

# **Bourton-on-the-Water Parish Council**

## **Minutes of an Extraordinary Meeting of the Parish Council held at 7.00pm on Monday 18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 in the Windrush Room at The George Moore Community Centre**

**Attendees:** Cllr A Roberts (Chairman), Cllrs S Coventry, B Hadley, L Hicks, L Launchbury, M Macklin, J Wareing, L Wilkins, S Tapper and B Wragge.

**In Attendance:** Sharon Henley, Clerk. Steve Cotton, Village Warden. County Cllrs P Hodgkinson and M Mackenzie-Charrington (Stow Division).

**Members of Public:** 48

### **Public Session:**

The Chairman welcomed all attendees and reminded everyone that this was a Parish Council meeting and not a public meeting. He proposed that the public session was extended beyond 10 minutes and this was agreed by councillors. The meeting had originally been called to discuss a private proposal which was withdrawn following the individual and their family suffering abuse. The Chairman said this was not acceptable, and we should all be allowed to have sensible discussions about village matters without people being intimidated.

All correspondence sent to the Clerk had been circulated and added to Dropbox, so he urged those speaking only to raise new points. There had been mixed responses received by email and letter from businesses and residents but no practical solutions. There was currently no suitable and affordable safe drop-off, pick-up and turning point. The Parish Council were there to represent the whole parish and needed to decide what was best for the community. The Parish Council does not have the direct power to implement decisions made but could only make recommendations to higher authorities. Recommendations for changes to road restrictions would need approval from GCC Highways and would ultimately be subject to public consultation.

County Cllr MacKenzie-Charrington (Stow Division) explained that he represents many communities surrounding Bourton and would like to take messages to the County Council from this meeting. He raised concerns about coaches turning off the Fosse Way, dropping off in Bourton and trying to negotiate through Little Rissington.

A representative of Pulhams Coaches, also a member of Bourton Business Network, encouraged the Parish Council to 'dig hard' with the District Council for a solution. Local businesses had offered to fund a coach park on the industrial estate but needed the support of the Parish Council. CDC had suggested that coach companies could bring three minibuses into the village, rather than one coach, but this would not be good for the environment. Emissions are less from modern coaches.

A resident suggested the Parish Council should ask the District Council for a Compulsory Purchase Order on the car park, which he believed was possible.

A member of the public who lived near Bourton and represented the British Retailers Association commented that coach visitors were different from those arriving by car. Removing coach customers would impact on businesses and could be the difference between success and failure of a business.

A resident highlighted that the provision of coach parking was not a statutory requirement for the Parish Council. The Tourist Levy had been introduced by CDC to mitigate cost and damage by visitors. He urged Parish Councillors to review their pecuniary interests in respect of tourism. TROs (Traffic Regulation Orders) would most likely cost £80,000 to £100,000 and GCC paid half the cost last time a TRO was introduced.

A resident who used to be a Parish Councillor had previously worked with CDC/GCC in relation to CDC's pre-planning application for coaches at the Rissington Road car park. The application was not progressed due to road width, access and concerns about coaches at Post Office corner.

A resident called for a balance of interests between the resident and tourist/business communities as it had been unpleasant for residents to get around the village this year. In their opinion, the changes in Parish Councillors had brought about a majority bias towards the business community which needed redressing.

A resident asked whether there was an opportunity for coaches to drop-off at the School field. The Chairman advised that had already been investigated and the School had previously said it was not viable.

A representative from Cotswold China and Cookware stated that he had been a retailer and employer for 30 years in the village. He explained how business rates were calculated and was concerned that the loss of coaches would result in a slow decline in businesses, with only the service sector remaining.

A resident raised concerns about coaches in Station Road producing pollution on children's walking route to school and favoured keeping coaches just outside of Bourton.

A resident and business owner thought that stopping coaches coming into the village was misguided and that cars were the problem. There was no long-term strategic plan for Bourton for decisions to be based on. A range of businesses providing local services could be lost. Air quality and congestion were a problem, however, with the new Euro6 coaches being more environmentally friendly, each coach could remove 35-40 cars from the road.

A resident asked whether Manor Field was suitable for a coach park. They were advised during the meeting that this was privately owned and there were archaeological issues with tarmacking this site as well as it being a designated Green Open Space.

A resident suggested coaches could drop-off in Meadow Way, just off Station Road by Jubilee Lodge, to avoid parking in the village. The Chairman advised that the solution for parking would be the industrial estate, but no lorries were allowed past Colletts Garage, so coaches should not be permitted to go that way either.

A resident suggested that coaches could park and visitors could walk from the industrial estate.

A resident had just returned from holiday where their coach had parked in a local town and dropped off passengers for 20 minutes only as that was all that was allowed in that location.

