

Consultation Feedback Report

Proposed Public Spaces Protection Order: Dogs in Council-Owned Cemeteries

**Bath & North East
Somerset Council**

Improving People's Lives



Introduction

Between 5th January 2026 and 2nd February 2026, Bath and North East Somerset Council (B&NES) held a public consultation to obtain feedback on a draft proposal governing the behaviour of dogs and dog owners in Council-owned cemeteries.

This is a report of the public consultation, including the process undertaken and a collation of comments made in response to the consultation. A verbatim record of all comments received is available in Appendix 1.

Proposals were made following repeated reports of issues caused by the behaviour of dogs and their owners in Council-owned cemeteries.

The Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) is proposing to introduce formal rules, enforceable by fixed penalty or prosecution, which will require owners to:

- Keep their dogs on a short lead (2 metres or less)*
- Immediately clean up and remove any dog mess

* this is a commonly used control length, and allows reasonable freedom while maintaining control,

Consultation sought feedback from:

- Chief of Police
- Police & Crime Commissioner
- Cemetery visitors
- Local residents
- Dog owners
- Other interested parties concerned about the environment in these public spaces

To alert target groups to the proposal and enable them to provide feedback, the Council undertook the following communications:

Stakeholder Notification

Two emails were sent to all Ward Councillors representing the areas in which the proposed PSPO would apply: the first notifying them of the intention to launch the consultation, and the second advising that the consultation was live and open for responses.

Two emails were also sent to community groups and stakeholders with a direct link or interest in any of the cemeteries included in the proposed PSPO. These groups included Parish Councils, Friends groups, and the Bath Residents Group. As with Councillors, one email notified them of the intention to consult, and the other confirmed that the consultation was live.

Posters were installed on the gates of each cemetery covered by the proposed PSPO, informing visitors of the consultation and providing a link and QR code to take part.

Publicity channels

- B&NES website - One press release was issued on Newsroom (<https://newsroom.bathnes.gov.uk/news/council-proposes-public-space-protection-order-keep-dogs-leads-cemeteries>). All press releases are emailed to around 200 regional and local media contacts, parish and town councils, all B&NES councillors and the local MPs.
- B&NES website – Banner on Bereavement Services landing page with consultation link.
- B&NES weekly newsletter e-Connect.
- B&NES Social Media channels (Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) weekly posts throughout consultation period.
- Haycombe Cemetery & Crematorium Facebook page, regular posts throughout consultation period.

Estimated audience reached through all social media channels: Approx 11,400

Feedback Summary

A total of 220 responses were made to the consultation.

The most comments received raised issues relating to:

- Many felt that restricting dog walkers could reduce natural surveillance and negatively affect safety.
- A common view was that most dog owners behave responsibly, with issues attributed to a small minority.
- Several highlighted the wellbeing benefits of visiting cemeteries with dogs, alongside concerns about limited alternative secure green spaces.
- Others shared experiences of fear or distress caused by off-lead dogs and supported clearer rules and stronger enforcement.

Consultation background

B&NES Council is responding to repeated reports of issues caused by the behaviour of dogs and their owners in council-owned cemeteries. We are proposing introducing formal rules, enforceable by fines, which will require owners to:

- Keep their dogs on a short lead (2 metres or less)
- Immediately clean up and remove any dog mess

We have tried to address these issues in our cemeteries in several ways:

- Improved signage
- Staff engagement and training
- Public communications

However, these issues persist, and in some cases, cemetery visitors and staff faced unacceptable and abusive behaviour, as well as instances of uncontrolled defecation. It was felt that more formal enforcement is necessary, through the introduction of a Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO).

This proposal is a proactive step toward ensuring these spaces remain safe, clean, and respectful for all visitors, council staff, contractors and the public alike. The initiative aligns with B&NES Council's commitment to enhancing community well-being and maintaining public spaces.

Without a PSPO, enforcement options are limited, particularly around on-lead requirements.

Proposed Area

The PSPO is proposed to apply in the following locations:

- Locksbrook Cemetery, Upper Bristol Road, Bath, BA1 3DQ
- Harptree Cemetery, West Harptree Road, East Harptree, Somerset, BS40 6BQ
- St. Michael's Cemetery, St. Michael's Road, Lower Weston, Bath, BA1 3BJ
- Smallcombe Cemetery, 6 Widcombe Hill, Bath, BA2 6DD
- St. James Cemetery, Lower Bristol Road, Bath, BA2 3BQ
- Twerton Cemetery, Bellotts Rd, Bath, BA2 3RT

Maps of the above cemeteries with outlines can be viewed in Appendix 2.

