

Report 1: Community Governance Review Request

Attachments:

1. Guidance on Community Governance Reviews. (Produced by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary Commission for England).
2. Wiltshire Council Community Governance Review Request Form
3. Map showing proposed boundary change.

1. Situation:

Wiltshire Council is undertaking a review of community governance and has asked parish and town councils to notify it of any outline proposals for changes in community governance they wish to request by 1st October 2019.

Changes in Community Governance could include:

1. Change of name of parish/parish wards
2. Change number of councillors for parish
3. Change number/ shape of wards for parish
4. Change external boundaries of parish
5. Creation/ merger/ abolition/ grouping of parishes
6. Other changes

The objective of any changes proposed must be to support or improve the identities, interests and cohesion of local communities and effective and convenient local government.

Accordingly, Malmesbury Town Council has set up a Working Party to consider if it should make any proposals to Wiltshire Council as part of its current review. The recommendations of the Working Party are as follows.

2. Malmesbury Town Council boundary.

Proposal 1: To apply for a change in our parish boundary.

Specifically, it is proposed:

- (i) That Malmesbury Town Council seeks a change in its external boundaries, namely an extension to include the adjacent centres of residential population at Burton Hill, Cowbridge, Milbourne and Foxley/ Common Road. This would be achieved by a change in our boundary with St Paul Malmesbury Without, and
- (ii) As a part of this proposal, our preferred boundary change would include the all the area north of Filands, Kings Heath and Cole Park.

This specific boundary proposal is because of the historical attachment of Kings Heath to Malmesbury, the isolation otherwise of the area north of Filands and the natural boundary that can be drawn to the south of Cole Park. However, the focus of our proposal is establishing a shape for the local community that reflects the recent development of Malmesbury and the residential communities immediately surrounding Malmesbury and to support and improve the identities, interests and cohesion of our local community and effective and convenient local government.

Reasons for Proposal:

Our proposal is for the following reasons:

1. The boundary of Malmesbury Town Council has been extended over the years as the town has grown and developed, most recently in 1984, to follow the by-pass, along Filands Road past its Tetbury Hill junction and south via Park Lane to the junction with the Sherston Road.
2. Malmesbury has grown significantly since 1984, with, in particular significant developments built or planned for the north of the town centre. At the same time the closely neighbouring residential centres of population currently within the parish of St Paul Malmesbury Without – Burton Hill, Cowbridge, Milbourne and Common Road - have also grown and commercial development, has been attracted to the A429 corridor, with Waitrose built and the redevelopment of the Garden Centre site, including an Aldi, expected. The Malmesbury based Dyson operation has also grown significantly.
3. The residential centres of Burton Hill, Cowbridge, Milbourne and Foxley/ Common Road are closer to Malmesbury Town Centre than the extremities of existing and proposed residential developments that are already within Malmesbury Town Council.
4. The neighbouring residential centres of Burton Hill, Cowbridge, Milbourne and Foxley/ Common Road identify strongly with Malmesbury and utilise the public and private facilities in Malmesbury, including those operated by Malmesbury Town Council. Examples of Malmesbury Town Council facilities include the Town Hall, Play Parks, Cemetery and Open Spaces. In addition, their residents actively participate in community events and activities centreing on Malmesbury, such as Carnival, cinema, clubs and societies and benefit directly from the community promotion work undertaken by Malmesbury Town Council, which includes action to support the well-being of the local economy.
5. From the 'outside' Malmesbury and its neighbouring residential centres are seen as one. This is particularly the case on planning matters as significant development applications are focused on the boundaries of either Malmesbury or the Malmesbury boundary of, in particular St Paul Malmesbury Without, because of the presence of the town of Malmesbury and the development of the community centred on Malmesbury. It therefore will be of benefit to all the local population if local consideration is led by a single representing body. In addition, a coherent overall view can be taken on the application of CiL. Currently CiL falls according to parish boundary and there is no transparent means to consider its application across all of the relevant community. This has been highlighted in the case of the current Aldi application and recent and future developments in Burton Hill and Cowbridge.
6. The significant difference between the local precept in Malmesbury and the neighbouring residential centres of Burton Hill, Cowbridge, Milbourne and Common Road is increasingly anomalous while residents living in Burton Hill, Cowbridge, Milbourne and Common Road make full use of the services funded by Malmesbury residents. No views have been taken by the working group on the overall effect on precept in Malmesbury if the boundaries are redrawn as proposed, as a number of factors outside the scope of the working party need to be taken into account, but it is clear that fairer overall tax raising can be achieved if our proposal is accepted. An immediate benefit for residents in the neighbouring residential centres would be access to reduced charges at Tetbury Hill Cemetery.
7. Malmesbury Town Council has a well organised employed team on which the management of services and future growth can be centred and overall economies achieved. The neighbouring parish does not have any similar resources. This will become increasingly important as Wiltshire Council seeks to devolve more services.

