

Report No.4

Report to Meeting of Malmesbury Town Council 21st April 2015

Local Government (Religious etc. Observances) Act 2015

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1. To invite the Town Council to consider the provisions of the Local Government (Religious etc. Observances) Act 2015.

2. Background

- 2.1. Until a recent court case a few years ago each meeting of the Malmesbury Town Council opened with prayers.
- 2.2. The judgement of the court case clarified that prayers or other religious observances could not form part of the business included in a council meeting and Malmesbury Town Council ceased the inclusion of prayers on the agenda.
- 2.3. In response to many objections received from councils the Secretary of State for the Department of Community and Local Government pledged to return the choice to councils as soon as possible.

3. Proposals

- 3.1. The Local Government (Religious etc. Observances) Act 2015 was approved last month and comes into force within the next two months.
- 3.2. The act states that "the business at a meeting of a local authority in England may include time for prayers or other religious observances, or observance connected with a religious or philosophical belief".
- 3.3. The permission given in para 3.2 also applies to a committee of a local authority, a joint committee and a sub-committee.
- 3.4. The Town Council is invited to consider if prayers should be reinstated as an agenda item for the Town Council now that the appropriate legislation has been introduced.

4. Financial implications

- 4.1. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

5. Recommendations

- 5.1. Members are requested to consider if prayers should be reintroduced into Council meetings

Jeff Penfold
Town Clerk
1st April 2015.