Consultation Questions

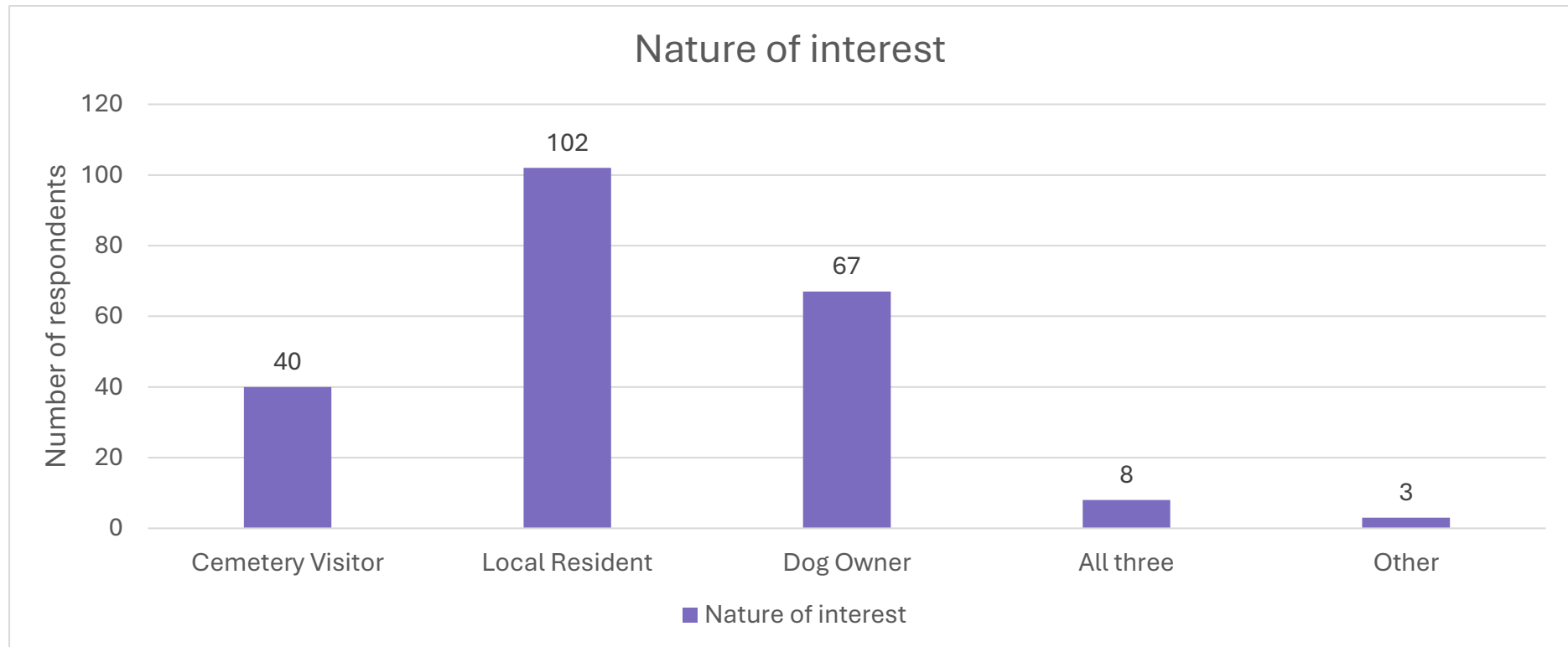
- What is the basis of your interest in this consultation
- How often do you visit Council-owned cemeteries
- How important is it to you that there is a peaceful and respectful atmosphere in cemeteries at all times
- How important to you is the issue of dog fouling in Council-owned cemeteries
- Do you support the proposal to require dog owners to clean up after their dogs in Council-owned cemeteries
- Do you agree that dogs should be kept on a lead of 2 metres or less in cemeteries
- Do you believe these measures will help maintain a respectful environment in cemeteries
- Overall, do you support the introduction of this PSPO in Council-owned cemeteries
- Additional comments

The consultation included multiple choice questions as well as open questions allowing free form text responses. The responses were read in full.

Overview of Feedback

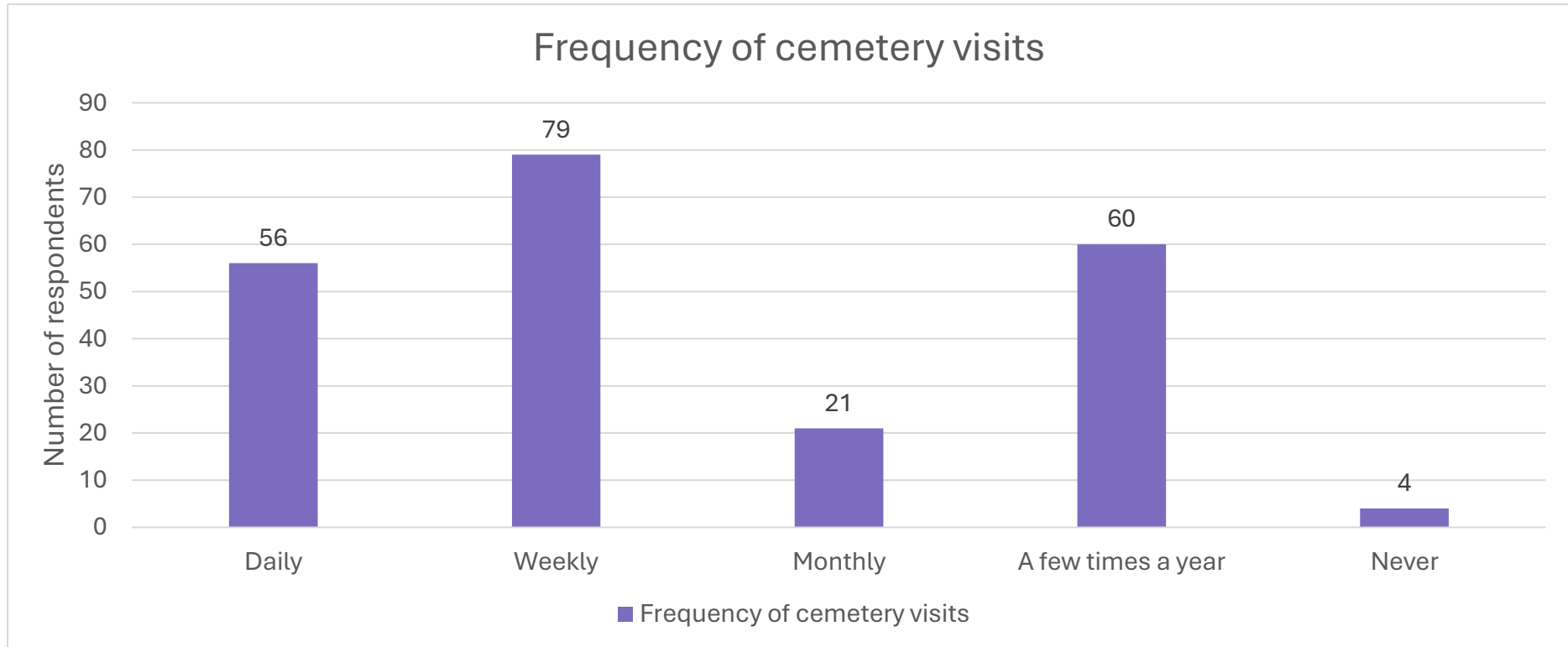
This next section includes an overview of the responses and comments made in the consultation. The questions are displayed in the same order as they were asked in the consultation. The individual results can be found in Appendix 3.

