

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 1st August – 25th September 2022

1.0 Council and other meetings

In terms of physical meetings of Cornwall Council during the last two months, I attended a Full Council meeting, Constitution and Governance Committee, Chief Officers Employment Panel and three meetings of Network Chairs about the review of Community Network Panels and the Prosperity Fund. Councillors from the China Clay Area also met the Corporate Director for Neighbourhoods at the Wheal Martyn Museum to discuss local issues.

In addition, I attended a Cost of Living summit at Tremough, one meeting of the St Dennis and Nanpean Community Fund, plus three meetings of St Enoder Parish Council and two meetings of St Dennis Parish Council.

I have also attended a number of meetings via TEAMS video-conferencing, including three Group Leaders meeting (which included discussions about the County Deal), a monthly meeting of councillors from the China Clay Area and an all member briefing about the Council's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy which I have been involved with.

I also had further online meetings about a range of local issues.

2.0 Cornwall Council

2.1 Financial problems at the unitary authority

At the most recent Full Council meeting on 21st September, the Deputy Leader of Cornwall Council stated that the authority is "in a hole" and facing a deficit of £62million in 2023/2024. The present administration has stated that it may have to prioritise statutory services and stop providing certain services which it does not have a legal obligation to provide. It is all very worrying, especially as the promises of fair funding for local government have not materialised.

2.2 Fire Control Centre at Tolvaddon

The Conservative administration is also planning to close the Fire Control Centre and centralise this important service to a "partnership" based outside of Cornwall. I reject any assertion that this important control service could be better provided by people based to the east of the Tamar, who will have little knowledge about Cornwall. I have also made it clear that I do not support the closure of the Control Centre, which I intend to oppose.

At the time of writing this report, I am pleased to see that more than 6,000 people have signed a petition opposing the loss of the service.

2.3 Cornwall Aviation Heritage Centre

I am also disappointed that the Conservative administration in Truro is refusing to allow the Cornwall Aviation Heritage Centre to remain on Newquay Airport. In the spirit of openness, I will add that the Centre includes the extensive model collection of my late uncle Barry Cole. I recently visited the Museum and met with the director of the Centre.

I also challenged the approach of the Council at the Full Council meeting on 21st September.

At the time of writing this report, I am also pleased that more than 20,000 people have signed a petition in support of the Centre.

2.4 China Clay Area Community Network

As noted above, in my role as Chairman of the China Clay Area Community Network Panel, I attended three meetings of Chairs and vice-chairs of the Community Network Panels. Two of the meetings were focused on the plan from the Council's Conservative administration to reduce the number of Networks. In the second of the two meetings, we were tasked to come up with suggested boundaries for a total of 12 Networks, and I have been doing my best to argue for the continuation of a China Clay Area Community Network.

3.0 Cost of Living summit

I was among the councillors to attend the summit on date at Tremough, which brought together representatives from Cornwall Council and a range of charities and third sector organisations. It would be an understatement to describe the present circumstances as worrying and I used the opportunity to network with others at the event. In particular, I was checking what additional support we might be able to generate for projects in the China Clay Area.

4.0 Community Chest

As a Cornwall Councillor, I am allocated £3,000 per annum which I can grant to local community organisations. I can confirm that I have so far supported Indian Queens and district food larder, St Dennis Carnival and St Ender Youth Football. Half of the money has yet to be allocated, so please get in contact if you would like to discuss the possibility of a grant for your organisation.

ST DENNIS PARISH ISSUES

5.0 Planning matters

5.1 Housing development at Hendra Prazey (PA20/11311)

In terms of the proposed housing site at Hendra Prazey, I requested a site visit at Hendra Prazey with the planning / highways officers at the unitary authority who are dealing with the application. This was held in mid-August. The highways officer has withdrawn his objection following the submission of further information by the applicant's consultants. It is fair to say that the officer did not think that the highway set-up was particularly good, but he seemed to think that it might meet a very low threshold that could be acceptable in the overall planning process.

At the meeting I queried whether the officers dealing with the biodiversity and drainage aspects of the application had looked in detail at the scheme. It has since transpired that the Council's ecologist had raised concerns with the proposal. Concerns include that drainage works for the site could unacceptably impact on the adjacent Site of Special Scientific Interest, that some of the wildlife surveys are out-of-date and the calculation on biodiversity net gain are questionable.

There will therefore a further delay before Cornwall Council makes a decision on this application.

5.2 Proposed dwelling off Hendra Road (PA22/02138)

The planning officer dealing with the above application has contacted me to say that she wishes to approve the development. As St Dennis Parish Council has objected to the scheme, I have informed her that the application will need to be referred to a meeting of the Central Sub-Area Planning Committee.

5.3 Indian Queens Power Station (PA22/05961)

In terms of the application for the installation and operation of a 47.5 megawatt battery energy storage system on land immediately to the west of Indian Queens Power Station, there have been no objections from local residents. St Dennis Parish Council has however raised concerns about the lack of supporting information linked to the application.

6.0 Proposed multi-use trail from St Dennis to the Goss Moor

In previous reports, I have written about how I had submitted an application (on behalf of Cornwall Council and St Dennis Parish Council) to the G7 Nature Recovery Project to investigate the possibility of turning the section of defunct railway line between St Dennis and the Goss Moor National Nature Reserve into a multi-use trail. It was unsuccessful, but I was very pleased to be approached by Natural England to discuss a potential application to a "seed corn" fund to support the initial phase of the project. Unfortunately, this application was also unsuccessful, but I have been told it is on a "reserve list" should there be an underspend during this financial year.

I did take the opportunity to take two senior officers from Cornwall Council to the site, to seek their support for the project.

