

## **Meeting with James Gray, MP**

### 1. Purpose of Report

To inform the Council of the conversation with James Gray, MP on the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2021

### 2. Background

Malmesbury Town Council has not had a working relationship with the local MP, James Gray, for some time and there was a recent inference of MTC having political inference with Sir Ed Davey of the Liberal Democrat Party during the recent elections in May 2021.

Sir Ed Davey did visit Malmesbury to discuss Neighbourhood plans and he also met the last Mayor of Malmesbury, Campbell Ritchie.

A review took place and it was established that Ed Davey was invited by The Liberals in the Wiltshire Council elections and Cllr Ritchie was there as a person involved in local Neighbourhood plans. He was not there in a role for Malmesbury Town Council.

Policy & Resources and Planning & Environment Committees went to full council to correct the understanding error on the part of James Gray MP. They had tried to contact to James Gray to correct the issue and gain an apology without success.

I managed to make an appointment to introduce myself as new Mayor of Malmesbury. This was to be an informal light lunch in The Old Bell on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2021.

I was accompanied by Frances Smith as my wife and current Mayoress and Claire Mann as the Acting Town Clerk for Malmesbury.

We did discuss at some length the Sir Ed Davey visit and that MTC has no political bias despite having a few members with political views. I pointed out that MTC had no part in the visit and neither did Mayor Ritchie. He accepted he was wrong on the issue and offered a full unreserved apology to Malmesbury Town Council and all of its officers. He also stated that in no way had he wanted to cause any offence or upset; his comments were not directed at the Town Council.

All 3 of us accepted his verbal apology and moved on with our discussions.

We felt it was not necessary to demand he put it in writing, we had received the apology we sought.

We did discuss neighbourhood plans and Filands. He is supportive of retaining the educational element and that a nursery would be good for the town.

He acknowledges that the town is a special place and should not be built over and that the infrastructure of the town does not support future growth.

As this was an initial meeting between ourselves it was felt that rapport should be developed and a positive communication be continued. As such I did not invite him to any meetings with MTC or committees.

3. Proposal

That Malmesbury Town Council accepts this apology and I continue to develop a positive working relationship between Council and our local MP.

4. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications with this proposal.

Paul Smith & Claire Mann  
Mayor & Acting Town Clerk  
12<sup>th</sup> July 2021