8. Our preferred boundary would remove the 'doughnut' of current parish boundaries around Malmesbury. While perhaps at first sight geographically wide, the inclusion of the current St Paul and Malmesbury Without land north of Filands, and Kings Heath and Cole Park will achieve a coherent overall new parish boundary with the minimum of disruption to other parishes, while the additional population directly affected in what might otherwise be considered 'an extended area without these justifications is minimal and already associates with Malmesbury.

It will also allow for

- a. More focus on the community's input into planning development proposals that would otherwise be 'on the edge' or just the other side of the current Malmesbury boundary.
 - b. Coherence in considering the improvement of facilities such as footpaths in the area surrounding Malmesbury. The Daniel's Well area, Kings Heath and the connections to and from Kings Heath, which are currently outside the Malmesbury boundary, are important assets which could be better utilised in the development of Malmesbury as an interesting tourist destination.
 - c. The restoration of a community connection between Malmesbury and the land owned by Malmesbury's Warden and Freeman organisation for centuries.
9. Taken together, it is clear that the identity and functioning of Malmesbury as town and unit of local governance should include the neighbouring residential centres of Malmesbury.
 10. Adopting our proposal will leave a very viable Parish based on Corston and Rodbourne. As far as we are aware all the current community assets managed by St Paul Malmesbury Without are in within this new parish area.

Benefits:

In summary our proposal, if adopted, would:

1. Achieve an improvement in community cohesion across the new parish area
2. Increase the effectiveness of local government across the new parish area
3. Increase the convenience of local government across the new parish area
4. Increase the opportunity for the community living in the new parish area to be involved in future planning and the development of local resources that recognises needs and requirements across all the new parish area.
5. Support the development of warding to improve representation arrangements across the new parish area. This is discussed below.

3. Warding

If our boundary change proposal is accepted it is vital that representation arrangements are amended to achieve the best opportunity for effective local representation. The working group has concluded that this can best be achieved by applying warding across the new parish area. It is also believes that warding will be cost effective, as well as increasing accountability of representation. In the event of Councillor vacancies by- elections would only be required in the affected ward, which is significantly cheaper than a council wide by-elections.

Proposal 2: If proposal 1 is accepted, to propose warding across the new boundary area as outlined below, with the caveat that further detailed work is required the principle we wish to propose is:

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1. The overall number of councillor positions on Malmesbury Town Council is increased from 16 to 19 or 20.

2. That warding follows existing voting districts. This would give us wards in:

Backbridge (subject to Boundary Commission final recommendations)
Burton Hill and Cowbridge (including Parliament Row area)
Common Road (Common Road, Foxley Road, Kings Heath)
Malmesbury South (The old town and Silk Mills to the Triangle)
Malmesbury North – Reeds Farm, Filands, North of Filands, Gloucester Road, Tetbury Hill,
Malmesbury West – Park Road, Parklands, Newnton Grove, White Lion Park
Milbourne

3. That Council positions would be divided by ward according to size. We would expect the approximate allocation would be:

	Councillor Positions
Backbridge	1 or 2
Burton Hill and Cowbridge	1 or 2
Common Road	1
Malmesbury South	2 or 3
Malmesbury North	6 or 7
Malmesbury West	7 or 8
Milbourne	1
Total	Minimum 19

4. Financial Consequences of Proposals:

1. Making these proposals to Wiltshire Council and participating in the community governance review process has no direct cost other than councillor and officer time.

2. Acceptance and implementation of our proposal will require a review of precept across the new boundary area.