

**Salisbury City Council**  
**Community Governance Review 2014**  
**Leader's options report (Doc 46689)**

**Aims of any review**

Salisbury City Council is a civil parish. Its jurisdiction and operating area are determined by its parish boundaries. Those parish boundaries are to be reviewed by Wiltshire Council, using a procedure known as a Community Governance Review. The review is part of a wider series of boundary reviews of the larger settlements in Wiltshire and was requested by those towns and our City.

A boundary review should aim to align administrative boundaries with the physical reality of any settlement. This usually requires 'catching up' but can also predict and provide for future changes, giving 'breathing room' to a settlement. The amount of room given should be linked to the predicted next boundary review date. History suggests that the intervals between reviews are usually at least decades.

Boundary alignment is done to ensure that those who live together are governed together, with liability for local taxes matching use of shared local facilities. Boundaries can also help to create or change local identities, although such identity is rarely solely or strongly linked to administrative areas.

It is assumed that any major change in boundaries would lead to a review of City ward boundaries - and possibly councillor numbers and the question of whether wards have one, two or three members.

**Nature and purpose of a Community Governance Review**

A Community Governance Review is a review of the whole or part of Wiltshire Council's area to consider one or more of the following:

- Creating, merging, altering or abolishing parishes
- The naming of parishes and styles of new parishes
- The electoral arrangements of parishes (including the number of councillors to be elected to the council and parish warding)
- Grouping or de-grouping parishes

This Review is being carried out by Wiltshire Council under the powers in Part 4 of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 and will be undertaken in accordance with the requirements of that Act and any relevant regulations made under it. It will also have regard to the Guidance on Community Governance Reviews published by the DCLG.

Wiltshire Council has appointed a Working Group to carry out this review and to make recommendations to the Council in due course. The Working Group will comprise a representative from each group of the Council (with a substitute permitted to attend). Other members may also attend where an item specifically affects their electoral division.

The Review will have particular regard for the need to secure that the community governance arrangements within the areas under review....

- reflect the identities and interests of the communities concerned and
- are effective and convenient to local people

When carrying out the community governance review Wiltshire Council will also take into account other existing or potential community governance arrangements (other than those relating to parishes) in determining what parish arrangements to recommend.

Reviews can receive submission from any interested person, including affected parish councils, individual councillors or groups of councillors.

All boundary reviews produce a great deal of comment, much of it over-heated and tending to suggest that an administrative boundary change will 'destroy a thousand years of history' and so on. The expanding settlement will probably be 'land-grabbing', 'empire building', 'bullying' smaller groups, 'riding roughshod over local views' and perhaps even 'failing to understand rural life and feelings'.

The review will of course merely be seeking to find the most rational longer term parish-level governance arrangement for our local area. It will aim to achieve the best outcome for all local people rather than any existing bodies, their members or other groups.

### **A short history of the boundaries of Salisbury**

The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 sets out in detail the modern criteria for community governance reviews. Although different in detail they are unchanged in essence from the criteria used in many previous boundary reviews, which have always aimed to match the administrative boundaries of local government entities to the physical reality of the villages, towns or cities that they represent, with logical boundaries fixed where possible on prominent and unchanging natural features.

As development changes the built reality of settlements then the administrative machinery that relates to them, including boundaries, changes to match. These changes are almost always retrospective, with boundaries catching up with a built reality that has been in place for some time.

This occurs because reviews of the boundaries of local government areas are rare. Reviews of parish boundaries are rarer still.

The boundaries of the City of Salisbury did not change between the time of its medieval foundation and 1835. For all of that time the City consisted of the three original parishes of St Thomas', St Edmund's and St Martin's plus the extra parochial Liberty of the Close. Old Sarum and all other surrounding settlements remained administratively separate from the City and some became notorious as rotten boroughs.

As part of a general review of boundaries following the Great Reform Act of 1832 the parliamentary boundaries of the City of Salisbury were reviewed. The built up area was then well beyond the line of the old medieval walls and new residential areas to the east and north in Milford and Fisherton Anger were added to the City to match the new parliamentary boundary, becoming the parishes of Milford within and Fisherton Anger within in 1894.

The City grew throughout the nineteenth century. Its boundaries caught up with the physical changes in 1904, when the City became a single civil parish for the first time and took in all of Fisherton Anger Without and parts of the previously separate settlements of Milford Without, East Harnham, Britford and Stratford-sub-Castle.

