of these events were promoted via email to a wide array of stakeholders on the council's newsroom website as well as social media channels. Approximately 220 people attended overall, with the third and final event in the Umbrella Centre attracting over 120 people.

The letters were unfortunately delivered late to some households, which resulted in some complaints about the fact some or all of the public events had passed. In response, an online version of the presentation was published, along with answers to all of the questions raised at the events. The presentation received over 230 views.

Below is a summary of the points raised at each event.

4.3.1. Swalecliffe & Chestfield Community Association

The following questions and comments were raised:

- Whitstable has a lower average income for households and lots of people in work poverty, will they get a discount on the fees if they don't qualify for benefits?
- We know there is a lot of debt in county councils and local authorities. Are there any provisions to prevent the same from happening in town councils?
- You talked about the number of respondents needed, in terms of stage 2 submissions are there any criteria that apply to this in terms of minimum numbers responding or would it be a simple majority to decide the outcome?
- Who will decide if there will or won't be a town council?
- How many people actually live in this area that you have bound?
- Where does the initial money come from for a town council?
- As someone who doesn't live in the area, can I still respond to the consultation?
- Is it true that businesses would not have to pay the precept?
- The councils non-statutory services public conveniences are not a statutory service such as public toilets, if they were under threat could the town council take these services on?
- Will town councils benefit from housing developments where they developers are levied? Development contributions are split, section 106 agreements won't change,

the CIL contribution would go to the town council but it wouldn't be the full pot of development contributions.

- At the moment there is an agreement in the charter which gives them a percentage, currently Whitstable, Canterbury and Herne Bay don't get any of that money, is that correct?
- Is the CIL money only from developments that happen within that boundary?
- The CIL projects are actually listed and voted on well in advance, there will be projects in Whitstable no doubt on the CIL list already.
- Public toilets are always potentially at risk, they are needed to tick boxes for green/blue flag awards, who is responsible for this? In Whitstable's case, the blue flag, would CCC feel the need to support this to retain the blue flag?
- How will it be decided how many councillors there will be? Do they have to live in the area?
- Will the number of councillors be based on evidence elsewhere?
- Can someone from Chestfield Parish stand as a councillor for Whitstable?
- We know CCC have had funding cuts, this diminishes the council's responsibility to deliver the non-essential services, if there was a town council for Whitstable, what are the chances of the city council or town council creating policies on things such as tourism, environmental etc?
- The town council group has a website which has been revised with new information. Some attendees encouraged people to have a look as it included positives and negatives.

4.3.2. Seasalter Christian Centre

The following questions and comments were raised:

- A question regarding the fees estimated for Band D. Can the fees be set by the council in following years and they decide what the amounts would be.
- Will every household receive a questionnaire form?
- When you talk about social media. I have had this conversation with CCC recently. They said it's on Facebook and on our website. This should be on the local news, on local meridian news or in posters where people go to. Too much is relied on social media. A lot of people don't use it.
- This meeting is not representative of the demographic. Where are the diverse ages who are entitled to vote? You need younger dynamic people to become councillors. Here you are asking this demographic to approve the idea of having another charge imposed on young people. You had an opportunity to put a council notice in with the council tax. It is not a democratic way to come in for the decision of whether you will or will not have a choice in the council. Imposing on young people and young families. Although there is never a right time for the potential people. This should

not be decided by the council but by the electorate. Do you want to have a council or not?

- You have told us how to start a town council. But have not been told how to get rid of them if they don't do their job.
- Can I ask about planning? The town council would be consulted for planning applications. Would the town council be consulted for the LDP?
- I agree with gentlemen speaking to old people. What about older people? Not on benefits. Some may start worrying they may not be able to afford or do not want to pay. Will they be taken to court? What happens then?
- Is it possible to do another event? These start at 5pm. Is it possible to do a weekend/lunchtime one? I was concerned about the enforcement from the non payment of council tax as well. Where I missed part of the presentation will it be put on the website?
- We know that the local government is under pressure. Some examples of what you gave are what town councils can provide. Toilets and street lighting. These are provided by CCC and KCC. What assurances are CCC going to give that they won't cut any more funding. Using the town council as an excuse for giving cuts.
- Member is it likely there is going to be a reduction to the council tax for the services that a town council now delivers.
- Do councillors get paid? Where does the money from the tax go?
- It is my understanding that councils have statutory obligations. What are the statutory obligations which will remain for CCC and what discretionary services will be passed on.
- Consultation says something about 1st march. Is there a threshold for the number of people responding and is there a threshold for and against.
- Central govt would support this as it gives them an opportunity to increase council tax for services that should be given.
- You have a very narrow demographic here. I have a babysitter so I can be informed and made aware. The council is talking from a position of privilege and people may be affected by this increasing cost. Not everyone will be able to afford the proposed charges.
- What powers do you hold as a town council? Can you influence the infrastructure like bus routes and services?
- I would like to add that what people are concerned about is the extra money. But also to consider the extra money that will be pulled into the town which is not from our pockets. All the parish councils can apply for grants and pull in lots of money. Example given of loan. We might like a community centre to provide health and social activities. Froome council employed a bid person to help people bring in bids and they helped to bring in 1.4 million. As a town council we can think big and pull in that money from outside.
- When I moved down here we had a local police station and an information centre. Can the town councils have any influence to bring those back in. We are lucky in seeing people around but would the town council be able to bring this in. Felt that we don't have a voice and are not getting the same benefits as the other areas. Do

you have those powers? It's about safety and where people don't feel safe. If we had local policing or info on community safety.

4.3.3. Whitstable Umbrella Centre

Matthew Archer introduced himself and the other people giving presentations.