The representative of Pulhams Coaches highlighted that they had requested for additional 801 buses to service the village and needed to know whether this would be perceived as a problem. The Chairman stated that at this stage this was not perceived as a problem.

**23/235 Apologies for absence:** Cllrs A Davis, J Jowitt and M Samuel.

**23/236 Declarations of Interest.** Cllr Tapper declared a pecuniary interest in coach parking as a local business owner and left the meeting during items 23/237 (1) and (2).

**23/237 Coach parking, pick-up and drop off:**

1. To discuss and agree next steps: The Chairman suspended Standing Orders for District Councillors Wareing and Wilkins to speak:

- District Cllr Wareing discussed coach parking options for the Rissington Road car park with CDC and was advised that this did not work financially for them. The owners of Bourton Vale car park had chosen to cease coach parking due to the additional work required and that it was more financially viable to park cars than coaches. They had no interest in subsidies from businesses. He raised concerns about coaches stopping on blind corners as they did last summer and had received a lot of correspondence from residents on 'accidents waiting to happen'. He believed there was currently a risk to public safety. He sympathised with businesses during the terrible cost of living crisis and urged the Parish Council to decide where it stands on this matter.
- District Cllr Wilkins understood from CDC that an administrator would be needed to run coach parking provision in the Rissington Road car park, which would significantly add to their costs.

Parish Councillors made the following points:

- The Parish Council had requested funding from the Tourist Levy for increased warden patrols in the summer. Their powers would hopefully be increased from next year to deal with coaches not obeying the PSV restrictions.
- CDC should be approached again about the use of the Rissington Road car park for coaches. They had produced very high cost estimates for this but had not discussed the previous spend of around £300,000 with the Parish Council.
- The Chairman raised concerns about gridlock on Rissington Road if coaches used that car park. There was now only one entrance opposite the Cricket Club field and cars trying to enter and exit both sites, along with manoeuvring coaches, could cause traffic problems.
- Although a TRO was expected to take around 12 months to implement, an experimental TRO could be brought in quicker with no public consultation, which would then take place whilst it was in force.

- Coaches had been seen breaking the existing TROs which prohibits them accessing the High Street, Lansdowne, the Steeps near the village and Post Office corner.
- With the closure of the village Information Centre there would be no facility available to administrate coach parking arrangements in any location.
- If coaches were banned it could disadvantage older and partially disabled people.
- The Cotswold School had previously used Section 106 money for buildings to accommodate extra pupils. At that time, a scheme to use the school fields bordering the Fosseway for school bus parking had been investigated but deemed too expensive. The option to use the school as a drop-off point could be revisited.

Standing Orders were suspended for County Cllr P Hodgkinson to speak: He discussed the TRO option with GCC Highways and to ban coaches from the village centre via a TRO would cost £10,000. An Emergency TRO for a fixed period of 12-18 months would cost £30,000. To continue the arrangements would cost a further £10-15,000 including public consultation, so approximately £45,000 in total. Cllr Hodgkinson only had £10,000 available to assist (from a total fund of £30,000) which would mean that he would not be able to fund the proposed TRO to protect residential streets against tourist parking at peak times. He offered to assist Cllr Hadley (as member of The Cotswold School Academy Trust) in discussions with the Cotswold school. Although there were limited funds, the Build Back Better fund could possibly be used for the school. Following discussion, the Parish Council RESOLVED that Cllr Hadley should approach the Cotswold School to scope out possibilities, including the potential for a drop-off point in the turning bay. Following that Cllrs Roberts, Wilkins, Wareing, Hicks, Hadley, County Cllr Hodgkinson and Andy Pulham from Pulhams Coaches would meet with CDC decision-makers for a round table discussion on available options. This was approved UNANIMOUSLY.

Cllr Hadley to supply exact figures for coach visits in 2023 from records at the village Information Centre.

2. To agree the Parish Council's position if there is no workable solution for coach parking provision. In accordance with Standing Order 7a this was requested by Cllrs Hicks, Roberts & Wareing.

Following discussion, this was DEFERRED to a future meeting.

#### **23/238 Items to Note:**

1. Cllr Wilkins highlighted that business rates had been referred to during the Public Session, but the Parish Council did not receive any of this money as it went to the District Council.

**23/239 Next Meeting:** 7pm on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024 in the Windrush Room, The George Moore Community Centre.

All members of the public left the room after this item.

#### **23/240**

1. **Confidential Session:** Resolution under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Section 1, extended by the Local Government Act 1972, Section 100, that the following item is confidential as it relates to staffing matters. As such, the press and public are excluded from this part of the meeting. APPROVED.
2. Staff Pension (Confidential Paper 1): To review additional information provided and approve an option. Information was reviewed and arrangements were agreed for the Committee Clerk's pension, backdated to the employment start date of 6<sup>th</sup> November.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20.18 hours.