

## Report for Full Council 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023

To note the developing community programme being organised in 2024 to celebrate and commemorate the 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Athelstan becoming King and to agree that Malmesbury Town Council will organise an appropriate Civic Event to open this programme in June 2024.

### Background:

King Athelstan, who became the first King of England and who reigned between 924AD and 939AD, is integral to the history of Malmesbury and Britain. He chose to be buried in Malmesbury Abbey. His importance in the creation of England, the development of Anglo-Saxon society and belief and European wide diplomatic relations is increasingly recognised. His name is attached to many local organisations, including the Warden and Freeman of Malmesbury, Athlestan Museum and Malmesbury School.

The 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Athelstan becoming King can be of local, national and international interest. It is therefore a great opportunity to add to the recognition of Athelstan's role locally and Malmesbury's important place in this part of English history nationally and internationally. By defining this recognition as 'Athelstan 1100' this recognition can be extended across the whole period of his reign.

### Situation:

Community groups have already taken big steps towards creating a programme for 2024 to mark the 1100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of start of Athelstan's reign. Malmesbury Town Council is an active participant in the development of this programme and has committed £2,000 in the current financial year through C&TP to support this programme development.

The draft programme for 2024 includes:

June to October	Museum and Courthouse Exhibition
5 <sup>th</sup> July	Talk: Michael Wood
6 <sup>th</sup> / 7 <sup>th</sup> July	Archaeology - 'Malmesbury Big Saxon Dig'
12 <sup>th</sup> July	Talk: Sarah Foot
13 <sup>th</sup> / 14 <sup>th</sup> July	Live Performance Event in Town Centre (Abbey/ Cloister Gardens etc).
20 <sup>th</sup> / 21 <sup>st</sup> July	Re-Enactment weekend (St Aldhelm's Mead) + Feast (Town Hall)
7 <sup>th</sup> September	Athelstan themed Carnival Procession
October	Wessex Week

Based on this progress, it has been mooted that the programme should include a Civic Event led by Malmesbury Town Council to mark the opening of Athelstan. This would include a formal marking of the event at the Abbey, with a procession from the Town Hall, the opening of a commemorative plaque or other marker in Cloister Gardens, the opening of the Museum Exhibition and other

supporting activities. The concept is supported in principle by representatives of the Abbey and the Warden and Freemen.

Invitations to participate would be made locally, to County dignitaries, representatives of other towns and cities to whom Athelstan has direct connections, and appropriate national dignitaries (taking into account that this Civic Event has direct connections to the monarchy).

### **Proposal**

That:

- (i) Malmesbury Town Council agrees to lead the organisation of a Civic Event to mark the start of the commemoration and celebration of Athelstan 1100.
- (ii) The organisation of the Civic Event, including the date of the event in June 2024, the nature and scope of the event, the extension of invitations to attend, and the specification of one or more permanent markers of the Anniversary, is delegated to the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Chair of P&R and the Town Clerk, with a mandate to include other MTC Committees, Councillors and Athelstan 1100 event organisers as required.
- (iii) Funding requirements for the Civic Event and the permanent markers are identified and included with MTC budget proposals for the Council Year 2024-25.

### **Financial and Organisational Implications**

A Civic Event as proposed will have financial costs for MTC and require the application of MTC organisational resources. These cost and organisational resources will be related to the invitations extended and responses received. A report on proposed financial expenditure will be made to P&R and Full Council in November 2023. Based on previous experience of previous Civic Events it is likely these will be of the order of £5,000.

Note: While MTC has already committed to spend £2,000 through C&TP in the current financial year supporting the setup of Athelstan 1100 in 2024, this was determined and allocated before this proposal for a Civic Event was developed. It would be possible to allocate some of this funding as cash flow for the proposed Civic Event but it is not proposed to reduce MTC's commitment to participate in the set up and operation of, or to support, the other Athelstan 1100 events in 2024 because of this Civic Event or that further allocations will not be proposed to be made towards Athelstan 1100 by C&TP in the 2024-25 budget.

Cllrs Grant, Exton and Ritchie

July 2023