

Community Governance Review: Should Barrow have its own Parish Council?

Wiswell Parish Council has asked Ribble Valley Borough Council to again consider dividing the Parish of Wiswell into two parishes to form a new parish of Barrow and leave a smaller, amended, parish of Wiswell. At present Barrow forms part of Wiswell Parish and is represented by Wiswell Parish Council.

A 2010 consultation on this issue was inconclusive: whilst those residents of Wiswell who responded seemed in favour of a split, few residents from Barrow responded, and, those who did, were against a split.

This Council is keen to ensure that any governance arrangements reflect the identities and interests of communities in the Wiswell/Barrow area and that “community governance” in these areas is effective and convenient.

This Council understands that residents in the Wiswell ward would prefer to have their own separate Parish and that the Wiswell Parish Council supports this. This Council has no objection to facilitating this, provided that the residents of Barrow are in agreement/do not object. This Council is therefore seeking the views of interested persons on community governance in Wiswell. In particular, views are sought on whether Wiswell Parish should be divided or changed. The consultation is aimed principally at the residents of Wiswell Parish (i.e. **residents of Wiswell and Barrow**), although views from other groups or individuals are welcomed and will be considered.

The information below is provided to assist you in expressing your views as part of this consultation. Each consultation response (whether electronic or hard copy) will be treated as a response from one person. If there is more than one person in your household, each person will need to complete a response if they want their view to be counted.

Please ensure your response is received by the Council no later than Friday 28 September 2012 by:

- Using the online consultation response tool at:
http://www.ribblevalley.gov.uk/info/200214/have_your_say/347/consultation_and_custom_er_satisfaction/5
- Handing your responses into one of your parish councillors or your parish clerk (whose details are on your parish notice board) who will pass them onto this Council;
- Posting them, or giving them into the office of Ribble Valley Borough Council, Council Offices, Church Walk, Clitheroe, BB7 2RA, marked for the attention of Debbie Nuttall;

If you have any questions about this consultation, please contact Debbie Nuttall on 01200 414403 (Monday–Wednesday pm), or at debbie.nuttall@ribblevalley.gov.uk.

Background

The Parish of Wiswell comprises the villages of Barrow and Wiswell and the surrounding areas.

For electoral purposes the parish is divided into two wards: the Barrow Ward and the Wiswell Ward. On the electoral register on 1 December 2011 there were 595 electors in the Barrow ward and 256 electors in the Wiswell ward.

The boundary between the two wards was fixed in 1951. The fixing of the boundary pre-dates the building of the A59 bypass. Both follow the same general line but are not identical. Park Farm, for example, is situated in the Barrow ward even though it is on the "Wiswell" side of the bypass.

A map showing the parish of Wiswell and its two wards is on page 5.

The parish is represented by Wiswell Parish Council. This is made up of eight elected councillors (four for each ward), elected every four years.

Wiswell Parish Council has asked this Council to consider dividing Wiswell Parish into two parishes: Barrow and Wiswell. At present Barrow is represented by the Wiswell Parish Council. Some residents of Wiswell ward feel keenly that they should have their own Parish Council, separate to that of Barrow. This issue has been under consideration for some years now.

Wiswell Parish Council feels there is little community interest between the settlements of Wiswell and Barrow. They are geographically separate and have separate identities and cultures. Barrow has grown over the last ten years and is continuing to grow. It has a younger community, a school, play areas and bus services. It is beside a busy main road and contains a large site for development. Wiswell, in contrast, has had little recent development. It remains a rural quiet village. The Parish Council feels that the A59 would provide a natural boundary between the two wards.

This Council has no objection to creating a separate parish council for Barrow along ward lines, provided the residents of Wiswell and Barrow want this.

Parish councils and their powers

Parish councils are the most local level of elected local government. They represent the interests of a particular community and are statutory bodies. They act as a sounding board for local opinion and have important rights of consultation. The range of services and amenities that parish councils provide varies enormously.

Parish councillors are elected for a four-year term (or co-opted for the remainder). An individual member has no statutory authority on his/her own. The power of the parish council comes from the majority of councillors acting together. Legislation specifies that each parish council must have at least five parish councillors; there is no maximum number.

