

Report 1: Summary of COVID 19 situation being addressed by Malmesbury Town Council based on latest government guidelines

As at the 18th May:

1. The lockdown imposed in late March is reducing the levels of COVID 19 virus infection and the number of deaths being reported is also declining.
2. Food supplies and access to medical services is settling and public confidence that food and medicines will be available is increasing.
3. Residents who are shielding (approximately 300) or are at higher risk of death or serious illness as a consequence of catching COVID 19 are continuing to be advised to isolate or to take maximum precautions to avoid exposure to the virus and no end date for these precautions is in sight.
4. The government has announced a staged lifting of lockdown restrictions, with essential shops and services (including estate agents) already re-opening and workers who cannot work from home being encouraged to return to work if safe to do so. More shops and some schooling will return in June, (although schools will not fully open until September at the earliest), and some hospitality is expected to open in July. In all instances physical distancing must be observed. Infection rates will be monitored and a return to tighter lockdown at any time has not been ruled out. In the meantime, those who can work from home are being instructed to continue to work from home and there is no indication when this might change.
5. The government has announced it is continuing employment and business support packages although interim changes, yet to be detailed, are likely to be announced. A significant proportion of the working age population is not covered by current support packages and formal unemployment is expected to increase sharply in the months ahead while the economy recovers from the deepest reduction in activity for 300 years.

The consequences of the above are:

- a. Welfare support for the most vulnerable members of our community of all ages will continue to be required for the foreseeable future.
- b. The type of issues being faced by residents may be changing. For example, it is likely that there will be increased mental health issues for those who are most isolated. Some children will continue to be home-schooled through necessity (they live with a shielded person) or their parents will not allow them to return to school. Economic hardship will increase for those not able to return to work, or who become unemployed, or whose financial losses from not being able to work are not covered by the government's emergency support.
- c. Some local businesses, particularly those who are hospitality, tourism, event and discretionary spending related, will experience a long-term reduction in demand.
- d. We have to anticipate the need for physical distance in all economic and social activities for the foreseeable future.

This suggests that as a Town Council we should:

- I. Continue to manage our operations in accordance with the latest guidelines. This includes looking to reopen the Town Hall and make it available for public use, including allowing the operation of the Museum and the Jackdaw cafe, as allowed by government guidelines. However, social gatherings in the Town Hall are unlikely for some time to come.

- II. Continue or grounds operations and, unless otherwise required and deemed essential and safe, office based staff should continue to work from home where possible.
- III. Be prepared and commit to continue the Malmesbury Town Council and Heals Partnership (with sensible adaptation and service adjustment) for at least the period July to September.
- IV. Work actively in partnership with the Town Team to support the business community and the safe return of business operations. The immediate priority is to enable the safe and effective re-opening of retail and hospitality businesses, which will require the support of Wiltshire Council to temporarily widen some pavements and restart parking controls.
- V. Continue to identify grant and other opportunities to offset the damage to MTC finances as a consequence of COVID 19 and its impact and to enable funding of essential community support while the situation continues.

The details of the steps it is proposed Malmesbury Town Council should take are detailed in the Reports 2 to 6.

Report 2: Malmesbury Town Council and Heals Partnership (community welfare).

This report follows the decision taken by Malmesbury Town Council to create the Malmesbury Town Council and Heals Partnership at Full Council on the 24th March 2020 and the update given to Council at its meeting on 24th April.

The Partnership continues to operate in accordance with the resolution passed by Council on the 24th March, with amendments agreed on 24th April.

