

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 20th March to 22nd April 2016

1. Council meetings

I have attended a range of formal meetings at Cornwall Council over the last month. These included: Strategic Planning Committee, Planning Policy Advisory Committee (PAC) plus two associated pre-agenda meeting, Transport PAC, Young People PAC, Constitution and Governance Committee, Electoral Review Panel, Civic Awards Panel, informal Planning and Development Improvement Group, a briefing on EU funding, a briefing on the upcoming Boundary Review (and related meetings of Group Leaders and the Electoral Review Panel), a meeting of the China Clay Network, an informal meeting of the councillors from the China Clay Area, a meeting of Community Networks, and an informal site visit for the proposed "eco-community" near St Austell.

In addition to the meetings listed above, I have had numerous informal meetings with council officers and others to discuss a range of issues.

2. Other meetings

I have attended meetings of the St Austell Bay Economic Forum (which took place at the Indian Queens Pit Building) and the ClayTAWC centre in St Dennis, where I am Chairman. I also took part in a debate on the EU referendum at the university near Falmouth.

3. South West Water works at Trevarren

As reported in my report to the recent Annual Assembly, South West Water have, following significant representations over a long period, commenced works to realign part of the foul sewer near Trevarren and construct an associated attenuation tank (with a capacity of 280,000 litres) to prevent flooding in the area. The works started in late March and are ongoing.

4. Bus services to Summercourt

Also, as reported in my report to the recent Annual Assembly, Alex Carter of FIRST has confirmed that an hourly service between Summercourt and Truro (Mondays to Saturdays) will be reintroduced from Monday 30th May. Though I am somewhat disappointed that it has taken longer than I had hoped, it is good that this new service is now only weeks away.

5. Planning and related matters

I have been actively involved with a large number of ongoing applications, as well as related planning matters. Listed below are a few examples, though this list is by no means exhaustive:

- AD plant at Penare (PA15/03073)

The "regularisation" application for the biogas plant at Higher Fraddon was discussed at a meeting of Cornwall Council's Strategic Planning Committee, for the third time, on 7th April.

In advance of the meeting, Greener for Life went to appeal for "non-determination." Prior to the 7th, it was confirmed that Cornwall Council had lost jurisdiction over the application and this meant that councillors were not able to "decide" the application but were, in effect, considering how to approach the upcoming appeal.

The revised recommendation in the officer's report was that the Council should declare it would have been "minded" to approve the application (if it still had the ability to do so), subject to a series of conditions.

I argued that councillors, rather than saying that they were "minded to approve," should resolve to contest the appeal. They voted twenty to nil to do this. I also argued that the Council should adopt a stronger position with regard to the "potential" conditions that will be considered at the appeal, which is what councillors also voted for.

A number of "potential" conditions to be considered at the appeal, of which two examples are as follows:

The officer recommended a "condition 14" that said the number of vehicle movements should be no more than 42 per week, of which 35 would be HGVs and seven would be staff / other vehicles. This was challenged by public speakers, and myself. It was noted that the original consent from 2009 stated there should be no more than 51 vehicle movements, and the application for the pig farm had recently been consented with 11 movements. Councillors took the view that traffic movements should therefore be restricted to 40 per week, of which only 28 could be large vehicles and 12 would be smaller, staff or other, vehicles. There were a number of references to the amount of traffic accessing the site, which was much greater than this, and councillors also sought an additional condition about the proactive monitoring of movements and a commitment to enforcement.

The officer recommended a "condition 15" which restricted movements to between 7am and 7pm, with no vehicles between 8am & 9am, and 3pm & 4.15pm on weekdays (to avoid children walking to and from school along the lane that has no pavement). This was changed to a restriction between 9am and 6pm, with no vehicles between 3pm & 4.15pm on weekdays.

Paperwork for the appeal has to be submitted by 20th May and St Enoder Parish Council needs to agree how it will be approaching this issue.

Greener for Life have requested that the appeal should be by written representations, but I understand that this is likely to be challenged with a request for the appeal to be heard via a hearing.

Greener for Life has also appealed their other application on traffic movements, which was refused by Cornwall Council. The timetable is the same for this appeal.

- Five housing units on land adjacent to Cobble Lane, Fraddon (PA15/00763)

Members will recall that this application was refused by Cornwall Council because of an under-provision of affordable housing and an adverse impact on immediate neighbours.

The appeal was dismissed. The Inspector's ruling accepted that the site was an "exception site" and he came to the following conclusion in terms of planning balance:

"The benefits of the scheme are principally that it would provide five additional houses. However, only two of these would be affordable units in an area where there is strong evidence that such properties are what are principally needed. Irrespective of the viability of the proposed scheme in terms of cross-subsidy, there is evidence that other sites can and will provide a greater proportion of affordable units. That could be outweighed were all other factors in the proposed development's favour. However, it represents a clear breach of the current village envelope – physically as well as in policy terms – and thereby an intrusion into open countryside. Moreover, it does so with a scheme that would lead to a deterioration in the living conditions of the occupants of the adjacent residential properties. I therefore conclude that the benefits of the scheme are insufficient to outweigh its significant and demonstrable adverse impacts."

- Mobile homes on the Kelliers (PA15/06186)

I can confirm a detailed statement on behalf of the Parish Council for the appeal into the above application. It was submitted in advance of the deadline of 28th March.

6. Highway and related issues

Since my last monthly report, I have been liaising with Cornwall Council on a range of traffic matters. I had hoped that I would be in a position to provide more detailed information on this in this report, but I will do that for the next meeting.

Resurfacing works were completed at Beacon Road, Summercourt, in early April and there has also been some more small scale patching carried out locally.

I specifically attended meetings of the Transport PAC and Young People PAC, which were discussing issues relating to transport to schools and also congestion around local schools.

7. Inquiries

In the last month, I have also helped numerous people with advice and guidance. Issues have included housing problems, speeding traffic, various enforcement matters and more.