- Matthew Archer (MA), Head of Corporate Governance, Chief Executive at Canterbury City Council (CCC)
- Charmaine Keatley (CK) on behalf of Kent Association of Local Councils (KACL)

MA gave his presentation which included the following points:

- The role of town councils (TCs) and what they contribute.
- The whole district review in 2017, where no TC was created for Whitstable as not enough interest.
- How the Community Governance Review (CGR) is started by a petition signed by 7.5% of the electorate.
- That the petition is carefully checked to ensure names are on the electoral register in the correct area.
- The petition cites concerns over lack of representation for areas without parishes if a unitary authority was created and the desire for more local control of how funds are spent. Other coastal towns have TCs and the petitioners feel Whitstable is overlooked.
- CGRs create merge alter and abolish parishes and TCs
- TC election May 2025 if it goes ahead, term
- CCC's role is only to consult, it doesn't have a position for or against the creation of the TC. The TC is not CCC's idea.
- The boundary of the proposed TC in phase 1 of this CGR.
- Where the council tax that CCC collects is used and how most of the council tax goes to Kent County Council (KCC). 11% goes to CCC.
- That there is not a specific limit on the yearly increases of the TC charges (precept) TCs and Parish Councils (PCs). There are some control measures on how much the TC charges can be increased by however.
- CCC sets the first TC charge. Other TCs charge between £60 and £80 a year. This could generate £750k and £1M per annum respectively. Some aspects make this hard to precisely predict the amount that might be raised by a Whitstable TC. This is because not every household would be liable for TC charges, there are, for instance, exemptions for properties probate, students, charities and for those on low incomes.
- An explanation of CCC vs KCC responsibilities and some of the idiosyncrasies (CCC = controls some aspects of off-street parking, KCC controls some aspects of

on-street parking), and also how CCC is responsible for a greater number of many different services.

- That a TC is not the same as Urban District Council (UDC) which is something that existed in Whitstable in the past, but no longer exists now.

CK gave her presentation which included the following points:

- A TC can support KCC services even though the TC isn't directly in charge of them.
- For example a library that might be shut down by a Country Council can be supported by the TC, and libraries provide extremely important services to local communities.
- Bus route cuts affect vulnerable people. TCs can set up community transport services. An example of this is the parish alliance shopper bus, setup by TC and PCs.
- TCs can provide valuable local knowledge on where the issues are and what changes need to be made by the responsible authorities for road and pavements maintenance, Highways Improvement Plans (HIPS), new 20mph speed limits and pedestrian crossings.
- TCs better understand local people's needs on matters like food poverty, warm spaces, social spaces.
- TCs work with the CCC in the same way as they do with KCC. The TC can work with CCC to ensure there is an appropriate mix of different types of development by conducting surveys of the local community. TCs can act as Housing Enablers.
- TCs can make a neighbourhood plan which goes alongside the local plan to have more influence on how development happens in the local area.
- TC only statutory duty is to provide allotments if they are wanted.
- The TC charges are usually described about the cost of a cup of coffee an x (e.g. week or month).
- Froome TC hired a bid writer to help community groups to go for grants. This brought £1.3 million into Froome.
- TCs can apply Saturday clubs for primary kids for low income, food banks with fresh food, village food stores with hygiene packs, weekly cafes for people with dementia and as a general social space. They can also provide cost of living grants (money for people with low incomes), initiative with young, dementia artists
- One TC supplemented Year 6 school trips for families with low income so their children weren't excluded from the activities.
- TCs can borrow money via KALC and the Department for Levelling Up (DLUF), over very long periods of time, like 50 years, which can enable TCs to buy churches to convert places that can be used as community workshops, centrest to run speed awareness courses, vaccination centres, lectures and other volunteer initiatives.
- In one case, a loan of £500k was used to purchase a church that was already a community hub that hosted activities like yoga, dancing, and adult education.
- If TCs weren't able to access these loans, these community buildings can be lost to development like conversion to residential housing.

- Other TCs has looked at climate change initiatives like tree planting energy saving grants, energy efficient light bulbs Electric Vehicle (EV) charging points in TC car parks, wildflower areas, recommendations to developers like making green spaces within developments, land purchase for play areas and flood resilience fields, seed swaps, bug hotels pollinators, 20 is plenty rewilding schemes.
- Froome is a good example of what TCs can do.
- TCs help with prescriptions, talking to lonely people, wellbeing initiatives
- KCC Helping hands fund a number of projects including a dementia cafe, cost of living support, health and weight loss programmes, and volunteer run loneliness schemes. They all massive impact and have received good feedback
- Child mental health services like Kooth, or whatever the TC wants.
- Creating a TC also links you into a network of similar communities of other TC where you can get advice and support.

MA then made the following points and took questions from the attendees:

- That TCs have an influencing role as a statutory consultee as part of planning applications.
- That CCC is not obliged to give powers to any Whitstable TC that forms.
- That an ambitious time table has been set out to reach a decision in time for the other elections taking place next year.

Questions

- Q: Can other boundaries be considered? What happens if Seasalter doesn't want a TC but the centre of Whitstable does?
- MA: Other boundaries can be considered. In the analysis, we will see if there are different views in different areas. In Phase 2 proposals like an alternative TC boundary might be put forward. The committee will see the recommendations and then they will decide what other proposals to proceed with next.
- Q: Are TC councillors affiliated with the major political parties?
- MA: You can stand as an independent TC councillor or be affiliated with one of the major parties. TCs sometimes have councillors who have been put forward by the major parties. PC usually have independent councillors.
- Q: Do the TC charges pay for the wages of the TC councillors?
- MA: it is very unusual for TC councils to claim an allowance. Although they have the power to claim an allowance, most don't. It is extremely rare at the PC level for allowances to be claimed by councillors. Typically the TC funds would be used for staff. The number of staff is decided by the TC councillors. The TC Charges are used on TC staff, services, buildings and projects.
- CK: The TC Charges must support projects and staff,
- Q: What proportion of the area to which the CGR applies, in terms of residents or people or households, have to respond for it to be representative?
- MA: There is no threshold that defines if responses are representative of an area. The advisory group will consider its representative. For instance if there is a very

low response rate, the advisory group may state there is not enough interest, but it's up to them to make recommendations.