1. The key developments to note are:

1. The Supervision Team is meeting three times a week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday).
2. Direct support of the Partnership (in the form of donated staff time and services) are being gratefully received from the Co-Op, Virtual Business Services, Mindvision and Malmesbury Marketing, Waitrose, Calcot Manor, The Red Bull, Atema IT and others
3. The weekly reports issued to volunteers and copied to councillors summarises key activities.
4. The Partnership continues to link to good effect with Community Groups, local retailers and pharmacies, local schools, other COVID 19 support providers, Wiltshire Council, and Malmesbury Town Team.
5. Heals has launched a Hardship Fund appeal, supported by Malmesbury Town Council and mayors past and present. Donations have reached £15,000 and requests for support are being dealt with. Additional donations are being strongly encouraged.
6. The Ready Meals service for over 100 residents living in and around Malmesbury is continuing. This is supported currently by Calcot Manor and The Red Bull. Funding to continue this service is required and will be met from the Heals Hardship Fund. The current specific needs – and the likely medium term needs - of current recipients are being identified so that a future plan for the service can be developed.
7. The Partnership's shopping solutions are providing increased confidence to residents although take up is relatively low. It is likely demand will increase as we move into longer term isolation situations for some residents.
8. Effort is being put into building increased friendship calling, identifying the other needs of residents receiving ready meals, and IT support, where the supply of equipment and or connectivity would be of direct benefit.
9. The new Malmesbury Town Council website is continuing to be developed. Staff have now been trained in its use but we still have support available from Mindvision on a pro bono basis. Lesley Wood of Malmesbury Marketing is continuing to support our social media activity, also on a pro-bono basis, and the processes for web-site listing and social media posting have been improved.
10. Grant applications for additional funding support have been agreed by SSE (£3,000) and Wiltshire Communities Fund (£3,750). Identifying and applying for additional funds is continuing. We have also sign-posted some community groups to possible grant opportunities (notably those who run for community halls).
11. St Paul Malmesbury Without have made an interim contribution of £500 to Heals in support of the extra work Heals is undertaking in the Parish as a consequence of the emergency. They have no set date for a further review.
12. The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government has written 'all who serve on Parish and Town Councils' promising a share of the £3.2bn of additional funding for councils will be allocated to lower tier councils.

13. The continuing commitment and effort of our Town Clerk and our staff team towards progressing the work of the Partnership while also continuing MTC operations deserves to be noted.

2. Proposal

1. To note and accept the above report, and specifically:
2. To agree to extend the Partnership to 30th September, subject to sensible adaptation and service adjustment.
3. To consider the provision of additional funding to Heals in the period July to September at our next meeting based on a report and request from Heals to be received.
4. To encourage Wiltshire Council to release the funding share it has received for lower tier councils to its lower tier councils.
5. To note the grants received by Malmesbury Town Council and to agree to apply for other grants Malmesbury Town Council may be eligible to receive.
6. To agree to continue to circulate the volunteer reports and offer additional briefing meetings with councillors as appropriate
7. To note the interim contribution made by St Pauls Without Parish to Heals as a consequence of the work Heals is doing in conjunction with Partnership activity in the Parish, and to encourage StPW and other parishes receiving support as a consequence of Partnership and specifically Heals activities to make appropriate contributions to Heals.

3. Financial Implications of these Proposals

Proposal 3 could lead to a further payment to Heals to cover additional costs in the period July to September 2020.

The cost of the support by Malmesbury Town Council to Heals and the additional costs (or revenue shortfall) caused by the COVID emergency will continue to be offset, as far as possible, by applying for and receiving grants, and seeking the allocation of additional emergency funding from government as indicated by the Secretary of State.

Campbell Ritchie

Mayor

Malmesbury Town Council

18th May 2020

Report 3: Supporting the work of Malmesbury Town Team.

Malmesbury Town Council partners with Malmesbury Town Team to support the promotion of Malmesbury as a place to visit and the economic well-being of our High Street and local businesses.

Malmesbury Town Team is continuing to undertake range of activities to support local businesses and business people during the COVID 19 situation.

These include:

1. Weekly video calls with local business leaders
2. Regular newsletters and updates (6 to date)
3. Topical and relevant 'how to' guides for businesses
4. Complementary population of the MTC and Discover Malmesbury websites with relevant information for businesses
5. Specialist virtual training sessions
6. Free one to one coaching and advice to businesses by Town Team specialists
7. Investigation of and support for the introduction of an online shopping tool for local businesses seeking to add online shopping capability – Shopappy. Malmesbury Town Council has expressed an interest and is investigating membership (no cost) for the TIC.

