

Borough and County Councillor's Report to Prestbury Parish Council

Monday 13th January 2020

On 16th December a public meeting of the Transport Regulation Order Committee was convened for the sole purpose of reviewing the modifications to the Phase 4 of the traffic scheme known locally as Boots Corner.

Following the usual administrative procedures during which Cllr. Will Windsor-Clive was elected Chair for the meeting, the Chair outlined the format of the meeting and then invited people who had submitted written questions to the committee to take the opportunity to ask one supplementary question that related to the original question. This was followed by statements from residents who had requested to speak at the meeting. Each speaker was allowed 3 minutes. There were 30 speakers in objection to the scheme and 8 spoke in favour.

Those speaking in objection to the scheme cited a downturn in business due to clients having difficulty in accessing their premise via the one-way systems which had been poorly signposted. The majority of objectors highlighted the increased journey times, the lack of signposted alternative routes and increased congestion and attendant pollution.

Those supporting the scheme emphasised the increase in footfall in the High Street, decreased pollution at Boot's Corner, increases in cycling walking and bus journeys.

Following the presentations by members of the public the Members of the TRO Committee debated the various issues raised during the meeting and took the opportunity to question the officers present.

There were I believe two key questions that influence the committee members in arriving at their decision.

1. Philip Williams the Gloucestershire County Council Traffic Commissioner was asked what mitigation measures could be put in place to eliminate the congestion caused by the closure of Boots Corner. He said that there were no specific measures planned, but this could be looked at. He did however comment that there would need to be a review of signage.

2. Tim Atkins the Managing Director of CBC was asked how the Council processed the 6000 signature petition presented to the Council requesting that Boots Corner be open to all traffic. He responded by saying that the petition was processed in accordance with the Council's Constitution, the petition was debated and on a vote was rejected.

The committee then voted, 3 in favour of retaining the scheme and making it permanent 6 were against the scheme.

The recommendation from the TRO Committee was presented to Gloucestershire County Council's Cabinet on the 20th December, who unanimously endorsed the recommendation.

Cheltenham Borough Council Meeting – 16th December 2019

1.Presentation of Petition.

Following the usual administrative proceeding the council considered a petition present by Mr. Stephen Fifield. The petition called upon the Council to keep parking free at Pittville Park Pump Room and Albermarle Gate. Mr. Fifield argued that the basis for the charges were unjustified with no evidence to support the proposed charges. In response Cllr. Andrew McKinley pointed out that petition was not presented to the Council during the consultation period, but comments from residents had led to a modification of the proposals. He felt that allowing two hours free parking followed by a charge of £1 for the next two hours would encourage a turnover of parking spaces and reduce commuter parking. Cllr. Parsons commented that spaces on the Pump Room car park had been occupied by commuters and students from the Student Village. On a vote councillor voted in favour of Recommendation 2, to take no further action.

2.Recommendations of the Independent Remuneration Panel.

The Council is required to review the allowances paid to councillors on an annual basis. This task is undertaken by the Independent Remuneration Panel. The IRP recommended to Council that the basic allowance be increased by 2% to £5,698, this incorporates a £50 increase to the home ICT allowance.

The IRP further recommended that the Special Responsibility Allowance be increased by 2%.

The IRP further recommended that the Special Responsibility Allowance for the Chair of the Planning Committee be increased by 15% plus the 2% inflation increase.

The allowance paid to the Chair and Vice Chair of the Licensing Committee be split on a 60/40 basis.

The recommendations were accepted by the Council.

3.Local Council Tax Support Scheme.

In the absence of Cllr. Rowena Hall the report was delivered by Cllr. Steve Jordon, Leader of the Council.

The scheme provides financial assistance to working age residents who experience difficulty in paying their council tax. Following the withdrawal of financial support from the Government, Cheltenham Borough Council continues to fund the scheme. There are nearly 4000 beneficiaries of the scheme, at a cost to the Council of £3.3 m. The payments are banded so that the maximum benefit is targeted to those in greatest financial difficulties.

When put to the vote, the continuation of the scheme was unanimously supported.

4. Review of Council Tax Premium on empty properties.

This scheme was introduced to discourage homeowners from leaving properties empty. The Council was recommended to approve the following levels of taxation on empty properties:

- a. 100% in respect of properties which have been unoccupied and unfurnished for more than 2 years as from 1st April 2020.
- b. 200% in respect of properties which have been unoccupied and unfurnished for more than 5 years as from 1st April 2020.
- c. 300% in respect of properties which have been unoccupied and unfurnished for more than 10 years as from 1st April 2020.

The Council approved the recommendations.

5. Review of No Child Left Behind and Adoption of the Cheltenham Offer.

In December 2018 the council responded to a children and young people needs assessment and supported a motion to support the No Child Left Behind Year of Action.

In Cheltenham alone there are over 4000 children and young people living in poverty.

In a detailed report to council Cllr. Clucas the Cabinet member for Healthy Lifestyles detailed the progress that had been made during the past year, and the partnerships that had developed to tackle the issues of child poverty. She asked the council to support a further year of action and to support the Cheltenham Offer, which she described as a ‘wide-ranging programme that will provide comprehensive support for the town’s children and young people’.

The council voted unanimously to support the request.

6. Motion A.

‘This council recognises that trees have a crucial role to play in tackling the climate emergency’

A similar debate was held at GCC last month. Whilst there was general agreement that the planting of trees can be beneficial, the real issue is to reduce the production of greenhouses gases in the first place.

The motion was passed.

7. Motion B

The motion called on the council to resist the suggestion in the Government sponsored Landscape Review that the Cotswold AONB become a National Park. It was argued that the Cotswold AONB differed from a National Park in that it did not rely solely on landscape and tourism for its economy. The AONB was home to a wide range of businesses and technologies

with many well-established employment sites. In addition, National Park status would remove the responsibility for planning from local authorities.

The motion was passed.

John Payne

6.1.20