

Meeting with James Gray, MP

1. Purpose of Report

To inform the Council of the outcome of the Mayor's meeting with James Gray, MP on the 3rd July 2021

2. Outcomes

2.1 Following Council's resolution on the 15th June 2021 a productive meeting was held between James Gray MP and myself in my role as the Mayor of Malmesbury. Also participating were the Mayoress, Cllr Frances Smith and Acting Town Clerk, Claire Mann.

2.2 After discussion, James Gray MP accepted he was wrong to make the following statement about the conduct of Malmesbury Town Council and its officers in an email on the 20th May at 15.55pm when he was giving reasons as to why he wished to not meet with Malmesbury Town Council to discuss our concerns on the future of Neighbourhood Planning, which he also asked to be shared with all councillors in a public report:

“However I am concerned that despite my very active support for your concerns in this whole area, you have nonetheless sought to politicise the matter, for example by inviting the Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party to Malmesbury to use it in the recent local government campaigning. Lib Dem leaflets went to lengths to allege that “the Tories were planning to concrete over Wiltshire”, and that “only a Lib Dem vote would prevent it”.

The full email exchange is included in previous reports to Council.

Mr Gray also offered an unreserved apology to Malmesbury Town Council and all of its officers for this statement. 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.

I accepted Mr Gray's apology.

2.3 We then discussed 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.

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

3. Proposal

That Malmesbury Town Council accepts the apology Mr Gray has made and I continue to develop a positive working relationship with our local MP.

4. Financial Implications

There are no financial implications with this proposal.

Paul Smith & Claire Mann
Mayor & Acting Town Clerk
12th July 2021