

**County Councillor Report for Glastonbury Town Council – 10<sup>th</sup> August 2021**  
**Cllr Liz Leyshon**

This report is intended to be a summary of the work I am undertaking as one of the County Councillors and also as Mendip councillor where I currently hold the portfolio of Corporate Services & Projects. Apologies if you are ever confused as to which hat I am wearing at any particular time, I confuse myself too.

My current workload in Glastonbury encompasses many different strands and I feel the most useful thing I can do is list all the strands with some detail on each.

**Town Deal Board & Town Investment Plan**

We all know the 12 projects, and Cllr Ian Tucker will report as representative of the Town Council. I am on the Board as a representative of community and heritage and at the last Board meeting I asked that other Board members and officers understand the wider work in Glastonbury and how any decision taken by the Town Deal Board could impact on other work going on in town. Plus how decisions taken in other forums could impact on the Town Investment Plan.

Mendip District Council is the accountable body for the Town Deal so responsible for the spend of Government funds. The Mendip finance director Richard Bates (known as the section 151 officer) attended the last Board meeting and I am totally assured that Richard is the right person for this important job. He is an interim appointment but his contract has been extended to take us over the 'bridge' to the single Unitary council for Somerset. Richard was the 151 officer at Dorset County Council as it went through to Unitary so he has that relevant experience too.

**The Multi Agency Group work on Glastonbury encampments**

This group is led by the County Council and comprises 24 officers, across County, Mendip, Town Councils and Police. A subgroup of Members has been established for information sharing on a regular basis. That group is the two County Cllrs and the four Mendip Ward Cllrs who are also on the Town Council. The often confidential work includes:

- Enforcement on Highways and Local Authority owned land
- Highways project work on four areas of Glastonbury: Stonedown Lane; Bretenoux Road; Kennard Moor Drove; Beckery Old Road. A budget for each project has been identified from different sources and details of each scheme will be announced when each project first stage design is completed.
- Identification of land for possible traveller sites including permanent/transit/temporary/stopover sites. As well as local authority land, private land is being considered through third party contacts and that work is being extended across Mendip and wider Somerset (see Unitary below)
- Connections with other local authorities with knowledge of similar situations and how their interpretation of eg bylaws or public space protection orders has worked – or not
- Housing services for people with local connection and desire to live in 'bricks & mortar' homes
- Public health initiatives to ensure services including vaccination are available to all in Somerset

**Single Unitary Council for Somerset**

The Secretary of State's announcement on 21<sup>st</sup> July gave us a clearer idea of where local government in Somerset is heading but the timeline is still – at times – confusing.

There was a paper under Urgent Business at Mendip Cabinet meeting last evening that gives more detail and can be found here

[https://www.mendip.gov.uk/media/28563/Item-10-Urgent-Business-Local-Government-Reorganisation-in-Somerset/pdf/Item\\_10\\_Urgent\\_Business\\_-\\_Local\\_Government\\_Reorganisation\\_in\\_Somerset\\_.pdf?m=637635992772630000](https://www.mendip.gov.uk/media/28563/Item-10-Urgent-Business-Local-Government-Reorganisation-in-Somerset/pdf/Item_10_Urgent_Business_-_Local_Government_Reorganisation_in_Somerset_.pdf?m=637635992772630000)

The move to one Unitary council for Somerset brings a challenging timeline, so I've copied the introduction and draft timetable from the Mendip paper – but be aware that it is subject to change on any item:

*“Whilst we do not yet know the detailed timetable that the MHCLG will be working to in terms of the negotiations, the outline timetable for implementing the new unitary moving forward is as follows:*

- *First meeting between MHCLG and Chief Executives August 2021*
- *Negotiation of the Structural Change Order Aug/Sept 2021 (tbc)*
- *MHCLG prepare and draft Structural Change Order Sept-Nov 2021*
- *Structural Change Order laid before Parliament Jan/Feb 2022*
- *Joint Committee comes into effect (if not already in place) Feb 2022*
- *Shadow or Transition Authority comes into effect April 2022*
- *Elections to Shadow or Transition Authority May 2022*
- *Approval of Consequential Orders (transfer of functions, staff, assets, pensions) Feb 2022-Mar 2023*
- *Vesting Day: New Unitary(s) take effect and Councils dissolved 1 April 2023*
- *Boundary Review April 2023 onwards (NB this item could come forward or backward in date)”*