Question 1. What is the basis of your interest in this consultation?



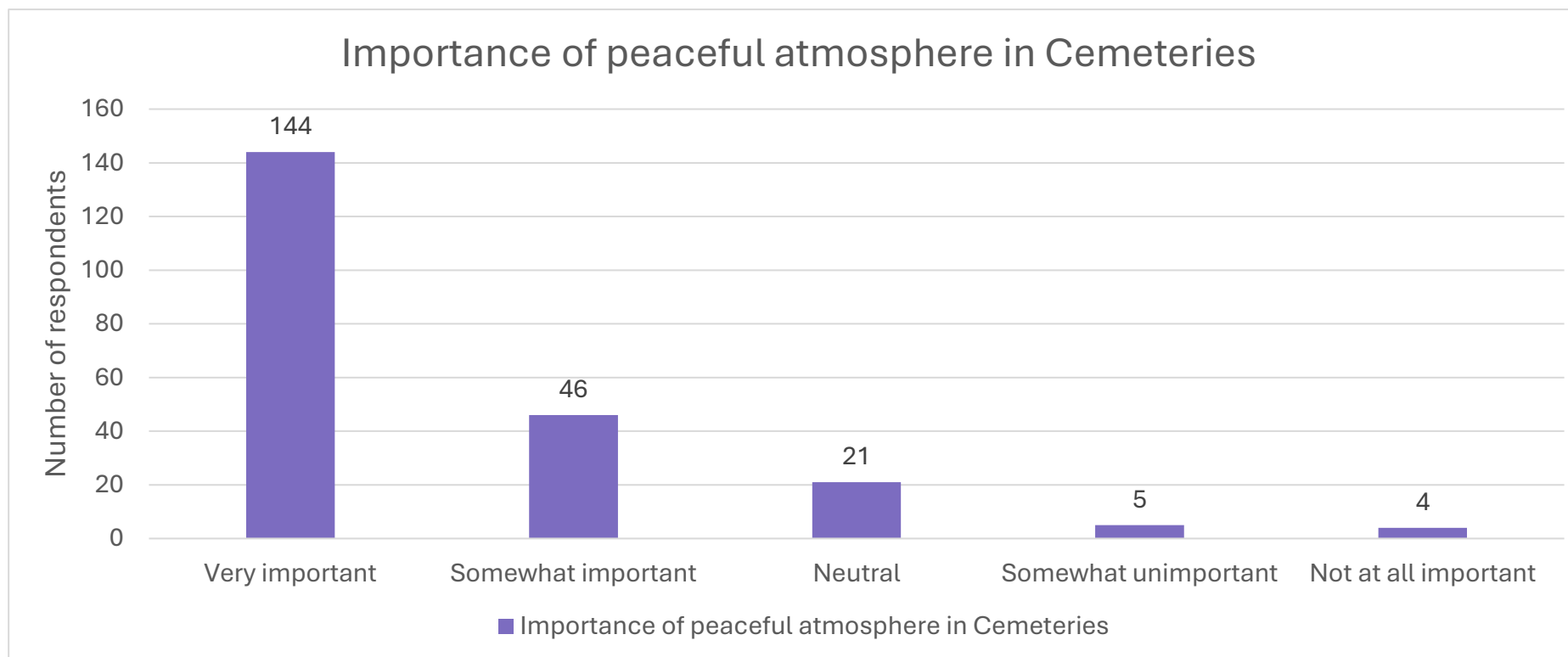
This chart shows that local residents make up the largest share of respondents (102), followed by dog owners (67) and cemetery visitors (40). A small number selected all three interests (8) or other (3), indicating that the consultation primarily engaged people with a direct residential or dog-walking connection to the area.