In addition, a Task Force consisting of members of Malmesbury Town Team, the Malmesbury Town Council and Wiltshire Councillor representatives on the Town Team and representatives of the local business community are working to ensure the effective implementation in Malmesbury of the governments phased lifting of lock-down restrictions.

This will require an increase in some pavement widths, major changes to parking arrangements and significant additional signage.

A self-explanatory report submitted to Wiltshire Council on the 18th May following a presentation to the Area Board on the 17th May is attached together with responses so far received from Wiltshire Council. These proposals were endorsed at a virtual briefing of local businesses, also on the 17th May.

The changes proposed have an estimated cost of £10,000 plus VAT. It is not clear yet what requirements Wiltshire Council will impose, what equipment and signage support might be available from Wiltshire or what funding will be available based on latest government announcements. However, Wiltshire Council have indicated that some if not all funding may be available and the project is supported by the Area Board.

It is noted that the formal traffic orders required to implement the proposed changes will require a minimum of seven days notice. To meet the governments next announced lifting of lock down restrictions on the 1st June, this means notices would have to be issued no later than this Thursday 23rd May.

Proposal

- a. To note and recognise the work of the Town Team to provide support to local businesses during the current COVID 19 situation.
- b. To continue to support Malmesbury Town Council becoming a member of the Shopappy application if this scheme is being adopted by businesses in Malmesbury.

- c. To note and support the proposals made by the Task Force to enable the safe and welcoming lifting of lock down restrictions on retailers, hospitality businesses and business in general in Malmesbury.
- d. To mandate to the Mayor and the Chair and Vice Chair of P&R, supported by the Town Clerk,
 - I. The role of assessing, on behalf of Malmesbury Town Council, the responses received from Wiltshire Council and the actions of Wiltshire Council in this matter,
 - II. To mandate the Mayor and Cllr Grant, supported by Cllr Smith to work with Town Team and members of the local business community in the Task Force.
 - III. The ability to agree funding for this project by Malmesbury Town Council up to a maximum of £10,000 plus VAT, subject to Wiltshire Council agreeing to process the necessary traffic orders (the detail of which Wiltshire Council have to expertly assess and finalise), and progress parking controls, MTC seeking to secure funding and/ or appropriate equipment from Wiltshire Council, and to MTC taking steps, if possible, to recovering any funding reasonably required not incurred by Wiltshire Council from any other obvious grant opportunities.

Financial Implications

- I. Shopappy is offering a special sign up arrangement during the COVID 19 situation so that the only fees are standard credit card transaction charges.
- II. In the event Wiltshire Council progresses the necessary traffic orders and is willing to support the reintroduction of parking controls but provides no or only partial funding for this project there may be a maximum financial spend by Malmesbury Town Council, to be taken from reserves, of £10,000, subject to any offset available through other grant funding.

Campbell Ritchie

Deputy Mayor
Malmesbury Town Council

20th April 2020

Report 3: Malmesbury Town Council Community Events and COVID 19

The objective of transitioning MTC community events into virtual events as far as reasonably possible has been discussed and agreed.

The current summary is

Virtual VE 75 Day – 8th May. This was a huge success. Over 70 attended the zoom talk on Malmesbury in WW2 and hundreds listened to Malmesbury Community Radio.

St Aldhelm's Day – 25th May: A revised programme has been developed. Promotion is underway.

Citizen of the Year: This will be held on as a Virtual Event at 7:00pm on Thursday 28th May. Council is considering category winners at Full Council on the 19th May.

Malmesbury in Bloom: It is proposed to continue this competition as far as possible with adjustments made to ensure safety during the COVID 19 situation. The awards ceremony will be held as a Virtual Event if necessary.

The councillors involved in making these alternative arrangements are to be commended for their imagination and hard work in producing new and exciting virtual proposals for each of these events.

Community groups looking to develop and promote virtual community events are being supported.

Proposal

To note and agree the above arrangements.

Financial Implications

There are minimal financial implications as a result of these proposals. It is expected that costs will be maintained within existing agreed budgets. Income may be reduced on the same basis as if the events were not running (e.g. reduced ticket sales and bar receipts).

Campbell Ritchie

Mayor
Malmesbury Town Council

18th May 2020