Growth in the early twentieth century was rapid and another review occurred in 1927, adding the by-then suburban areas of West Harnham, Bemerton, Laverstock and Stratford.

Post-war development saw another change in 1954, which added parts of Quidhampton and Netherhampton parishes as well as more of Britford, Stratford and Laverstock, including Old Sarum castle.

It is not clear when the last parts of Stratford parish, by then reduced to largely unpopulated fields north of Old Sarum, were added.

At no time to date have any areas within the City of Salisbury been removed from it and put into any adjoining parish.

The historic pattern has therefore been that the boundaries have followed the physical expansion of the city into surrounding, once rural, areas, taking in parts of parishes and in several cases finally incorporating them completely. The old parishes live on as City areas, but without separate councils.

The population resident within the City boundaries had grown from 17,117 at the 1901 census to 32,911 in 1951. It is now over 43,000.

From 1954 until 1974 the City of Salisbury was combined with the parishes of Quidhampton and Wilton into the Salisbury and Wilton Rural District Council, which merged with other authorities into Salisbury District Council, which led to the City being unparished from 1974 until 2009. Parish councils were reinstated in Wilton (as a Town Council) and Quidhampton after 1974.

### **The current position**

The City boundaries have not changed since 1954, although the physical City has continued to grow, and has spilled beyond the boundaries in several places, most notably at Hampton Park/Bishopdown Farm, where a large residential area is split between the City and the parish of Laverstock and on the western edge of Harnham, which now extends into Netherhampton.

A number of Salisbury facilities are currently in adjoining parishes. Three of the five Park and Ride sites are outside the City. Salisbury General Hospital, the largest single employment site in the area, is in Britford parish. Salisbury Racecourse, Salisbury livestock market and the Salisbury and South Wilts golf club are in Netherhampton. The site of the new Salisbury cemetery, to be operated by the City Council, is in South Newton. Salisbury City Football Club and three of the secondary schools that serve the City are in Laverstock and Ford.

Old Sarum Castle is within the City of New Sarum. Old Sarum airfield and the rest of Old Sarum are not.

The City has current boundaries with the parishes of Laverstock and Ford, Clarendon Park, Britford, Netherhampton, Quidhampton, Wilton, South Newton, Woodford and Durnford. The settlements in these parishes are very different in terms of size, proximity of the settlement centres to the City boundary, facilities, extent of interaction with the City, history and feel.

### **Future Development**

Further development is expected. Some is under construction, notably the extension to Hampton Park/Bishopdown Farm. More is approved and contracted, in various stages, such as that at Fugglestone and Long Hedge/Old Sarum. Others are simply designated in the approved Local Development Framework. Whilst there is and will be some infilling and conversion within the existing settlement most growth is expected to follow the past pattern of building in the next ring of fields around the current City.

Most of the expected development will be extensions of the City into adjoining parishes, or the expansion of the satellite settlement that is growing around the airfield at Old Sarum. The very large development at Fugglestone will all but close the current gap between the western side of the City and the northern end of Wilton.

### Salisbury City Council

Salisbury City Council (SCC) is the parish council for the area within the City boundaries, providing all local parish services. Wiltshire Council is the principal authority for the City and all surrounding parishes, providing all other local government services.

Measured by income, assets, staffing and responsibilities SCC is the largest parish council in Britain. Indeed it is something of a giant amongst parish councils. Its income in 2013/14 was £2,105,126 (£2,359,379 budgeted in 2014/15). Its asset value totals £16,423,925 and includes nearly one hundred areas of land, including eight major parks and open spaces (Hudson's Fields, Victoria Park, Churchill Gardens, Queen Elizabeth Gardens, Harnham Recreation Ground, The Greencroft/ Wyndham Park, Fisherton Recreation Ground and Lower Bemerton Recreation Ground), two cemeteries, a crematorium, the Guildhall, markets, a depot, a neighbourhood centre, investment properties and 850 allotments.

It has a diverse income arising from rents, fees and commercial activities as well as its parish precept. It receives no funding from central government. The precept in 2014/15 is £105 per Band D household and will total 61% of income in that year. The status, asset and income strength of SCC gives it the ability to borrow at very low rates to fund major capital projects.