Parish councils are funded principally by an annual precept. Every year a parish council is required to estimate its expenditure for the forthcoming year. It then 'precepts' the amount required from the Borough Council. The combined cost of having separate parish councils for Barrow and Wiswell will likely be greater than at present, although, in the context of the overall level of tax, any such increase may be relatively small.

Legal considerations and statutory guidance

Ribble Valley Borough Council has responsibility for undertaking Community Governance Reviews. The purpose of a Community Governance Review (a "Review") is to provide a mechanism whereby the boundaries of areas served by

Parish Councils and their related electoral arrangements can be amended, where appropriate.

The Borough Council has agreed to carry out another Review in relation to the area of Wiswell. When the last review was carried out in 2010, many Wiswell residents favoured a split, but the few Barrow residents who responded didn't.

As the Parish Council and some residents of Wiswell are still keen that the Parish be divided, this Council has agreed to carry out a further review. This Council is considering division of the Parish along ward lines. However, before it makes any firm decisions on this, it wants to give residents an opportunity to share their views. **The terms of reference of this Review** are (like those of the 2010 review), as follows:

The area under review is the current Parish of Wiswell, including the current wards of Wiswell and Barrow. The review will consider whether the Parish of Wiswell should be divided to create a new Parish of Barrow and a smaller Parish of Wiswell.

It will also consider, in respect of each Parish: (i) its name; (ii) whether it should have a Parish Council; (iii) what the electoral arrangements should be.

Consideration will also be given to where the boundary between the wards/parishes should lie.

Other suggested amendments to the existing governance arrangements will also be considered.

The Department for Communities and Local Government ("DCLG") and the Electoral Commission have produced guidance on community governance reviews ("the Guidance"). This is available online and will be borne in mind whilst carrying out this review. The black comments include some suggestions. Your views on these would be welcomed.

Boundaries: With regard to parish and ward boundaries, the Guidance states: "It is desirable that parish boundaries are readily identifiable by permanent features e.g. watercourses, major roads or railway lines. Whatever boundaries are selected they need to be, and likely to remain, easily identifiable." **The most logical boundary might be the ward boundaries.**

Five-year forecast: **The results of this are available on our website. It shows that Barrow ward (but not Wiswell ward) is growing.**

Council size and warding: The Guidance explains that: "In considering the issue of parish council size each area should be considered on its own merits having regard to its historical picture, population, geography and the pattern of communities." **Division along roughly ward lines appears sensible given the community identities.**

Names of Parish wards: The Guidance explains: "In considering the names of parish wards, thought should be given to existing local or historic places so that, where appropriate, these are reflected." **Barrow Parish Council and Wiswell Parish Council are the current proposals.**

The number of parish councillors to be elected for parish wards: The Guidance provides: "If it is proposed that a parish should be warded, consideration should be given to the levels of representation between each ward i.e. the number of parish

councillors to be elected for each ward and the number of electors they represent.” **5**
councillors for each Parish.

Ordinary year of election: “New or revised parish electoral arrangements come into force at ordinary parish elections, rather than at parish by-elections, so they usually have to wait until the next scheduled parish elections.”

Parish names and alternative styles for parishes: “The ‘name’ of a parish refers to the geographical name of the area concerned, whereas its status or ‘style’ allows for that area to be known as a town, community, neighbourhood or village, rather than as a parish ... the review must make recommendations as to whether the geographical name of the parish should be changed, but it may not make any recommendations for the parish about alternative style.”