Question 2. How often do you visit Council-owned cemeteries?



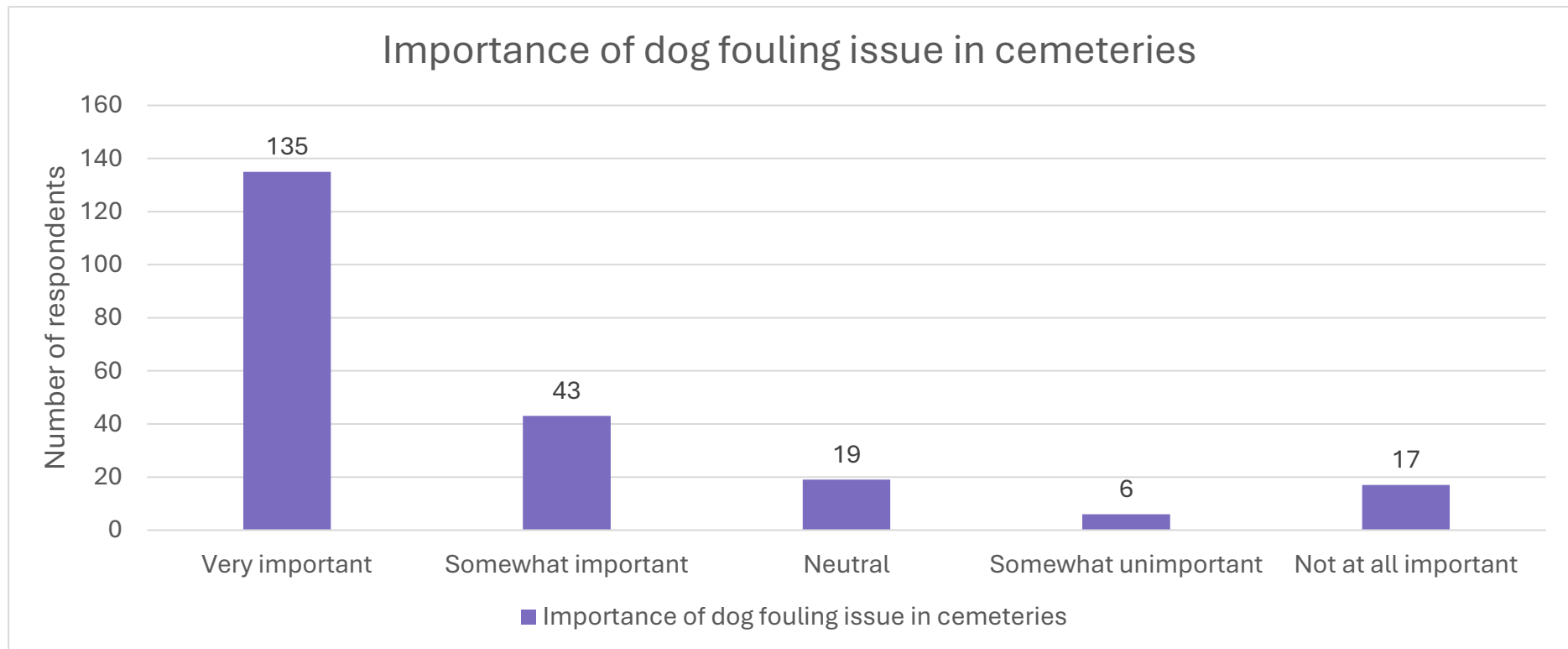
This chart shows that weekly cemetery visits are the most common (79 respondents), followed by a few times a year (60) and daily visits (56), indicating regular but varied patterns of use. Monthly visits (21) and never (4) are much less frequent, suggesting that most respondents have at least some ongoing connection with the named cemeteries.

Question 3. How important is it to you that there is a peaceful and respectful atmosphere in cemeteries at all times?



