



**BOROUGH OF
BARROW
IN FURNESS**

A town council for Barrow?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Below, you can find the answers to a number of frequently asked questions about town and parish councils.

1. What is a town or parish council?

A town council is another name for a parish council. They are both on the first tier of local government. Town and parish councils (also known as local councils) are statutory local authorities with tax raising powers. A local council has councillors elected by the people who live in its area. It has a town clerk, who is an employee of the council and who looks after the administration of its activities and it can employ other members of staff too.

2. Why consider creating a town council?

A town council can be a strong voice for their community. It can assist with the provision of services, improve community engagement and improve local democracy by giving residents a greater say on the matters of importance to residents of the area.

3. What are the powers and duties of a town council?

Town and parish councils have the duty to hold meetings and must employ a 'proper officer' (the official term for the parish/town clerk), they also have a duty to consider biodiversity in all their decisions.

In addition, town and parish councils have a wide range of powers, including the power to:

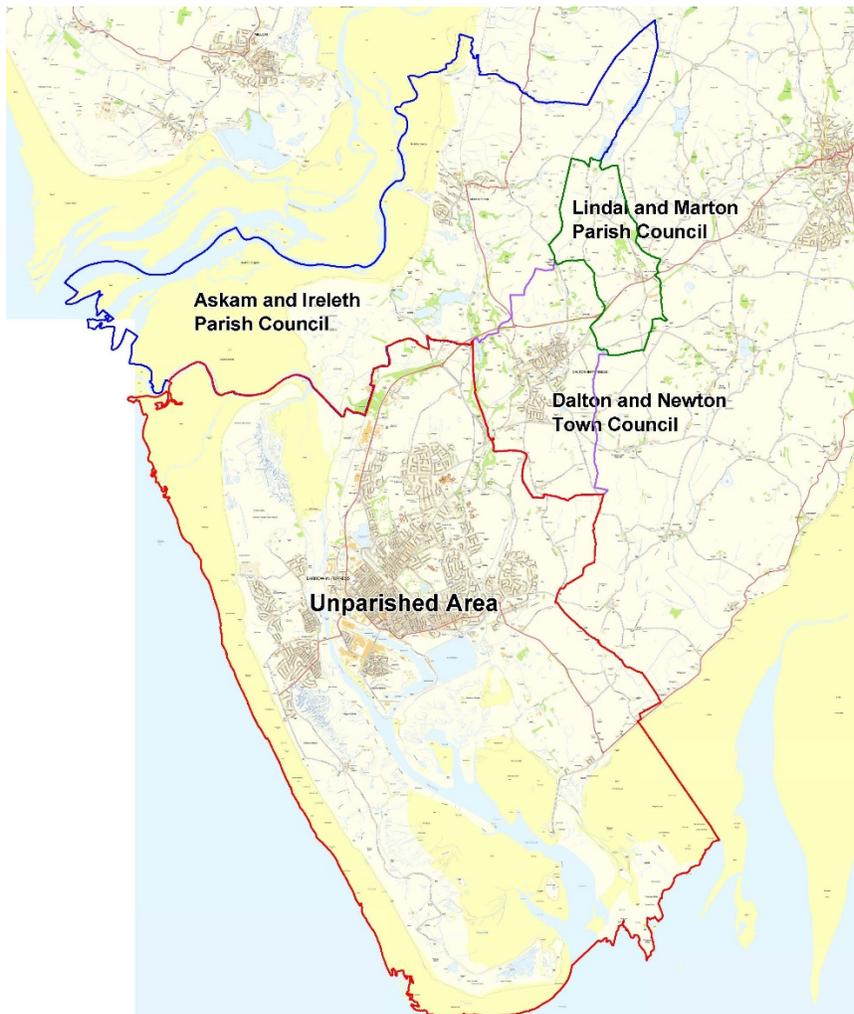
- Respond to planning applications, and to make a neighbourhood plan
- encourage tourism
- work in partnership with the principal authority and other authorities
- choose to make their council chair a mayor and look after the civic regalia of the town
- provide allotments (if a local council exists it is the allotment authority)
- provide and manage public parks and gardens
- run public conveniences
- provide hanging baskets and floral arrangements in the town
- hold events

- provide signage and bus shelters
- provide play areas and play equipment
- own land and buildings such as community centres
- provide grants to local organisations

4. If there is support to create a town council, which area will it cover?

The proposal is that the new town council will cover the whole of the unparished area of the borough of Barrow.