7.0 Highway issues

I have been continuing to follow up on a range of highway matters with Cornwall Council / Cormac. Sadly, progress is slow, for example, on the improvement of the conditions of double yellow lines and the poor state of the road surfacing in certain areas.

I have reported concerns that the two sets of barriers on the path that leads from Manson Place to Trelavour Road, because it prevents people with motorised buggies using the path. The inner barrier is on land owned by Ocean Housing and the Parish Clerk is in contact with them. The outer barrier is on land owned by Cornwall Council and they have agreed to remove it, but I have been told that the works will be timetabled for February 2023. I have challenged the delay and asked for the works to be brought forward.

8.0 Ditch to rear of Hall Road

For more than 15 months I have been following up on concerns about the condition of a ditch (vegetation and silting) that runs down the eastern side of Hall Road. It takes water from the downs and it has been historically maintained by Restormel Borough Council and subsequently the unitary authority.

It was my understanding that the works were going to be done this year, but the unitary authority and the landowner (Tregothnan Estate) are in discussions about what had historically been agreed. It seems that neither the Council or the estate can find the relevant paperwork, and there have been other discussions, for example, with Imerys. I am continuing to push for the works to be carried out and I understand that Cormac are costing the necessary works.

9.0 Footpath to north of church

I have been following up on the concerns about the footpath that extend northwards from the Church. Councillors will recall that the definitive map shows the path leading over a difficult stile over a wall though, for many years, people have walked through a gap in the wall, which was recently blocked up. A footpaths officer visited the area in August and is the process of approaching the landowner and occupier to see if a compromise can be reached and a gate inserted into the wall, where the breach had previously been located.

ST ENODER PARISH ISSUES

10.0 Parish Council projects

I am continuing to work closely with the Clerk of St Enoder Parish Council, on a range of issues. These include the following:

10.1 Field between Indian Queens Primary School and Harvenna Heights

I am pleased that the landscaping works have almost been completed along the new footway between Indian Queens Primary School and Harvenna Heights. The new walling at the south end of the field has been vandalised and needs to be rebuilt, and grass seed will soon be sown. It is good that we can now move onto placing some picnic benches and rubbish bins into the area, along with some tree planting. As previously stated, I personally favour the provision of a cluster of apple trees.

The Parish Council has also agreed to place some signs in the field, which will be known as Strongman's Field. This was the name of the enclosure recorded on the 1840 Tithe Map, and obviously the name includes the surname of an individual or family associated with the land.

10.2 The Kelliers / G7 Nature Recovery Project

The Clerk and I also met with representatives of the G7 Nature Recovery Project to consider what support they might be able to give the Parish Council in our plans to enhance the nature conservation and public access elements of the Kelliers near Indian Queens.

10.3 CWGC plaques

Given my involvement with remembering the history of the fallen servicemen of our area, I am pleased that, following the request of the Parish Council, the Commonwealth War Grave Commission has erected plaques at the old St Enoder and Indian Queens cemeteries.

11.0 Planning

As always, there continues to be a range of planning applications in St Enoder Parish. Shown below are updates on a number of applications.

11.1 Leisure building at Carvynick (PA22/04257)

As previously reported, on 3rd June 2019, the owners of Carvynick near Summercourt secured an outline planning permission for 38 residential dwellings at the site, plus a leisure / office building (PA18/04360). The specific details (reserved matters) for the 38

dwellings have been agreed over the couple of years and the applicants have secured planning permission for a further 21 dwellings – making a total of 59.

The reserved matters application for the leisure / office building was submitted in May. Letters of support (linked to previous applications) submitted by the applicant stated that the leisure building would “provide a community hub,” a “state-of-the-art gymnasium” and a “swimming pool for locals to not only exercise but also to learn how to swim.” The proposed building is much smaller than that on the original plan, and included a badminton court and a small gym, that is of a size little more than two car parking spaces. There was no swimming pool as promised.

St Enoder Parish unanimously objected to the application, and the applicant then changed the plans and added a swimming pool in the place of badminton court. The building remains less significant than promised, but the application has been consented.

11.2 Housing development in Summercourt

An application for an affordable housing led development in Summercourt, opposite New Row, has just been submitted. It is for 20 housing units, of which half will be affordable. There has been a previous consent on this site and a more recent pre-application discussion and many people who live opposite the site raised concerns.

The application is still going through the registration process and will likely be discussed by the Parish Council at a meeting in October.

12.0 Highway matters

I have been dealing with a large number of highway issues. A few are listed below:

12.1 Zebra crossing in St Francis Road, Indian Queens

Last year, Cornwall Council installed the two zebra crossings in Indian Queens – after many years of lobbying. Unfortunately, the installation by the Victory Hall was initially too high and the raised crossing was reduced in height. In mid-August, Cormac revisited the site to remodel it again, so that it met their specifications. It has all been very frustrating and the Parish Council has complained to Cornwall Council about the failings.

12.2 Double yellow lines at Penhale

The double yellow lines at Penhale are not yet completed, and there is one section that still needs to be painted on the road. Delays were caused by the parked cars and there has been objections from a local business.

The lining is part of a wider group of double yellow lines across Clay Country and will not be legally enforceable until all have been completed and the necessary legal order has been signed off.

12.3 Pocohontas Crescent

The road condition in this estate is quite poor and I have been pushing for resurfacing for a considerable time. I had hoped it would be done this year, but I have now been informed that it will be considered for inclusion in the programme for 2023.

I am continuing to lobby that greater priority is given to Pocohontas Crescent.

12.4 Study into road through Fraddon and St Columb Road

A meeting is being set up for me to meet with council officers to discuss their road safety audit from Penhale to the Halloon roundabout. I will give more feedback in the near future.

HELPING LOCAL FAMILIES

13.0 Advice

Over the last month, I have also assisted numerous households and individuals with guidance and advice on a range of topics.