- Q: Can we see the distribution of responses?
- MA: In the survey you can put your address and we can do postcode analysis to see how views vary by area.
- Q: If we had a TC, would the CCC be more ruthless because they will rely on the fact that a TC will step in to support services cut by CCC. e.g. CCC might close a library if they know a TC will step in and fund it.
- Chris Cornell, Councillor for Gorell: There is less money around generally to support services, and authorities can't run everything that they used to. Different authorities do consider if other people can fund services. It wouldn't be ruthless but we would have to consider if a service can be funded by someone else.
- Q: If there were a particular building that the TC didn't want to be developed. Would they be listened to or would CCC just approve a planning application for development anyway
- MA: CCC makes the final decision. It will consult and give weight to TC's views as part of the planning application process. It also has to consider planning policy and the officer's report. The TC's view is considered as part of all of these aspects.
- Q: Is there any evidence of TV influencing planning applications?
- MA: Yes there would be examples, the TC's views would go into the report that assess the application. This would include the views being set out for and against, and the TC's view does have weight. The planning committee does about 10% of applications.
- Q: A post by CT5 forum said residents will be able to decide how the TC funds are spent. Is this correct?
- MA: Technically speaking the TC councillors and the town clerk decide how the TC funds are spent. They have a mandate (authority) as elected representatives of the residents. The residents don't decide directly. The TC councillors may consult with the electorate and have the usual incentives to represent the residents as elected representatives.
- Q: Please give a specific example of how a TC could stop a library closing?
- CHL: We can work with KCC to agree a memorandum of understanding and provide a ready to go contract for TCs that allow them to take over a library. This can mean taking over the building and or the library services and leasing them back to KCC. There are new systems being developed for this sort of work. Its very early stages there is not a concrete procedure at this point.
- Q: On the 17th of October we will have a final decision. However, in the next 10 months, if there is significant opposition, will the proposal for a TC be dropped midway through the process or must it continue through the whole process you have outlined?
- MA: We decide how we do the consultations and when we have finished analysis of phase 1 in April, we will put proposals together for the phase 2 consultations.
- Q: even if there is 100% opposition

- MA: If there is enough interest to go through this initial part of the process, then we will proceed through that part of the process.
- Q: If the process goes on to the 17th of October, who makes the final decision and how will they come to the decision?
- MA: 38 councillors will vote yes or no and the proposal will proceed if there is a majority.
- Q: Regarding £1M is not enough money for a TC to do useful things. Can we have money from CCC also? Can we reduce our CCC tax and increase Whitstable TC tax?
- MA: The TC would determine the amount it charges and it would decide how to spend its funds. The CCC will need its own funds to deliver its statutory services. If there are projects where there can be collaboration there can be conversation on how their pots of money are spent between them (CCC and Whitstable TC). There are lots of examples about how TCs spend their money and whether they deliver value for money.
- CHL: £1M is only what they raise directly but it can be magnified through match funding, grants, and other schemes like the national lottery. It depends on your needs, and those needs give access to different grants.
- Q: How is the boundary area defined?
- MA: The boundary area is defined by the CCC and might include different areas. We are asked to pick logical geographical boundaries that represent communities.
- Q: Haybury is a borough of London surrounded by greenbelt. We live in Gorell and about 60% of Gorell is agricultural land. Will the TC obtain funding from agricultural bodies? Haybury had a book on different bodies where funding could be obtained.
- MA: We have officers that will take advantage of grant funding opportunities from the central government. This is the same at KCC and for TCs.
- Q There are 315 TCs and PCs overseen by KALC. Are residents in support of TCs and PCs now they have one? Are any TCs abolished?
- MA: Other TC councillors can be elected if the electorate is unhappy with them. It's rare for TCs to be abolished but the process is the same as the process for creating them. Put a petition together for the abolition.
- Q: Is it correct to say that we don't need a TC to have a Neighbourhood Plan (NP)?
- MA: We can access Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and be a consultee
- Q: how are they going to judge whether the TCs are delivering value for money? Froome is putting charges up by 29%. Faversham is spending £520k running their TC. The overall budget is £750k. This is troubling as it leaves £200k for actual projects. This means Faversham TC is spending 30% on local services and 70% on running their TC.
- Chris Cornell: Local residents can create a NP, and any such proposal will go through full referendum. The process takes a while and a NP allows a body to take a portion of CIL which comes from developments in the area. PCs get a 16% chunk from developers and having a NP brings it up to 25%. They don't get all of the CIL, but they do get a chunk of it. You don't need a TC for this. Whitstable tried before to

get a NP, and it was complicated. I think it's fair to say that a NP wasn't created partly because of the complexity of the process.

- CHL: I'm not familiar with Faversham. Their running costs are a big part of the services they provide so it's somewhat unfair to imply that staff costs are helping the community. The Guildhall has a shop below, loneliness services and the staff cost is part of the service that is being given. They offer community wardens, and help with climate change measures. They enable the community. The running costs might be high but they still deliver valuable services.
- Q: It concerns me that last year about 26 councils went bust or are on the verge of going bust according to The Guardian. Are you going to go bust? It's quite a leap of faith to propose a body that can increase its charges by an uncapped amount each year, given the financial pressure that different bodies are under.
- MA: It's a challenge to make our budgets balance every year. We must do that and deliver the services that are a priority.
- Q: Somebody in Canterbury will pay council tax in total less than those in Whitstable. I don't think this is fair.
- MA: If you are struggling you might not be paying the precept (council tax charges) in full as there are income exemptions. There are processes in place for some people to get support if they are struggling to pay their council tax charges.
- Q: The first election to put TC councillors forward is in 2025. If we then find the TC is not good value for money, can we then say we don't want a TC?
- MA: Yes you can abolish a TC through the same process that was used to create it.
- Q: Having a TC is a good way to get feedback on local issues like one way systems. As a taxi driver I think such a system would be a good idea.
- Q: A TC might have duplicate an input into the planning process that we already have from Whitstable Society. Would Whitstable Society still be needed if we had a TC?
- Q: Whitstable Society and Thanet Way Residents Association were against an application but CCC approved the application as we are in presumption. Would the TC have more influence than these groups?
- Chris Cornell: If a TC is created but it doesn't cover all the unparished areas around Whitstable, the Whitstable Society could have a role in these unrepresented areas.
- Q: What criteria will the group use to make recommendations to CCC. Will there be a cost benefit analysis of these recommendations?
- Chris Cornell: Whatever we get out of Phase 1 will influence Phase 2. TC we don't know what the TC will want, they could refuse some services offered by CCC. We will work this out at stage 2 working with other groups. We don't know enough at this stage and who will be elected. It depends on the nature of what they propose and we have to wait who is elected and how the negotiation goes.
- Q: The original petition said it would ask for residents' contributions which is an uncapped tax. Contribution is not an accurate description as it implies it's an optional payment, when it's not optional.
- MA: The precept for a TC would not be optional if a TC were to be created. It's a group of volunteers that have put forward this proposal. It is not CCC's proposal.