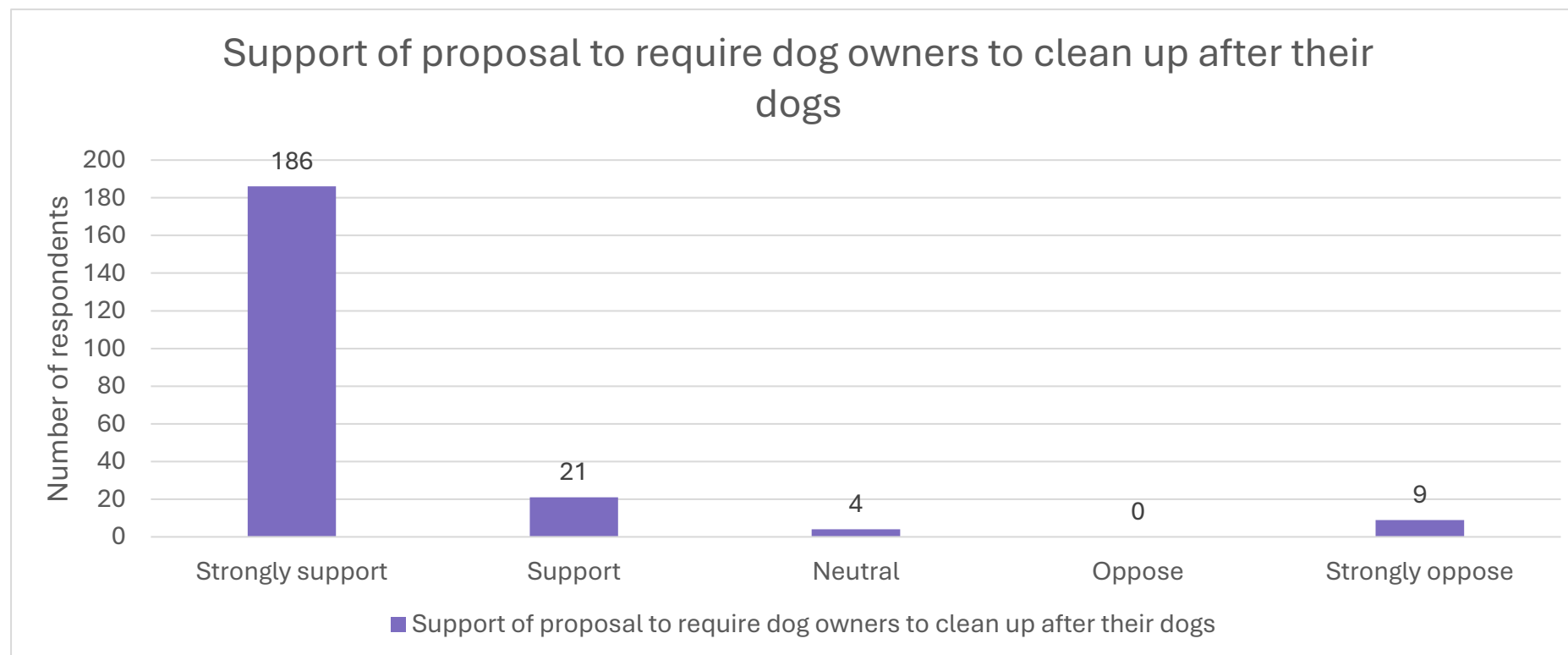
This chart shows an overwhelmingly strong consensus that a peaceful atmosphere in cemeteries is important, with 144 respondents rating it “very important” and 46 “somewhat important.” Only a very small minority (21 neutral, 5 somewhat unimportant, 4 not at all important) felt otherwise, highlighting that maintaining tranquillity is a clear priority for the vast majority of respondents.

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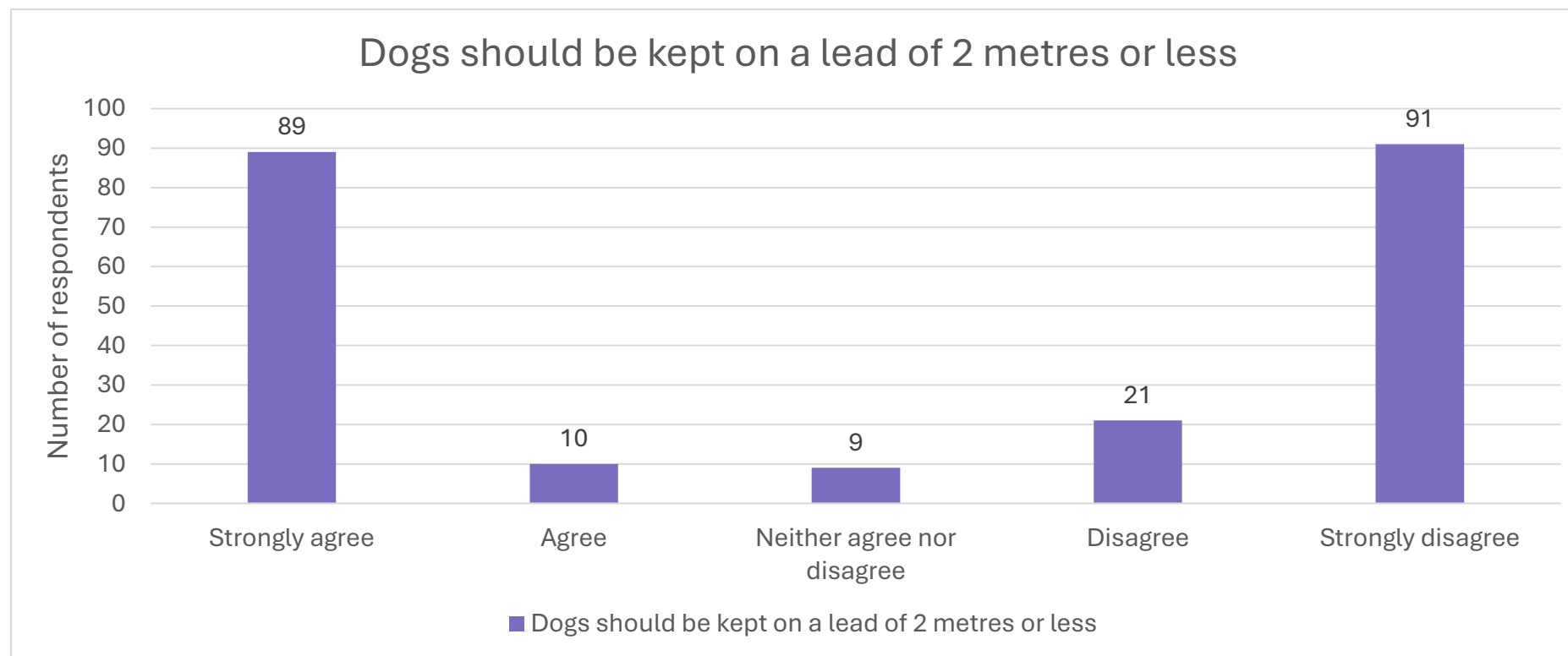
This chart shows that most respondents view dog fouling as a highly important issue, with 135 rating it “very important” and 43 “somewhat important.” Only small numbers felt neutral or unbothered (19 neutral, 6 somewhat unimportant, 17 not at all important), indicating that fouling is widely seen as a key concern that strongly influences perceptions of cemetery cleanliness and respect.