Map of the unparished area of Barrow



5. Can a town council affect planning applications?

Town and parish councils are consultees on planning applications that affect the people who live in its area. They have no power to approve or reject planning applications, only to comment on them. The unitary authority planners should take the views of a local council into account

when making their decisions. When their decisions are against the recommendations of a local council, they have a duty to explain why.

6. Isn't creating a new town council just more bureaucracy?

It is a tier of local government whose focus is purely on Barrow and it can enhance local democracy by speaking for the unparished areas of Barrow. Also, Barrow Borough Council will cease to exist on 31st March 2023 and their functions will pass to a new unitary authority called Westmorland and Furness Council. This new council will cover a large area and will be focused on delivering services that the county and borough councils used to deliver. A town council for Barrow will focus on matters just concerning Barrow.

7. Who can serve on a local council?

Anyone on the electoral register, who is not otherwise barred from standing for public office, who lives within the area, or conducts the majority of their business in the area or lives in a neighbouring parish but within three miles of the new council's boundary.

8. Who can vote for a local council?

Anyone who is on the electoral register in the area the council covers.

9. Who looks after Barrow at the moment?

Barrow Borough Council looks after the unparished area of Barrow borough at the moment.

10. Could a town council for Barrow have a mayor?

A parish council can choose to call itself a town council and the chair of a town council is usually called a mayor. The chair/mayor is elected by the council. Town councils often look after the mayoral regalia of a town rather than let it pass to out of the borough to the new unitary authority.

11. How does a local council raise money?

Local councils raise money through the council tax. This is called a precept. The local council's budget is set annually and Westmorland and Furness Council will be notified how much is to be raised through taxation. This is added to your council tax bill and will vary depending on the council tax band of your home. The amount you pay depends on what services the town or parish council provides.

12. How much may a town council for Barrow cost?

If the precept is agreed at **£20.00** per Band D household (raising £323,165 for the council), the charge for a Band A property will be **£13.33** a year and the charge for a Band B property will be **£15.56** per year per household.

If the precept is agreed at **£40.00** per Band D household (raising £646,330.40 for the council), the charge Band A property will be **£26.67** and for a Band B property will be **£31.11** per year per household

There is more detail on the Finance Information page on the Barrow Borough Council Community Governance Review webpages at:

<https://www.barrowbc.gov.uk/the-council/barrow-council/community-governance-review/>

13. Will businesses have to pay for a new local council?

No. Local council precepts are paid through the domestic council tax.

14. After this consultation, what will happen next?

At the end of this consultation period (21 February – 14 April 2022), Barrow Borough Council will consider the responses.

Depending on the outcome of the consultation with residents and other stakeholders in the town, the Borough Council members will agree some draft recommendations. Residents and stakeholders in the town will then have the chance to comment on these.

Then, Barrow Borough Council members will consider the responses on the draft recommendations and agree final recommendations. These will go to the new unitary authority, Westmorland and Furness (Shadow) Council, and they will make a final decision. If the decision is to create a town council, then they will begin that process.

15. If Westmorland and Furness Council decides not to create one or more new local councils, will that be the end of the matter?

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 makes provision for 'community governance reviews'. These can be instituted by the principal authority, or they can be in response to a public petition. There has to be a gap of two years following a community governance review before the principal authority must respond to renewed calls for the creation of a local council by local electors by instigating another review. In theory local electors could call for a 'community governance review' of the parishing arrangements every two years until they achieve a new local council.

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