- CK: We don't often use percentages as they are large to describe increase as they are misrepresented, due to the small absolute size of the charges. It makes the increases sound worse than they are, relative to the other services. We tend to use absolute amounts for this reason.
- Q: I am the lead petitioner, please look at our website, we discuss things like eco groups, TC. For 2 years we have done lots of research including TCs visits, discussions with KALC and we really think a TC is a really good idea. We started up the petition and achieved enough signatures. The benefits are greater than disadvantages. We want to know what's bad about TCs so we can address all the issues. We hope you will support the proposal.
- Q: Lots of things you said TC may do, lots of these things are done already by community groups. The volunteers do a lot of this already. Some of the people would be kicked out by TC. Faversham TC ,spends $\frac{2}{3}$ this of their income on staff, buildings, professional fees, and has 8 members of staff. Faversham owns a lot of buildings and can get mooring fees unlike a Whitstable TC. You can only apply for a grant once. I don't think it will be economically sustainable.
- Q: when it gets to stage 2 the Swalecliffe and Seaslate need to be able to attend a meeting like this. (comments from other attendees that there were meetings available). Kent is making redundancies. TC will engage with voluntary organisations to fund their activities. Most of Canterbury has a local government, Whistable wants the same. Previously the council had area forums and community trusts and these are under the control CCC and the area forum was abolished. Anyone on electoral register can stand. What the council can do is lobby strongly for the area. Action for what people want.
- MA: We did hold an event in Seasalter last week.
- Q: I'm a member of CT5 forum. I wasn't sure about a TC at first, but the more I researched it, the more I thought it was a good idea. I want to address the comments about Faversham. Last year generated 1 million from central government to develop pedestrian facilities. Type of money wasn't available to CCC. There's nothing about Whistable in CCCs active travel policies. The staff that Faversham have bring in lots of money. A TC would make Whitstable a better place.
- Q: Maureen Smith trustee of CT5 forum. All money raised by TC charges is ring fenced and only goes into CT5. TC councillors work only for the CT5 area. They don't get involved with the district affairs, usually voluntarily and solely for our town.
- Q: I'm confused about how you decide about TC if it affects all residents so they should all vote. There's a lot of people who can't get to the meetings. People who have the time and energy to present their support will be overrepresented in the consultation.
- MA: There is no duty to hold a referendum and no way to do so.
- Q: You can't just do it?
- MA: No legally we cannot just do it.
- Q cost benefit analysis must be done, if it costs £3 to get £1 of benefit it shouldn't go ahead.

- MA: The way the TC conducts itself will define the value for money that it delivers to the local area. I'm aware that people are starting to leave now, so I will bring matters to a close. Thank you everyone for attending.

5. Conclusions

Overall, the survey results show that most respondents do not support the idea of a town council for Whitstable.

This report provides a range of information about the levels of support for a Whitstable town council as well as reasons cited by respondents, both for and against.

Findings have been analysed by postcode and also by ward, along with additional heat map analysis to help visualise and contextualise the responses. These heat maps can be found at the end of this report.

The main areas which support the idea of a Whitstable town council are 'Tankerton' and the previously known 'Harbour' ward which now forms part of the northern site of the current 'Gorrell' ward (above the railway line). This is also broadly contiguous with the CT5 1 postcode area. These respondents felt that a town council would provide Whitstable with a voice of its own and have a positive impact on the local community.

Across all postcode areas, those against the prospect of a town council were concerned about additional financial burden and many stated that this extra layer of governance was unnecessary considering existing structures.

Compared to other consultations, the response rate and overall engagement during the consultation period was significant which suggests residents seem engaged with their local governance structure.

However, when comparing the response rate to the electoral population in Whitstable, approximately 8% of those affected by the proposal took part in this consultation. This suggests that despite the various engagement methods utilised, a degree of apathy exists.

These findings are predicated on the proposal that was put forward at this stage of the community governance review. Those that responded to this consultation, answered on the basis of the boundary proposed. Should Stage 2 commence and this boundary be amended, it cannot be assumed that the same trend will be noticeable.

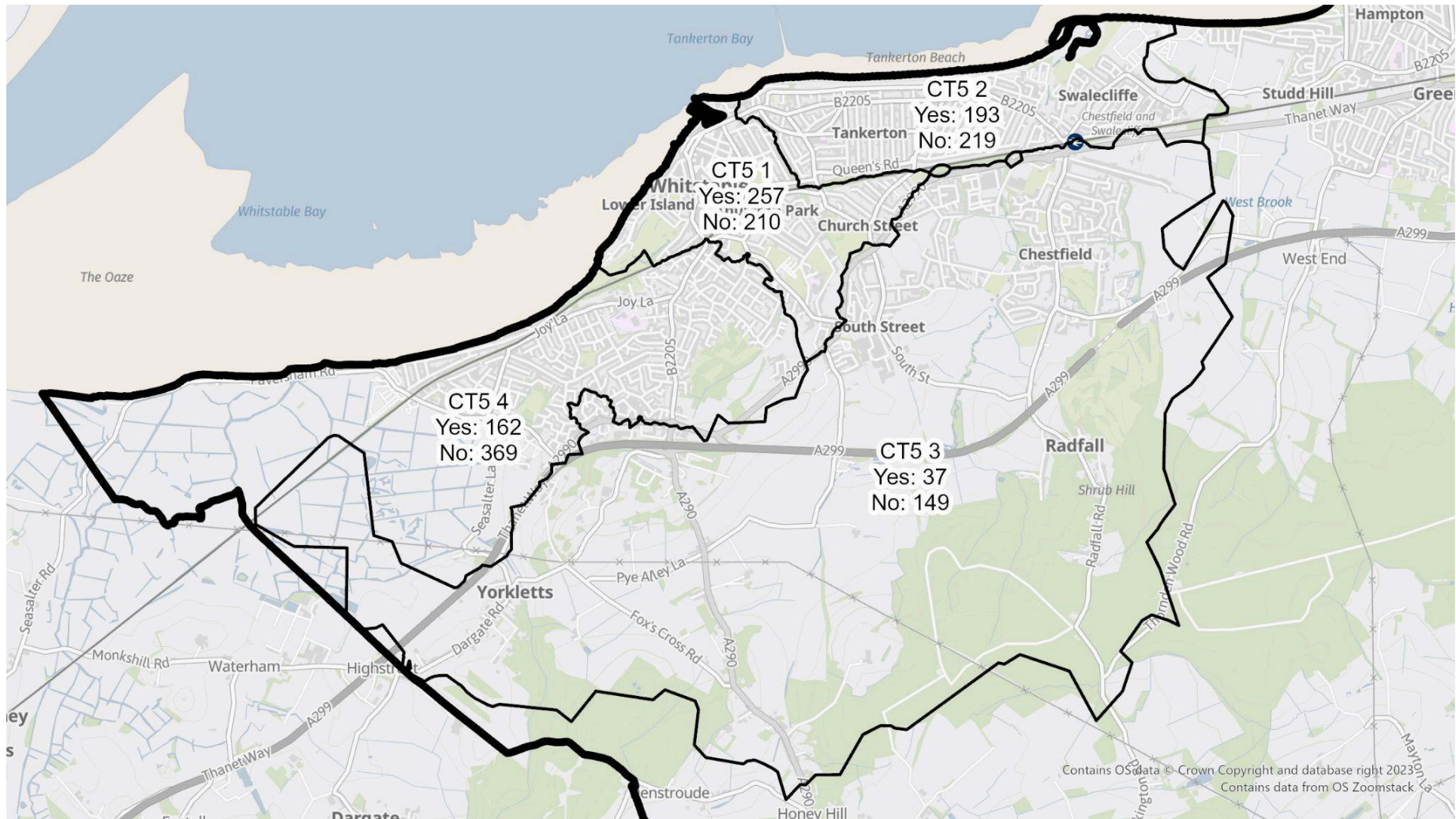
It is hoped that the findings from this consultation provide useful insight as to how the council will proceed during the next stage of its community governance review.