Question 5. Do you support the proposal to require dog owners to clean up after their dogs in Council-owned cemeteries?



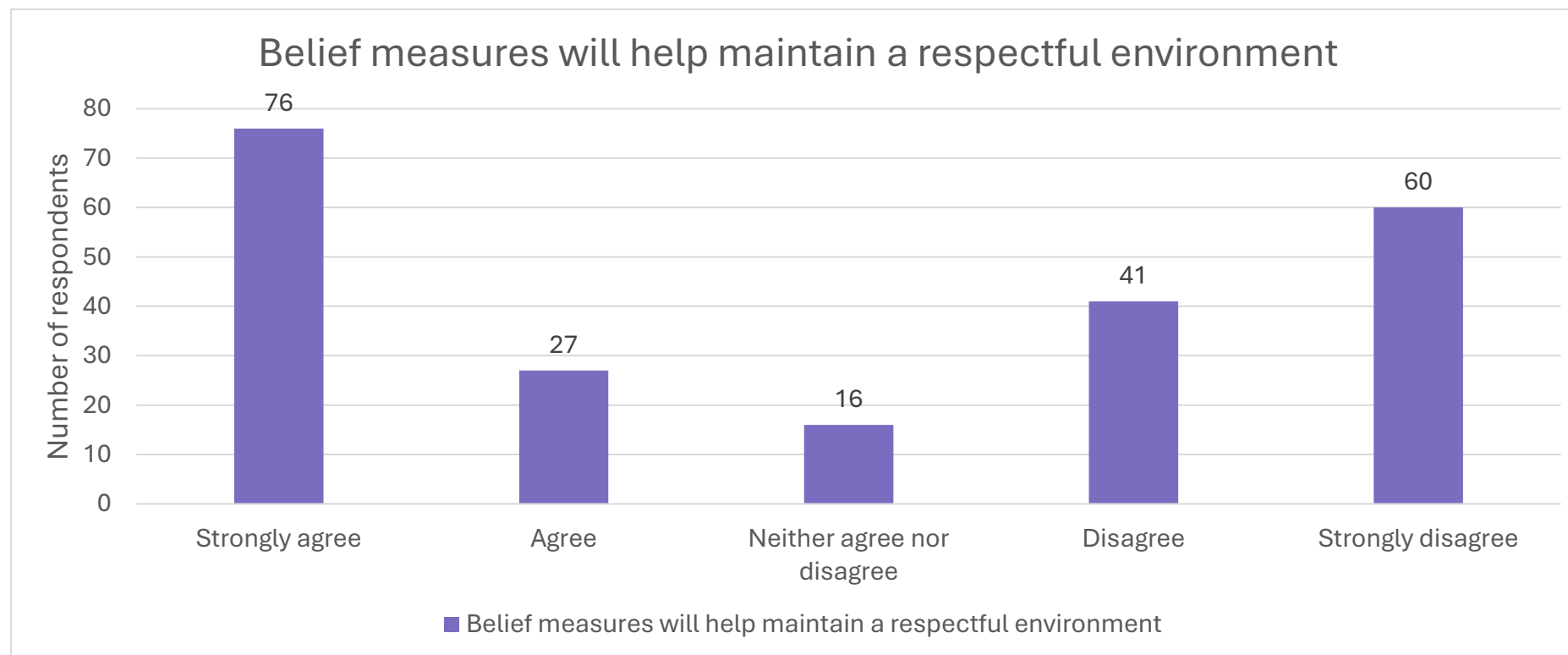
This chart shows an overwhelming support for requiring dog owners to clean up after their dogs, with 186 respondents strongly supporting and 21 supporting the proposal. Only 13 respondents in total expressed neutrality or opposition, highlighting that cleanliness and responsible dog ownership are common expectations among participants.

Question 6. Do you agree that dogs should be kept on a lead of 2 metres or less in Council-owned cemeteries?



