

MTC Full Council 26.11.19

Report No 3

Community Governance Review: Informal response by Malmesbury Town Council on the St Paul Malmesbury Without Parish Application

St Paul Malmesbury Without (the Parish) have made an application to retain the current Parish boundaries as they currently exist or, on the proviso of the Boundary Commission altering the Malmesbury & Sherston electoral divisional boundary changing Tetbury Hill & Backbridge to the Sherston division, that Tetbury Hill and Backbridge be incorporated into the Parish.

As the Boundary Commission have agreed to alter the Sherston division as described, the Parish application to incorporate Tetbury Hill and Backbridge must be considered. Accordingly, as invited, we wish to make informal comments on the Parish's application concerning boundaries as follows:

1. The Parish application is supported by three arguments:

- a) There is a logic and consistency in having a common boundary for the county division and the Parish.
- b) It would be more understandable and efficient for residents of Tetbury Hill and the Backbridge development to be in a Parish which was also part of a larger county division with a county councillor who would speak for the Parish at the county level, than for them to have a county councillor who did not represent their Parish, i.e. to have to go to a different county councillor for Parish (Malmesbury Town Council) matters than for county matters.
- c) The county councillor for the Sherston division would otherwise need to attend meetings of Malmesbury Town Council as well as those of the Parish which would be an additional call on his/her valuable time.

2. Malmesbury Town Council has already made an application that the current boundary between Malmesbury Town Council and the Parish should be amended to form an improved area for local government based on the existing and development relationship between the communities in and around Malmesbury, the actual and most efficient provision of local services and the shared interests of the community across the new Parish area we have described.

3. We understand the points being made by the Parish but do not believe they create a compelling case to agree the Parish's application. Some reasons are:

- a) The Backbridge site will clearly form an integral physical area of the town when constructed and will draw the majority of its local community services from the town. A line drawn along Tetbury Hill Road in the context of the first level of local government would be wholly artificial and contradictory in comparison to adjacent developments.
- b) A boundary drawn as proposed would raise additional unaddressed questions about the appropriate Parish in which to locate the Dyson development and other enterprises at the top of Tetbury Hill and the future management of Tetbury Hill Cemetery. Our view is that all should remain in the Malmesbury Town Council local government area as well as Backbridge and Tetbury Hill.
- c) Local Town Councillors will represent Backbridge and Tetbury Hill residents in dealings with Malmesbury Town Council, rather than, as suggested in point 2 of the Parish application, the Sherston division councillor.
- d) It is common for county councillors to represent constituents across different Parishes and, as towns grow, like Malmesbury, having constituents in different county council divisions.

The Sherston division will be a multi Parish division with or without the Backbridge and Tetbury Hill areas, as the County Councillor is already working with the Parishes of Luckington, Sherston, Sopworth, Easton Grey, Norton, St Paul Malmesbury Without, and Brokenborough. In contradiction to the Parish, we are more than confident the Sherston division county councillor would be capable of representing Backbridge and Tetbury Hill as well and liaising with Malmesbury Town Council as required.

- e) The financial impact of excluding Backbridge and Tetbury Hill from the Malmesbury Town Council precept base would be hugely significant. There would be an increased demand on local services but with no supporting precept income. CiL contributions from the Backbridge development would also be outside the control of Malmesbury Town Council. Other things being equal, this would be expected to increase the relative and absolute precept burden on Malmesbury residents in comparison to the Parish. This would be likely to create significant local disquiet.
- f) We are happy to answer any questions, expand on any of the above points or to make a formal response if it would be helpful.

Malmesbury Town Council