As at 15 July 2014 SCC has 49.37 (when vacancies/vacant hours filled) full time equivalent staff, including a professionally qualified City Clerk and Deputy Clerk and specialists in many areas, including Community Development, Parks and recreation, Events, Communications, Finance and HR.

It is a statutory consultee on all planning and other development applications in the City and has a dedicated planning and transportation committee to consider and comment on such applications.

SCC has a fully elected membership of 23 councillors. They currently represent four political parties with two independents. The City (both SCC and SDC wards) has long had a healthy diversity of political representation and all elections are true contests. Every council seat has been contested, often vigorously, at both SCC elections. SCC has never had a co-opted member. Co-option can lead to councils being seen to be, or being, self-perpetuating clubs of similar people rather than truly accountable representatives of local opinion.

SCC enjoys the general power of competence available to larger elected parishes. It has a regular, open and fully organised structure of committees and public meetings. All key information, including budgets and meeting minutes, is published online.

SCC supports local arts, cultural, sporting and community groups, with administrative support and direct funding, both regular and one-off grants, totalling £93,480 in 2013/14.

SCC therefore has significant capacity. It can and does get things done for the benefit of residents and visitors to the City and is fully and meaningfully democratically accountable to its residents.

The populations, council members and Precept of adjoining parishes in 2013/14 were as follows:

Parish	Precept - 2013/14 (band D) <sup>1</sup>	Population - 2011 census	Parish Councillors
Laverstock and Ford	12.45	4,447	13
Clarendon	13.26	246	5
Britford	17.41	592	7
Netherhampton	9.04	493	
Quidhampton	38.08	408	9
Wilton	91.65	3,579	11
South Newton	18.56	819	9
Woodford	17.13	443	7
Durnford	11.14	368	7
<b>Totals</b>	<b>228.72</b>	<b>11,395</b>	<b>43</b>
<i>Salisbury City</i>	<i>90.00</i>	<i>42,700</i>	<i>23</i>

None of these parishes has any full time staff or significant administrative resources beyond part-time clerks. Their income is largely derived from their precepts as shown above.

Adjoining parishes have few or no elected members, with co-option of members being the norm. Their memberships are not always complete.

Only Wilton and Laverstock and Ford councils have websites. Only Wilton has budget information available online.

#### Advantages and disadvantages of inclusion of any new area in the City

The boundary review may lead to new areas being included within the City boundaries. Doing so would give residents of any such areas a council with:

*Democratic accountability* - the real chance to choose your own representatives, and change them if they fail to perform. As SCC controls its own resources, with no grant income from or capping by central or other local government it offers true local democracy not mere local administration;

*Transparency* - access to local information, including financial and full membership information, through a website and other regular communications;

*Financial strength* - access to larger resources, including greater borrowing power, which could be spent on improving any newly incorporated areas;

*Administrative capacity* - that could be accessed to improve these areas by direct work, working in partnership with other bodies or lobbying other bodies;

*Diversity* - there is sufficient members to produce a worthwhile diversity of ability, experience and opinions, hopefully more representative of the population. Many smaller parish council members are excellent, hard-working and long-serving, but there are simply fewer of them.

*Efficiency* - small parishes can spend a disproportionate percentage of their income on administration, such as the clerk's fees. For example Wilton Town Council will spend 41.65% of its current income on administration. Complete incorporation of such bodies would end these costs, without adding much to SCC costs, freeing funds for more direct public benefit;

<sup>1</sup> Wiltshire Council website (council tax band D charge)

*A stronger, louder voice* - it is an unavoidable truth that larger bodies get more attention and therefore can have a better chance to get things fixed or improved. Their views can carry more weight in planning matters.

*City status* - this is a part of local identity - do you live in a village, a town or a City? Salisbury is a City. Its neighbours are not. The continuity of tradition of Salisbury's mayoralty (now with its 754<sup>th</sup> incumbent) is part of that status. This is in contrast to Wilton, the ancient capital of Wessex and the place from which the county name derives, but now only a town.

And give them individually:

*Access to facilities* - Most SCC facilities are already open to all, but some are limited to City residents, notably the chance to rent a City allotment;

*Cohesive identity* - Many 'overspill' area residents already identify themselves as Salisbury residents, when they are not. This anomaly would end;

*Local representation* - SCC has ward members, responsible for and to small areas. Other parishes have mostly 'whole parish' members, with no specific area of responsibility.

*Fairness of contribution* - included residents would make the same local tax contribution to local facilities as their neighbours.