6. Appendices

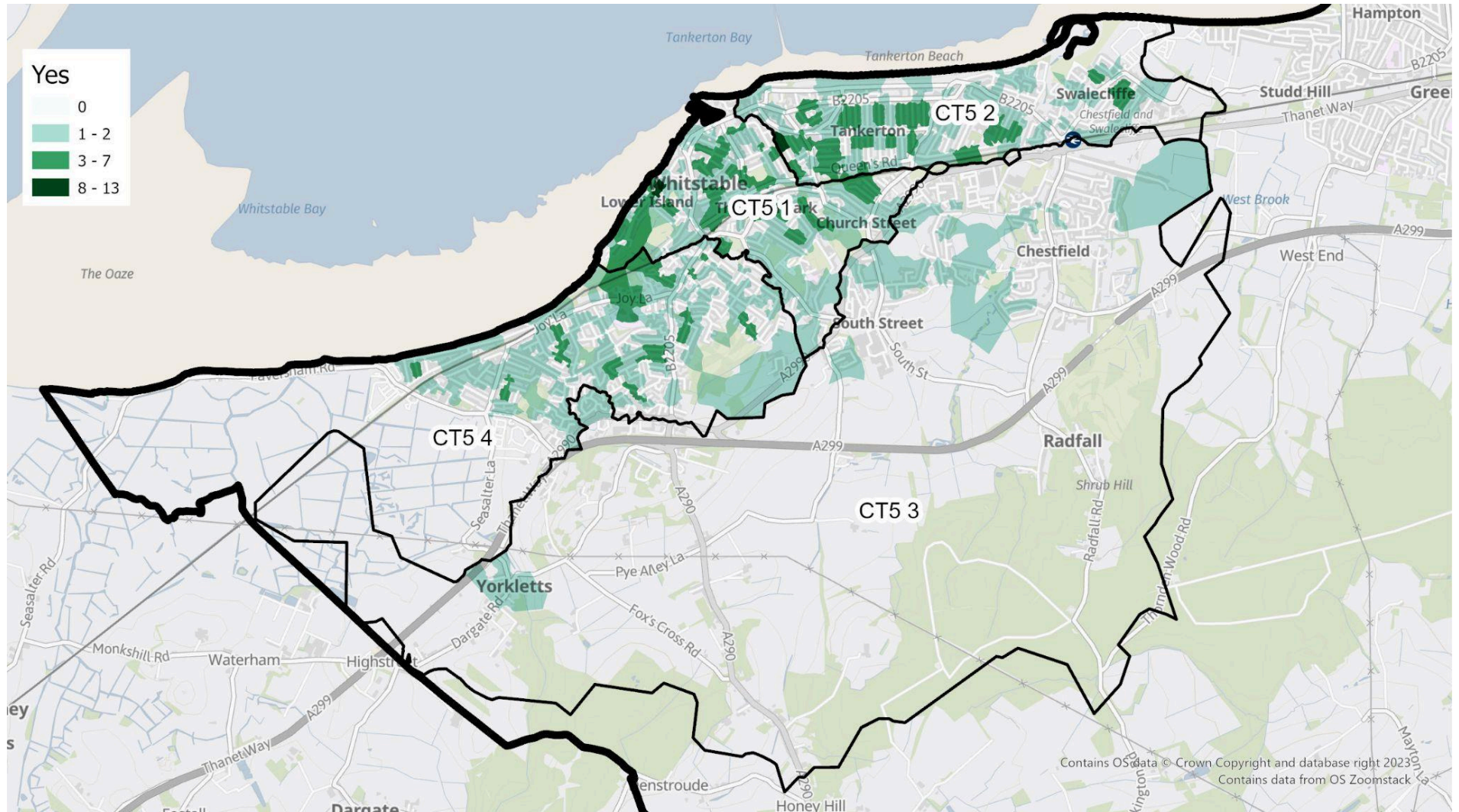
In some of the following appendices, the coloured maps, or 'heat maps' show how responses to the proposal varied by postcode area.

The legend in the top left of the heat maps explains how each shade of colour relates to a certain number of responses. For instance, with the maps showing 'No' responses, darker red means there were more 'No' responses in a postcode area than another area with a lighter shade of red.