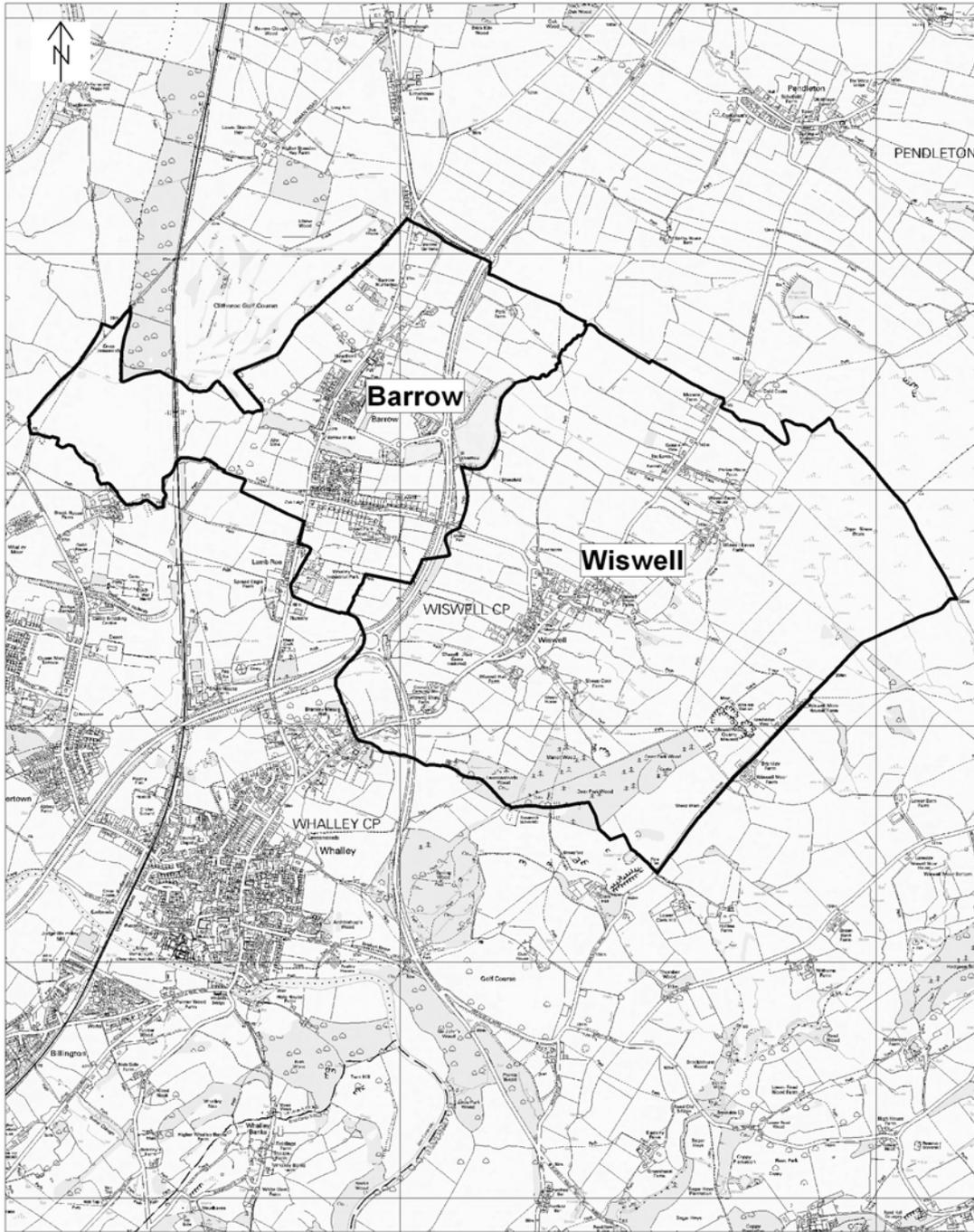
Recommendations and decisions on the outcome of the Community Governance Review

In relation to a Review, this Council must make recommendations as to: (i) whether a new parish or any new parishes should be constituted; (ii) whether existing parishes should or should not be abolished or whether the area of existing parishes should be altered; and (iii) what the electoral arrangements for new or existing parishes, which are to have parish councils, should be. It may also make recommendations concerning: (i) the grouping or degrouping of parishes; or (ii) making related alterations to the boundaries its own electoral areas.

In deciding what recommendations to make we must have regard to the need to secure that community governance reflects the identities and interests of the community in that area and is effective and convenient.

In making its recommendations Ribble Valley Borough Council will consider the information it has received in the form of residents’ responses and representations from other interested persons, and also use its own knowledge of the local area.

Map showing Wiswell and Barrow wards



Parish wards of Barrow and Wiswell, within parish of Wiswell

Scale: NTS

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