The possible disadvantages for incorporated residents would be:

*Loss of local identity* - Identity is a complex thing, made up of many parts. Most people's local identity is built around the people and places they personally know, rather than administrative areas, but there is no doubt importance in attachment to a neighbourhood. This can continue within a larger unit, as it notably does in Harnham, Bemerton and Milford within the City (and the civic traditions of Wilton continued separately during the existence of Salisbury and Wilton RDC) but could be diminished. It is notable that the northern end of Stratford-sub-Castle, which has been within the City for sixty years, still feels more rural than many areas in the adjoining parishes;

*Higher cost* - The SCC precept is higher than its neighbours, so incorporated residents could initially pay more. How much depends on parish and property banding, varying from about £5 to £200 per household per year. The maximum difference with an adjoining parish at Band D at 2014/15 rates would be £99.76 (Salisbury £1,551.97 total charge for all four local authorities, Clarendon £1,452.21). The smallest Band D difference with a neighbour would be £8.61 with Wilton. This difference might not last, as an increase in the number of precept payers would not automatically produce a matching increase in SCC costs (there should be savings on administrative costs), so the precept could in time stabilise or fall. Smaller parishes may also have to raise their current precepts to deal with the falling support grant from Wiltshire Council.

The possible benefits to SCC and its existing citizens would be:

*Rational boundaries* - Administrative boundaries could be changed to reflect the true settlement area;

*Fair contribution* - More of those who regularly use SCC funded facilities, such as parks and open spaces, would be contributing to them;

*Increased assets, income and tax base* - Expanding the boundaries would bring more households into the City which would increase the tax base and income of SCC. Incorporating whole parishes would bring the assets of those parishes.

*A stronger voice* - A larger council would be a stronger and more effective partner to other public and private sector organisations, including Wiltshire Council. Wiltshire Council is a very large authority. It will inevitably have to concentrate on more strategic issues, leaving purely local matters to parish and town councils. These councils need to be capable of taking on and effectively executing increasing responsibilities. The geography of Wiltshire makes it particularly important to have a strong and truly representative voice from the south of the county.

The possible disadvantages to SCC and its existing citizens would be:

*Increased liabilities* - new areas may bring liabilities for facilities within them, such as ageing play areas, that exceed the value of transferring assets;

*Increased demands* - new areas can bring new demands for services and facilities, to match the level of provision in other parts of the City, again without producing matching income or assets;

*Loss of focus* - The activities of SCC have been planned around current areas. Any new areas may disrupt or dilute these plans;

*Loss of identity* - The core City identity may be diluted rather than enhanced by the incorporation of surrounding suburban and other areas.

### Options and a tour round the boundaries

The shape of any settlement is best seen from above. An aerial view readily shows where the built up area ends and true open countryside begins, in a way that intra-urban green space can obscure from the ground. Such a view is publically available to all in Salisbury in the aerial photo in the lift lobby of Salisbury Library. That photo stretches from Wilton to Laverstock Down and forms the template for the options set out below.

#### Option 1 - The Minimal City - Catching Up

Incorporate into the City all of the built up areas and facilities that are contiguous to the current boundary and now form an indistinguishable part of the settlement, with boundaries moving to readily identified natural features, tracks or roads. These areas are:

*Hampton Park* - The whole of the current area up to Pearce Way and the extension across Pearce Way into Hampton Park Two, including the new country park land. The new boundary would be along the Ford Road from Old Sarum until Green Acres (the first house in Ford), and then along the field boundary of the Hampton Park Two site to join the existing River Bourne boundary.

*The New Cemetery Site* - The site designated for a cemetery at New Cut Crossroads together with the triangle of land across the Avenue, both currently in South Newton parish. This area is currently uninhabited.

*The Broken Bridges Path* - the line of this path between Lower Bemerton and Harnham up to the current city boundary, bringing this City link route within the City.

*Netherhampton Road* - Wellworthy Road and the Harnham Business Park where they extend into Netherhampton as extensions of West Harnham. Also that part of Harnham Slope woods that are currently in Netherhampton, to be brought under single management.

*The Coombe Road Triangle* - The area enclosed between the current boundary and an extension of the southern City boundary from the track opposite the hospital site to Old Shaftesbury Road, which includes the new housing in the triangle between Old Blandford Road and Coombe Road. Certain fields between Old Shaftesbury Drive and Harnham Slope woods could be included to produce a straighter City boundary.

