

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Monthly report for 25th January – 28th February 2026

1.0 Council and other meetings

Physical Cornwall Council meetings during the last five weeks included Full Council; Corporate, Finance and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee, an associated task and finish “Customer Philosophy: Face to Face Customer Services” workshops and three workshops on a new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy; and the China Clay Area and Luxulyan Community Area Partnership (CAP).

Other physical meetings included St Dennis Parish Council (two); St Ender Parish Council (two); Indian Queens Band (two) and Indian Queens Pit Committee (two).

Meetings via video-conferencing meanwhile included the Individual Decision Day; an agenda setting session for the Constitution and Governance Committee; Fifth Nation Working Group and associated pre-agenda session; Local Plan Members’ Working Group; and a Group Leaders’ Meeting.

2.0 Impact of recent weather

The recent bad weather is continuing to cause damage to local roads. I am continuing to spend quite a lot of time feeding information and complaints through to the local Cormac manager. This has included concerns about the deterioration of the road surface along the approaches to St Dennis around Domellick Bridge and on Rectory Road – where some works have been undertaken – as well as to the east of Gothers.

3.0 Budget

Cornwall Council agreed its budget for 2026-2027, at Full Council on 26th February, which included significant cuts and a maximum council tax increase of 4.99%. I supported the budget as there were no alternatives put forward by non-administration groups, which demonstrates how dire the financial situation is for local government in Cornwall.

The reality is that local government has been failed by Westminster Governments and ministers are continuing with the dodgy concept of spending power, which I think was brought in by the Conservatives. We are being told that Cornwall’s spending power is going up, but the funding increases are predicated on central government expecting councils to impose maximum council tax increases.

It is also the case that the so-called fair funding review has not delivered for Cornwall. We continue to get less funding than other, often urban, areas and much less than our Celtic cousins in Scotland and Wales.

Of course, I have concerns about many aspects of the budget and linked activities – for example, of the potential loss of Foundation Living Wage status and future reviews of non-domestic business rates – and the MK Group is committed to challenging the administration on various elements of the

4.0 Community Highway Improvement Programme

Councillors from across the China Clay Area and Luxulyan CAP have been allocated a small amount of money to fund improvements on the highway network. We have all received complaints about parking and are aiming to have a CAP-wide order to install new parking restrictions. A list has been prepared for Cormac and we will soon be discussing what might be possible before a public consultation.

5.0 Planning changes

I am extremely disappointed that the UK Government has announced it is introducing a new “expedited written representations procedure” for dealing with planning appeals. The spin says it is all about speeding up decision-making and reducing administrative burdens. But the guidance says that “no new evidence can be submitted at appeal stage” and there will be no opportunity for any “third party” representations, such as Parish Councils or the people actually affected by any proposed development.

In certain scenarios there will be hearings and public inquiries, but Parish Councils will not be able to demand such more detailed considerations of contested planning proposals.

This will frankly further undermine a planning system that is already broken.

6.0 “Report it”

I continue to report a number of local issues of concern to residents. If you spot any problems, you can also report it yourself through Cornwall Council’s website at: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/report-something/>

ST DENNIS PARISH

7.0 Trerice Solar Farm

As noted last month, the company behind the plans for a 32MW solar farm at Trerice has appealed the decision of Cornwall Council to refuse planning permission for the development. The hearing planned for 24th March has now been shifted to 21st April by the Bristol-based Planning Inspectorate. I understand it will take place at The Pitch.

I have prepared an addendum to the Parish Council’s representation to this appeal, which concentrates on the historic importance of the Trerice area, the impact of the proposed development on the character of the local landscape and the cumulative impact of industrial developments on St Dennis and surrounding China Clay Area.

Representatives of the applicant are arguing that the St Dennis area has been “influenced by existing industrial and mining activity” and the landscape is therefore “less sensitive” to change and more able to “accommodate” large developments, such as solar farms.

St Dennis Parish Council has taken the opposite view. It believes that the proposal site is part of an important tract of good quality farmland of medieval origin in the western part of the Parish, which is surrounded by clayworks and other industrial installations. It is arguing that the cumulative industrialisation of the locality [linked to the ongoing china clay industry, the Indian Queens power station, the incinerator plant, renewable energy developments and related battery storage facilities] has gone far enough and the landscape does not have capacity to “accommodate” more industrialisation.

In my 4,000-word document, I have noted how the parish of St Dennis comprises approximately 1,250 hectares, which includes 350 hectares of the Goss Moor and how, of the remaining 900 hectares, more than 255 hectares (28%) have been industrialised. The western part of St Dennis Parish meanwhile comprises a medieval landscape of great time-depth comprising farmland associated with a number of ancient farms with origins dating back over one thousand years.

I have also challenged aspects of how the applicants for the proposed scheme have downplayed the cumulative impact of developments across Clay Country.

Obviously, I do not know how the hearing will go, but it is noteworthy that solar farms near Carland Cross and by Trethurgy, near Penwithick, have been allowed by the Planning Inspectorate in recent months.

Please email me if you want a copy of what I have written.

8.0 Cornish Lithium

As I write this update report, Cornish Lithium will be launching its statutory consultation at the beginning of March. I will be attending a number of the consultation events and seeking people’s views on what is proposed.

9.0 Road improvements

In addition to the highway issues noted in section 2.0, I am also reporting extra potholes on Carne Hill, Fore Street and Trelavour Road. These roads are already high on Cornwall Council’s list for improvement works. I am presently awaiting confirmation that improvement works for sections of these roads will be timetabled for 2026.

10.0 Sign project

In terms of the project to install “Welcome to St Dennis Parish” signs and nameplates for the settlements of Enniscaven, Gothers and Trerice, I have received an indicative cost from Cormac. I will be submitting a grant application

with the Parish Council to the St Dennis and Nanpean Community Trust (incinerator fund) within the next few days.

ST ENODER PARISH

11.0 Road improvements

In addition to the highway issues noted in section 2.0, Cormac were due to be carrying out resurfacing works on sections of the road between Fraddon to Melbur. I understand these works have been pushed back because of pressures caused by the bad weather, but this work is being rescheduled for a couple of months time. I will confirm when the new dates have been finalised.

12.0 Transfer of play areas / green spaces to St Enoder Parish Council

The transfer of the play areas / green spaces [Hanover Parc, Kingsley Court, Lindsay Fields, Penhale Gardens and St James View] from Cornwall Council to St Enoder Parish Council is still ongoing, but we are nearly there.

13.0 CIL

The Parish Clerk and I have submitted an expression of interest for a grant from Cornwall Council's CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) pot towards the refurbishment of the skatepark in Indian Queens Recreation Ground. We will hear within the next six weeks, whether we will be asked to submit a full application.

14.0 Indian Queens Band

As previously reported, I was helping Indian Queens Band with the preparation of a grant application to support the Band's 170th anniversary celebrations. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful, but we are still working towards making this anniversary year very special.

15.0 Indian Queens Pit

I was pleased to re-elected vice-chairman of Indian Queens Pit at our AGM on 23rd February.

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL FAMILIES

16.0 Advice

In addition, I have assisted numerous households and individuals with guidance and advice on a range of topics.