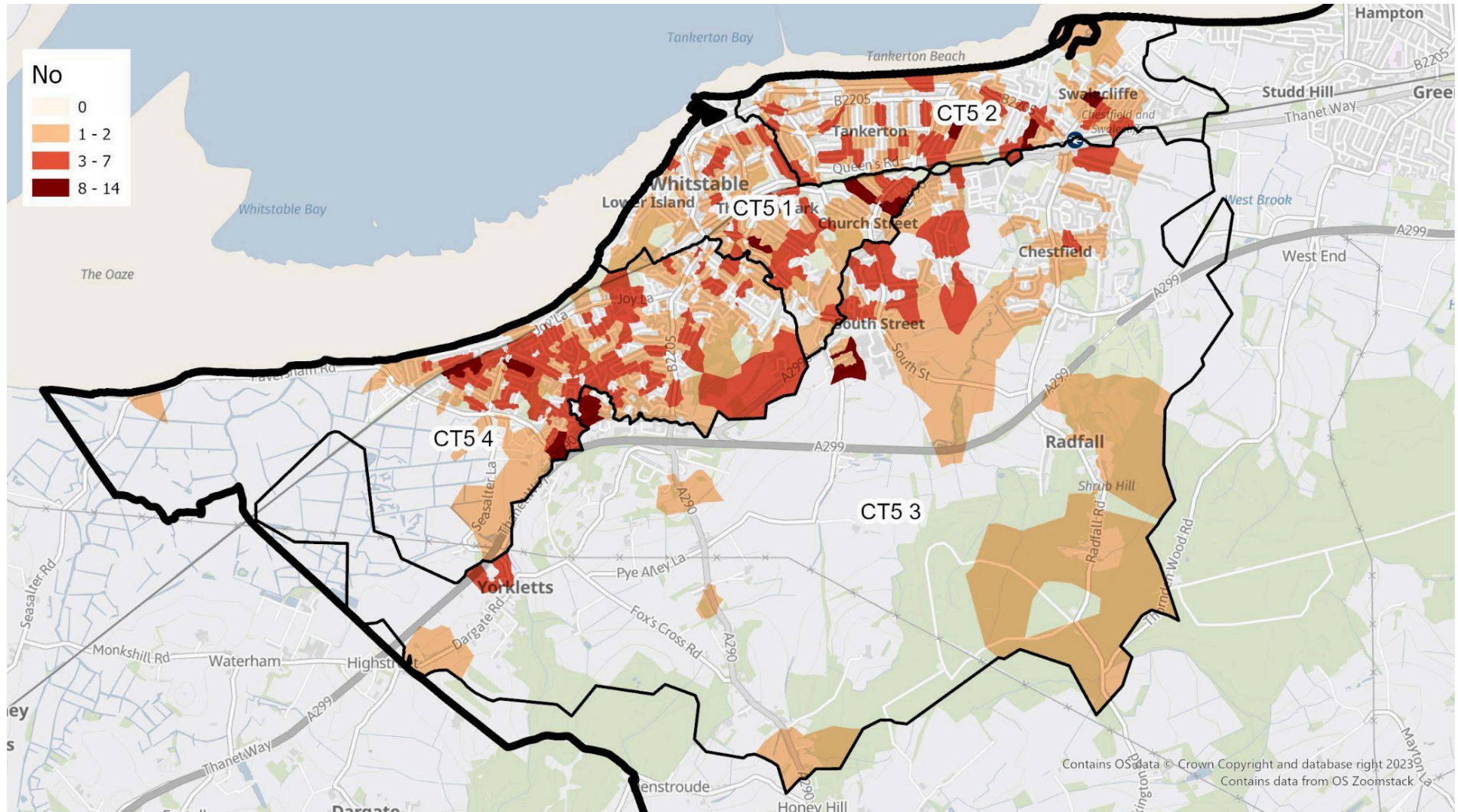
Appendix 1 - Whitstable by postcode area



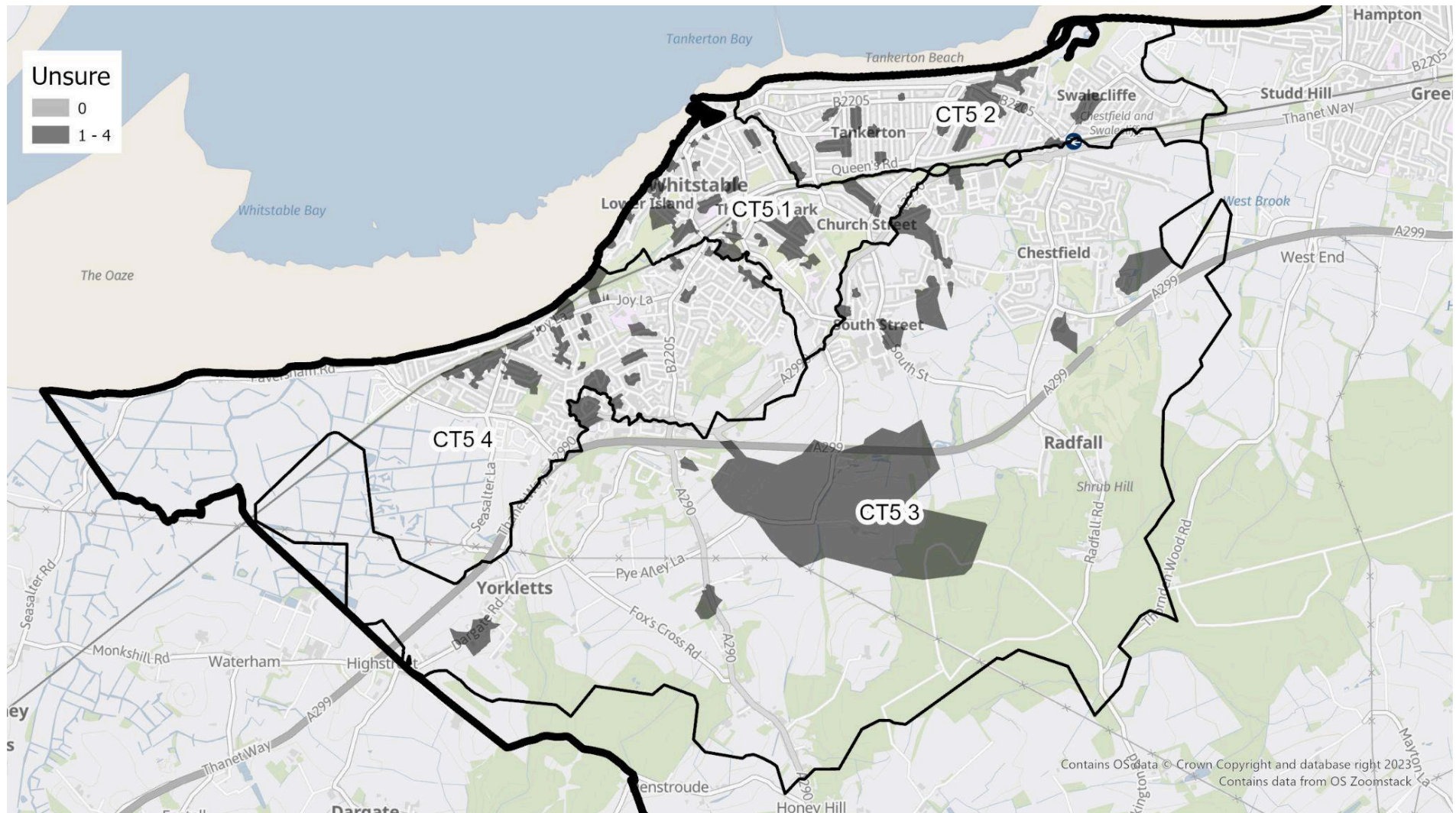
Appendix 1.1 - 'Yes' town council (by postcode area)