*Salisbury District Hospital and the Downton Road P&R site* - the whole of the hospital site, including its car parks, from the point on the north west corner where the site meets the City boundary and the area between the green lane joining the hospital site to the Downton Road, extending across to Lower Road Britford, where it joins the Downton Road near the Park and Ride site.

### **Option 2 - The Larger City - Planning Ahead**

Incorporate into the City all of the Option 1 areas plus the adjacent areas that are expected to be developed or that already form suburban extensions to the City, either by the suburbanisation of an existing village, such as Laverstock and Quidhampton, or the expansion of an old military facility, such as at Old Sarum, being:

*Laverstock* - The whole of the village within the current parish boundary up to a northern boundary along the London Road and A30.

*Old Sarum* - the whole of the airfield, the whole of the current and future housing areas west of the airfield up to the current northern and western parish boundary, including the Park and Ride site. The new southern boundary to start at Green Acres and go north around Ford village.

*Britford* - The whole of the current village up to the boundary of Longford Park, including that part of the Avon water meadows currently surrounded on three sides by the City.

### **Option 3 - The Full City - The Complete Settlement**

Incorporate into the City all of the Options 1 and 2 areas plus the whole of other adjoining parishes and Wilton, to produce a single area covering everything seen to be urban in the Library aerial photo. The City would then be surrounded and enclosed on at least three sides by the historic Pembroke (Wilton House), Radnor (Longford Castle) and Clarendon Park estates, which are unlikely to change very much. There should be no need to review this boundary for many years. These areas being some or all of:

*Laverstock and Ford* - The remainder of the parish, namely the still distinct village of Ford;

*Petersfinger* - The area between the railway line and the river, from the current city boundary to a point opposite the entrance lodge to Clarendon Park.

*Britford* - The remainder of the parish, essentially open land around the south of the City joining the hospital site to Coombe Road.

*Netherhampton* - The remainder of the parish, including the main village area, the Livestock Market and Racecourse. This would be logical if the boundary extended to include Wilton.

*Quidhampton* - The whole of the parish. Now reduced to about 700 acres. This would also be logical if the boundary extended to include Wilton.

*Wilton* - The whole of the parish, currently a very small Town. This would give Wilton the City status it richly deserves and probably necessitate a change of name of the council to something like 'The Cities of Salisbury and Wilton Council', perhaps with two Mayors.

*Woodford and Durnford* - The northern boundary could be straightened by moving it north to the line of the Avenue from New Cut Crossroads down to the Avon, though Little Durnford Manor park and up to the current boundary north of Old Sarum. Hilltop Business Park, the Avon Farm development and a few other houses are within this area. Boundary tidying might also put the area around Long Hedge Farm into the City, if the rest of Old Sarum is included.



## **Conclusion and recommendation**

The aim of this document is to give information and options, not to make recommendations or form a council submission to the Community Governance Review. Due to the controversial political issues that such reviews can create, both within and beyond the City, it is difficult for officers to make any worthwhile recommendations or put forward a neutral report that does anything more than describe the process. As an independent Leader of SCC I have no dog in any political or other boundary fight so feel obliged to seek to provide a personal review of the situation and possible logical options as I see them and leave it to the members of SCC to decide which, if any, of the above Options, or any variation of them, to choose, either collectively as a council, as political Groups or as individual members.

I will be unable to attend the Full Council meeting on 21 July at which these issues will be discussed, so I have asked officers to submit this report to the meeting as part of a more conventionally set out council paper with a request that members decide:

- (a) whether there is sufficient consensus for a council approved submission to be made; and
- (b) if yes, what that consensus is.

If there is no consensus then I would expect that fact to be reported to the review and separate submissions to be made by various members or groups. I would then submit this paper to the review for information and as a personal view as a single independent ward member, not as the Leader of the Council.

My purely personal view is that we should look into the next few decades of the future, think what is best for our existing and future citizens and neighbours over that period in terms of representation and resources, have faith in the quality and value of what our council has done, is doing and can in future do to improve our area for residents, workers and visitors and therefore choose to recommend Options 2 or 3 to the Wiltshire Council review body. I incline towards Option 3, although I think there may be more in it for our neighbours than our existing residents.

**Councillor Andrew Roberts**

Leader - Salisbury City Council  
11 July 2014.