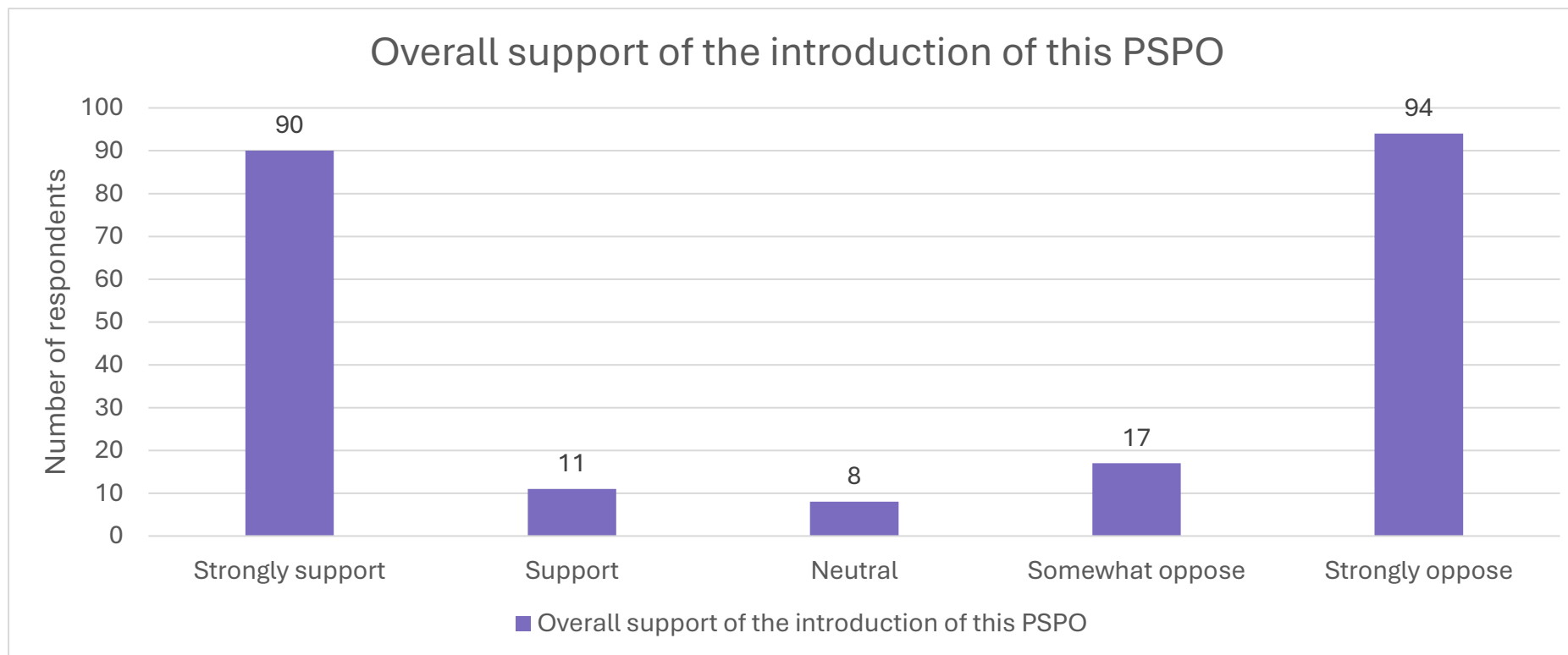
This chart shows a clear split in opinion on the 2-metre lead proposal, with 89 respondents strongly agreeing but an almost equal number (91) strongly disagreeing. While a small group expressed mild agreement or neutrality, the leading responses sit at the extremes, indicating this is the highly dividing issue among respondents.

Question 7. Do you believe these measures will help maintain a respectful environment in Council-owned cemeteries?



This chart shows a clear divide in confidence about whether the proposed measures will help maintain a respectful environment. While a substantial group strongly agree (76) or agree (27) that the measures will be effective, a similarly large group disagree (41) or strongly disagree (60), indicating that many respondents remain unconvinced and see the measures as insufficient or inappropriate in their proposed state.

Question 8. Overall, do you support the introduction of this PSPO in Council-owned cemeteries?



This chart shows a strong polarisation in views on the introduction of the PSPO, with 90 respondents strongly supporting it but an even larger group (94 strongly opposing) the proposal. While small numbers selected moderate support, neutrality, or mild opposition, the dominance of the two extreme positions indicates that the PSPO proposal is highly contentious, generating strong reactions both for and against.

Question 9. Additional Comments

Comments were made in relation to the following categories. Due to the particularly open nature of these responses, the following does not include information about how many comments fell within each category. Instead, it provides a summary of the categories to provide an overview of comments made. A list of verbatim comments can be found at Appendix 1.

PSPO Consultation Results and Feedback Summary Table of common themes from respondents opposed to the proposal and Council responses

Common Themes	Feedback Summary from Consultation	Council Response
Community & Social Value	Comments frequently describe cemeteries as vital community hubs where dog walkers form social connections, support older residents, deter antisocial behaviour, and maintain the space. Many highlight that removing off-lead access would harm community cohesion.	The Council acknowledges the strong community value described. A balanced approach will consider protecting community use while ensuring respectful behaviour in cemeteries. The Council does not concur that dogs being kept on leads will harm community cohesion and considers it will in fact enhance this aspect.
Safety & Natural Surveillance	Respondents report that dog walkers provide natural surveillance, discouraging drug use, rough sleeping, vandalism, and other antisocial behaviour. Several fear that restricting dog walkers will reduce safety.	The importance of natural surveillance is recognised. It is accepted and agreed that the presence of people utilising the cemeteries for genuine purposes does indeed enhance the overall wellbeing of the space.
Responsible Ownership & Control	Most respondents say responsible dog owners pick up after dogs, keep them under control, and use leads when mourners or contractors are present. They argue that irresponsible owners will not change under a PSPO.	We note that most owners act responsibly. Enforcement will prioritise persistent issues while recognising good practice.