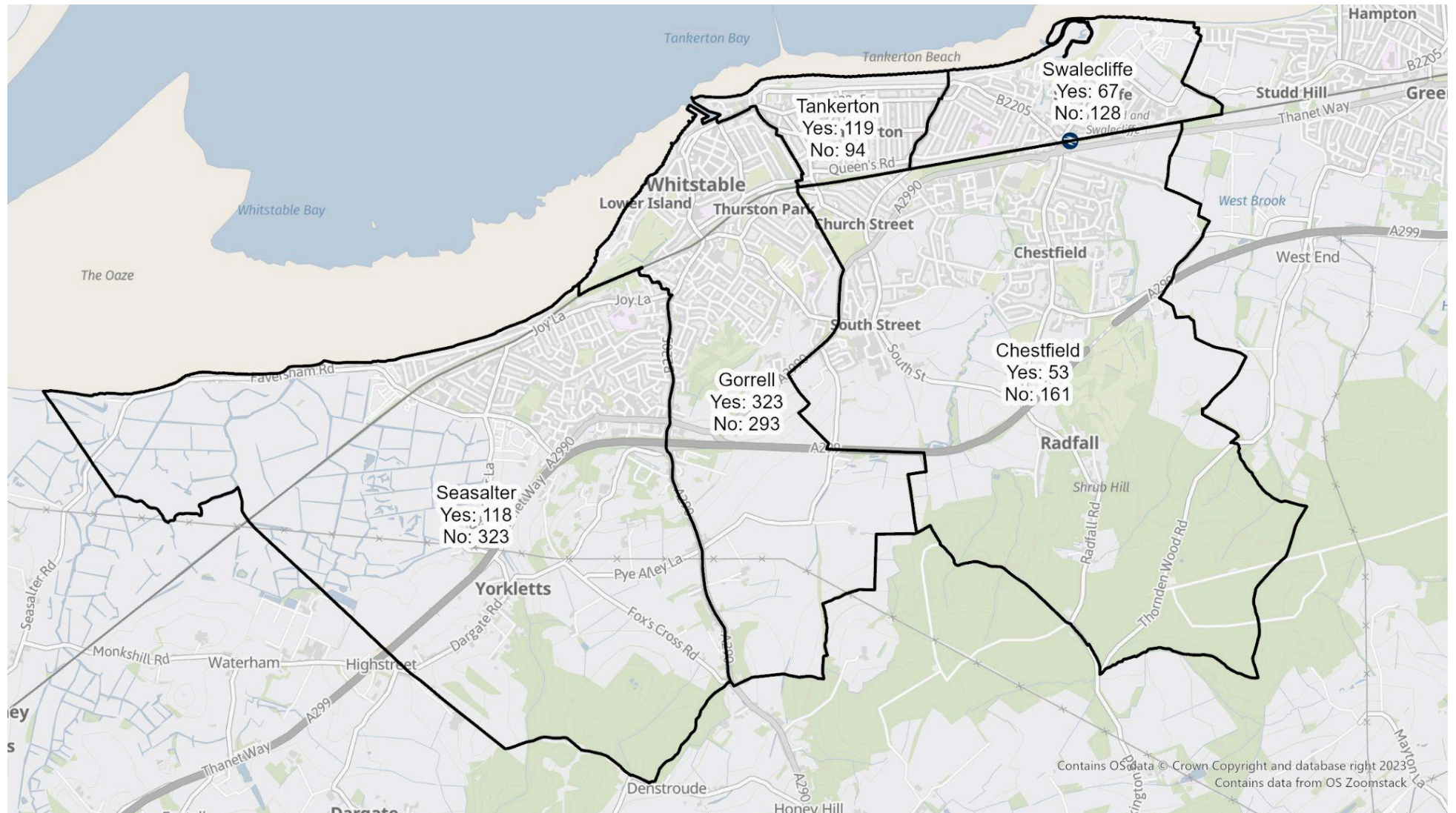
Appendix 1.2 - 'No' town council (by postcode area)



