

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 27th March – 23rd April 2023

1.0 Council and other meetings

In terms of physical meetings of Cornwall Council in the last month, I attended Full Council, Cabinet, Constitution and Governance Committee (to consider what changes would be needed to the Council's constitution if the mayor proposal was to go forward), China Clay Area Network Panel, stakeholder events (3) for review into the Homechoice system for the allocation of publicly-owned rental properties, a visit to the Council call centre at Camborne through the Customers and Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee, meeting about the proposed new CAPs (Community Area Partnerships), and a stakeholder event about health provision in the China Clay Area linked to the "eco-town / garden village" development near Penwithick.

Further meetings through Teams video-conferencing included a session about Community Levelling Up (Good Growth) funding for the China Clay Area, a training session about the new Climate Change Development Plan Document, a policy briefing about the proposed "devolution deal," a briefing in advance of the Full Council and Group Leaders meeting.

Other physical meetings included St Dennis Parish Council (2) and St Ender Parish Council, plus Annual Assemblies for both parishes.

2.0 Cornwall Council

2.1 "Devolution deal"

In March, Cornwall Council published the feedback from the consultation into the "devolution deal," which showed that 69% of respondents were against the imposition of a directly-elected mayor. At their meeting on 4th April, the ruling Cabinet confirmed that they would not be taking the scheme forward.

As the leader of Mebyon Kernow, I have been critical of the "deal," which was accommodations between central government and Cornwall's one principal council, rather than the devolution of meaningful political powers. I found the whole debate very frustrating as there was a very limited focus on the content of the "deal" and its inadequacies, and the key argument was about the possibility of a "local government" mayor.

Linked to this, at a meeting of Full Council on 18th April, I proposed a motion seeking greater devolution for Cornwall. The motion argued that Cornwall merited parity with Wales and Scotland in terms of devolution and sought to "commence negotiations for a proper devolution settlement similar to those enjoyed in the other Celtic parts of the UK (such as a National Assembly of Cornwall or Cornish Parliament)."

The motion was lost by 38 votes to 36. Supporters included all MK, Green, Labour and Liberal Democrat councillors, plus all members of the Independent Group – bar one – and three Conservatives. It was opposed by 35 Tories, one “Conservative aligned independent,” one non-aligned independent and the one member of the Independent Group.

Interesting, a number of councillors from the Conservative administration expressed some sympathy with the move for more extensive powers for Cornwall, and I will continue to do all I can to persuade my colleagues to be more ambitious for Cornwall.

2.2 Homechoice review

Cornwall Council and registered providers have commenced a review into the Homechoice system, through which publicly-owned rental homes are allocated.

There were three stakeholder events in April and I attended all three. Some people are saying that the “local connection” aspect of the allocations should be reduced, but I am arguing that such criteria should be strengthened for parishes such as St Dennis and St Enoher. I am presently collating evidence to submit into the review.

2.3 Community Chest

As a Cornwall Councillor, I am allocated £3,000 per annum, which I can grant to local organisations. I can confirm that for 2022/2023, I awarded grants to the Community Larder for Indian Queens and District, Indian Queens Youth Football, St Dennis Carnival, St Dennis Multi-Agency Hub, St Dennis Youth Club, the Wesley Pre-School at Indian Queens, and Wheal Rose Football Team at Mitchell. Anyone wishing to apply to my community chest for 2023/24, should give me a call to have a chat.

ST DENNIS PARISH ISSUES

3.0 Multi-use trail

The study looking at what would need to be done to turn the section of the defunct railway line between St Dennis and the Goss Moor National Nature Reserve into a multi-use trail has been ongoing. The work is being carried out by Sustrans and a first draft of this study has just been completed. I will be attending a meeting with the charity and Cornwall Council in the next few days to discuss the initial findings.

4.0 ClayTAWC

As the Chairman of the Board at ClayTAWC, I am putting a significant amount of time into the safeguarding of the future of the centre. Our 25-year lease for the building ends in about 18 months, and we are presently seeking funding to purchase the building so that it will be protected as a community-owned asset at the heart of the village. It is hoped that the funding will come from the St Dennis and Nanpean Community Trust (incinerator fund) and Shared Prosperity Funding through Cornwall Council.

5.0 Planning matters

Last year, a planning application was submitted for a new dwelling on Hendra Road, which was opposed by the Parish Council. It was subsequently withdrawn, but a fresh application has now been submitted (PA23/01263). The Parish Council has, once again, raised an objection and I will be keep an eye on what happens with the proposal.

6.0 Litter pick

It was great to join parish councillors and local residents at the litter pick in St Dennis on 15th April. It is worrying how much waste you can pick up in a couple of hours.

7.0 Annual Assembly

It was also a pleasure to attend the 2023 Annual Assembly for St Dennis on 18th April. I presented an annual report summarising key elements of my work over the last 12 months.

ST ENODER PARISH ISSUES

8.0 Planning matters

There continues to be a large number of live planning applications in St Enoder Parish. Listed below are updates on a couple of them, which will soon be considered by St Enoder Parish Council.

8.1 Housing at Summercourt (PA22/08134)

I have also received a range of representations about an affordable housing led development in Summercourt, opposite New Row and, a while back, I chaired a couple of meetings between representatives of the landowners and residents from neighbouring properties. Cornwall Council also raised concerns about the application as originally submitted and I confirm that a slightly reworked scheme has been submitted by the applicants.

8.2 Solar Farm at Burthy Row / Chytane (PA23/01893)

The application for a 50mw solar farm at Burthy / Chytane near Fraddon has just been submitted. It has been validated and residents can now formally comment on the proposal.

9.0 Highway matters

9.1 Pedestrianised crossings in Summercourt

The works to install three pedestrianised crossings on the crossroads are nearing completion. The new lights are up and final works relate to the replacement of some granite kerbing, after which the new arrangement will be fully operational.

9.2 Pocohontas Crescent / Princess Parc

As reported last month, Cormac will be on site between 24th and 28th April to carry out "works to repair the carriageway surface" in Pocohontas Crescent and Princess Parc, Indian Queens.

10.0 Annual Assembly

It was also a pleasure to attend the 2023 Annual Assembly for St Enoder on 11th April, at which I presented an annual report summarising key elements of my work over the last 12 months.

HELPING LOCAL FAMILIES

11.0 Advice

In addition, I have assisted numerous households and individuals with guidance and advice on a range of topics, including housing, planning and fly-tipping.