Cemetery as Green/Enclosed Space (Off-lead exercise need)	Cemeteries are widely described as enclosed, safe areas where dogs can exercise off-lead—particularly important due to limited green spaces in Bath. Many say there are no suitable alternatives for off-lead exercise.	While this view was expressed by some respondents, the Council considers that alternative green spaces are available for dog exercise. Cemeteries are not a community space for exercising dogs off leads, however, the PSPO proposal is not to prevent people walking their dogs, but to ensure they are kept on leads whilst doing so. Proposals have considered local context and access needs.
Wellbeing & Mental Health	Many respondents describe mental health benefits from daily dog walking, peace, reflection, and bereavement support. Several mourners say dogs bring comfort when visiting graves.	We recognise the therapeutic value of dog walking for many residents, including those experiencing bereavement. We are not seeking to prevent this and wholeheartedly encourage this but with dogs kept on leads.
Dog Fouling & Enforcement	Most say fouling is caused by a small minority and that responsible owners already clean up. Some point out fox/badger faeces are misattributed to dogs. Many prefer targeted enforcement and more bins over restrictions.	Fouling remains unacceptable. The Council will explore targeted enforcement.
Opposition to PSPO / Legal & Proportionality	Widespread concerns that the PSPO is disproportionate, lacks evidence, duplicates existing laws, and unfairly criminalises responsible owners. Many request site-specific rather than blanket rules.	Evidence will be reviewed and ensure any measures are proportionate, legally justified, and site-specific where needed. A site specific PSPO can incorporate additional laws over and above those already in existence. The PSPO proposal is not intended to criminalise responsible owners.

Wildlife Excrement / Not Dog	Several respondents note large amounts of fox and badger faeces in cemeteries, arguing that fouling cannot be attributed exclusively to dogs.	We recognise wildlife contribute to fouling.
Respect for Mourners / Etiquette	Respondents say dog walkers give space to mourners, use leads when appropriate, and behave respectfully. Many report rarely seeing visitors tending graves in older cemeteries.	Respect for mourners is essential. Measures will focus on maintaining decorum without deterring responsible users.
Suggestions & Alternatives	Suggestions include more bins, clearer signage, community stewards, donation schemes, and targeted enforcement of fouling rather than lead restrictions.	Suggestions such as additional bins, signage, and community stewardship will be evaluated for feasibility.
Access, Equality & Environment	Concerns include mobility issues, lack of alternative enclosed spaces, forcing residents to drive, and disproportionate impacts on older and disabled people.	Impacts on accessibility and environmental sustainability will be factored into decision-making to avoid disadvantaging specific groups. The EqlA has been reviewed and takes into consideration these attributes. No disproportionate impacts have been identified that cannot be mitigated through reasonable adjustments.

PSPO Consultation Results and Feedback Summary Table of common themes from respondents in favour to the proposal and Council responses

Common Themes	Feedback Summary from Consultation	Council Response
Abuse or harassment from dog owners	Many respondents reported being subjected to verbal abuse or intimidation when asking dog owners to control or leash their dogs. This contributed to strong support for stricter rules.	This feedback aligns with concerns previously raised by staff and visitors
Fear caused by uncontrolled or off-lead dogs	People frequently described feeling frightened or unsafe due to dogs running at them, jumping up, or behaving unpredictably while off lead.	These issues directly informed the rationale for proposing the PSPO
Aggressive or dangerous dog behaviour	Several comments highlighted experiences with aggressive dogs, including incidents that prevented individuals from returning to cemeteries.	This feedback aligns with concerns previously raised by staff and visitors
Dog fouling and lack of owner responsibility	Respondents expressed frustration about persistent dog fouling, with many noting that owners often fail to pick up after their pets, making cemeteries unhygienic and disrespectful spaces.	This feedback aligns with concerns previously raised by staff and visitors

Disrespect toward graves, mourners, and cemetery purpose	A significant number felt that allowing dogs off leads shows disrespect for graves, mourners, and the intended reflective nature of cemeteries.	These experiences form the basis to the proposed PSPO
Support for enforcement and stronger rules	Repeated calls were made for clearer rules, on-lead requirements, and consistent enforcement to address ongoing issues.	These issues directly informed the rationale for proposing the PSPO
Cemeteries not appropriate for exercising dogs	Many respondents argued that cemeteries should not be used as informal dog exercise areas, noting that numerous other green spaces are available.	These experiences form the basis to the proposed PSPO
Support for expanding PSPOs to other areas	Some supported extending similar controls to parks, footpaths, cycle paths, and other public spaces where off-lead dogs cause problems.	This does not fall within the remit of this PSPO proposal but these comments have been noted
Concerns about dog owners ignoring existing signage	Respondents noted that many owners disregard current rules and signage, reinforcing support for enforceable PSPO measures.	These experiences form the basis to the proposed PSPO

Next Steps

The feedback received through this consultation will be used to inform the Council's decision on whether to proceed with the proposed Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO), and if so, whether any amendments or site-specific variations are required.

In line with the Council's governance arrangements, a recommendation will be brought forward for Cabinet Member consideration through a Single Member Decision. This will take into account the consultation feedback, proportionality, equality impacts, enforceability, and operational considerations before any final decision is taken.