Two things will be affected by the confirmation of move to a single Unitary:

- Increased requests to Mendip District Council for asset transfers
- Search for traveller sites will be extended across the whole county as provision has to be within a local authority boundary – so what is now a District boundary will become the Somerset boundary

We have been told at County that there will be a Local Government Reorganisation Board set up in September, working in various ways including the setting up of Local Community Networks and also on assets of each Council and how they come together. Officers will be working throughout, and have started meetings on finance and HR already.

Don't forget it's likely that there will be an election for the new authority next May. The elected Members will be for the Unitary Council, some will have experience of a County Council, some will have experience of a District Council and some may have no experience.

The District Councils and Councillors will continue their work until Vesting Day as a 'demising authority'.

The new Councillors will continue to work on the existing County Council committees and panels until the Vesting Day.

There is still debate as to whether the Single Unitary Council for Somerset will be a new authority, or a continuing authority. That's significant in a number of ways and we'll have to wait for more information from MHCLG.

There is also concern as to how many Councillors will comprise the new (or continuing) authority, again we are waiting for more information to come from MHCLG. Apologies if you are now more confused – you're not on your own.

### **Glastonbury Town Council work on Housing and Homelessness**

The work of this Committee urgently needs to tie in with the work of the Multi Agency Group. I realise it's difficult to link with confidential work but there is a link at Mendip through the specialist housing officer and strategic manager, Jan Errington, who attended one of the recent Committee meetings. It's hugely important that no one believes promises have been made that are impossible to deliver, or where people are not entitled to e.g. social housing because they don't have local connections.

I realise that allotments in Glastonbury are a hot topic at present too. I am very willing to explore every opportunity for a larger number of allotment sites at Mendip through my work with the Property officers.

If anyone can put me in touch with the organiser of Manor House Road Community Garden, I would be very grateful as I need to include that in my work at Mendip too.

### **Changing Place Toilets for people with disabilities**

The Government has announced that there is national funding for building or adapting existing buildings to provide fully accessible facilities. Mendip's strategy has been for at least one facility in each of the five Mendip towns. Frome, Shepton and Wells are already open, so Glastonbury & Street are the next priorities.

Mendip has to submit an expression of interest by 26<sup>th</sup> September and it is mentioned in the Delivery Plan that is at Mendip's Scrutiny meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> August.

Also available is capital funding from the local Mencap group (Glastonbury & District) which will be very helpful in ensuring both Glastonbury & Street gain facilities.

For events such as the recent family festival at Paddington Farm, Mobiloo is one of the organisations providing mobile facilities <https://www.mobiloo.org.uk/>

### **Meetings with Neighbourhood Police**

There are a number of regular meetings with the Police, at different levels of seniority. The Neighbourhood Police keep in touch regularly and Sgt Simon Lancey is now working with the Community Alcohol Partnership which will be a good link, and one that was both welcome and active in Glastonbury before Covid lockdowns <https://www.communityalcoholpartnerships.co.uk/about>

### **Meetings with National Trust & tenant farmers**

The National Trust, as landowner of the Tor and surrounding fields, attend meetings too and express concerns about camping in the fields and orchards as well as sharing the widespread concern when Stonedown Lane becomes congested and unpassable. How the work of the MAG plays out in this area will be interesting to see, we need the National Trust to continue to engage with all the other strands of work in town.

In a previous meeting we heard that the National Trust is committed to the Tor remaining a wholly rural experience – they are not looking for car parks, toilet blocks or a café.

I'm sure there are other links and pieces of work that I've missed. Happy to take questions and find answers, if possible, at the Town Council meeting this evening.

*LL 10.8.21*