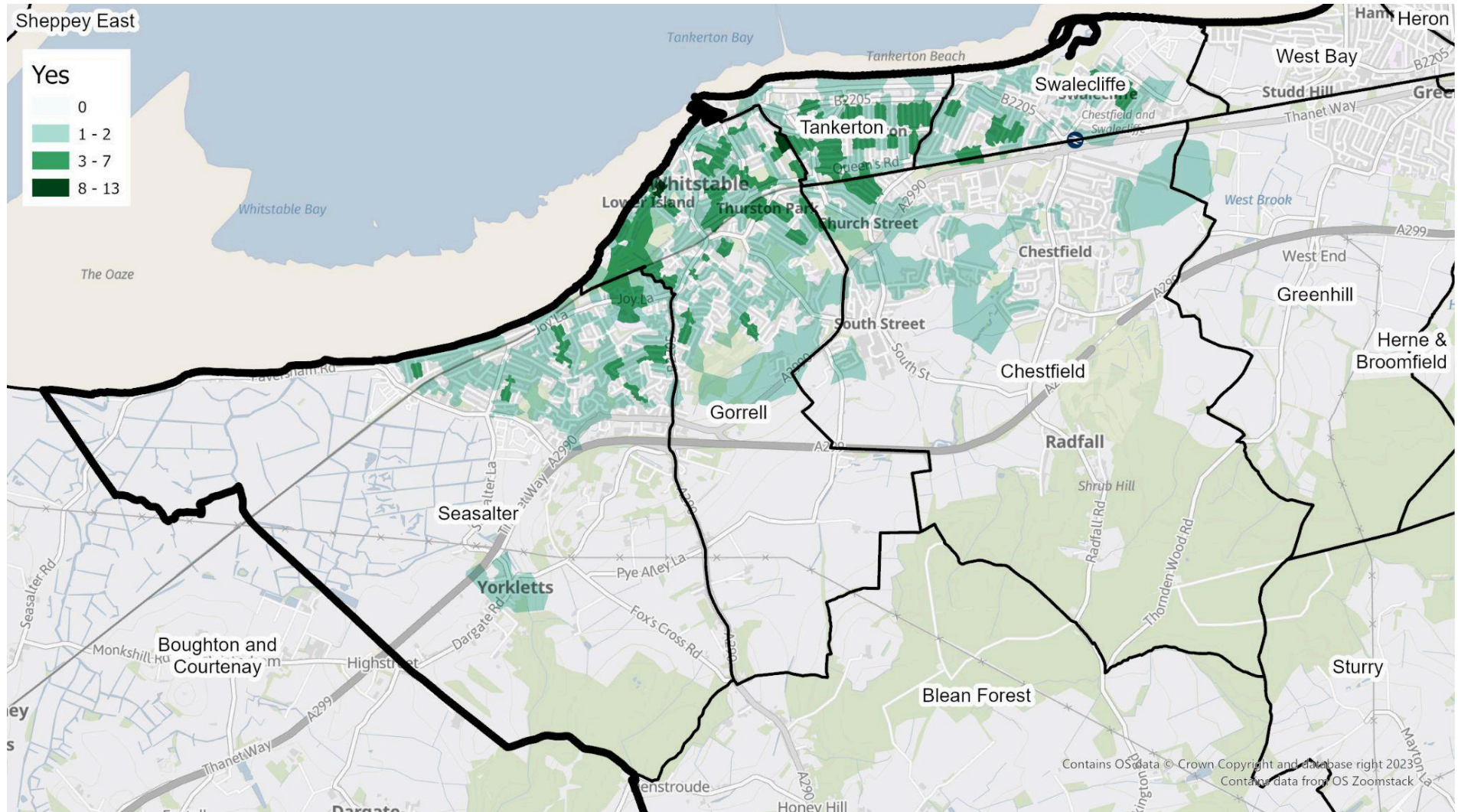
Appendix 1.3 - 'Not sure' town council (by postcode area)



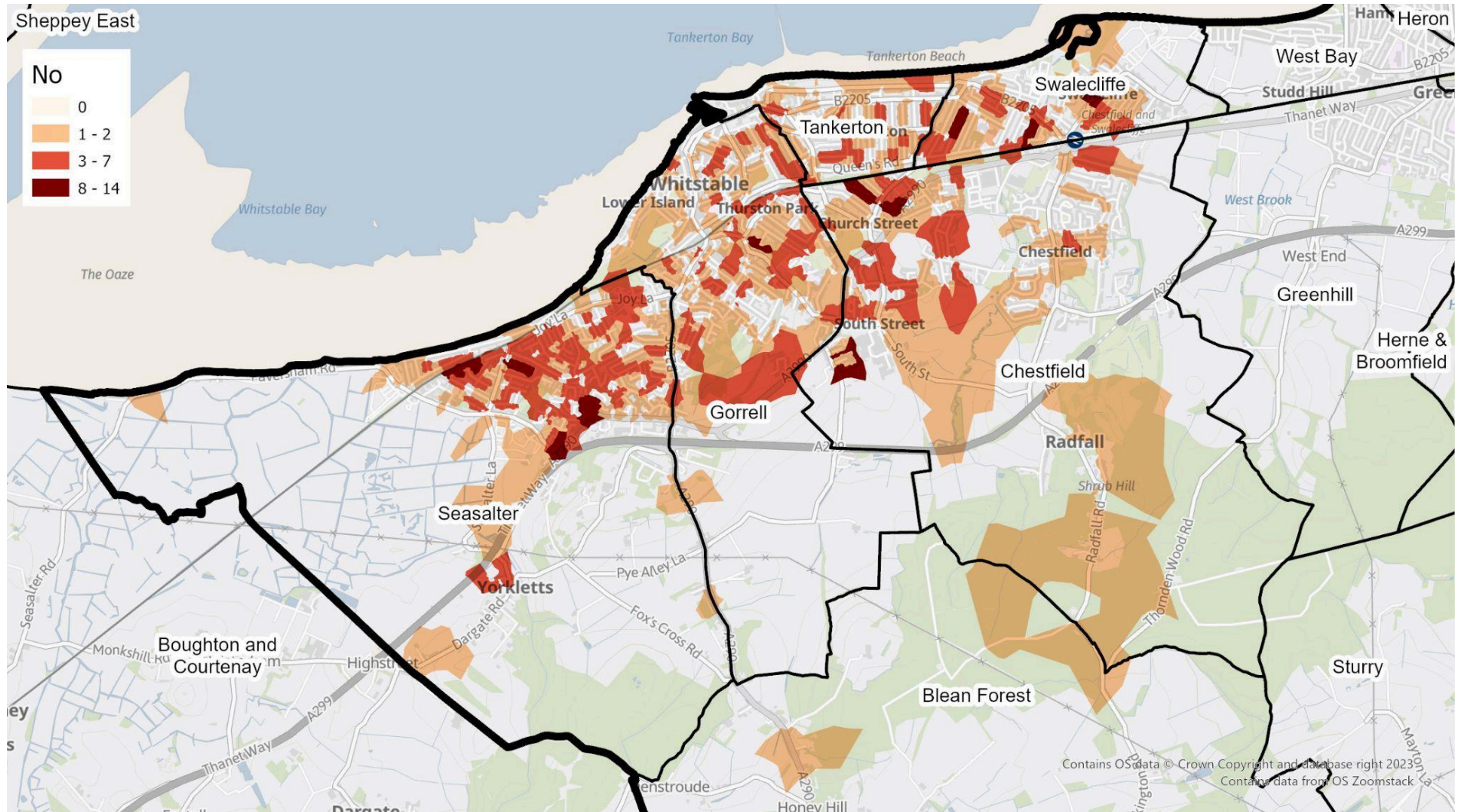
Appendix 2 - Whitstable by ward



Appendix 2.1 - 'Yes' town council (by ward)



Appendix 2.2 - 'No' town council (by ward)



Appendix 3 - Consultation responses (raw data)

[2024 CGR comments spreadsheet YES.xlsx - Google Sheets](#)

[2024 CGR comments spreadsheet NO or NOT SURE.xlsx - Google Sheets](#)