

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 23rd October – 26th November 2017.

1. Council meetings

During the last month, I have attended a range of formal meetings at, and associated with, the unitary authority. These included: Full Council (and associated agenda briefing); Cabinet; Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee; Neighbourhoods OSC; Electoral Review Panel (and, as vice-chairman of the Committee, a meeting for Cornwall Councillors at Launceston plus three associated public meetings in Liskeard, Pool and Truro); Group Leaders' meeting; (two) member briefings covering topics such as a government consultation on housing and a Cornwall-wide residents survey; China Clay Area Network meeting; a consultation meeting on a possible housing development in Summercourt; and a "Housing Delivery and Growth Summit.

In the same period, as well as a number of informal meetings with council officers and others, I attended three meetings of St Enoder Parish Council.

2. Other meetings and activities

I have attended meetings of ClayTAWC (where I am Chairman) and the St Austell Bay Economic Forum. As well, I helped out at the 40th annual show of the Indian Queens Cage Bird Society, which took place on 25th November at Fraddon Village Hall.

3. Investment programme from Cornwall Council

At the Full Council meeting on 22nd November, councillors on the unitary voted to take forward a large capital programme entitled "An Investment Programme for Cornwall (Delivering homes, jobs and infrastructure for communities and places)."

The basis of the programme is that the Council will intervene to bring forward housing, employment land and associated infrastructure. There is much logic within the programme and its supporters have argued that it could breathe life back into stalled developments and give Cornwall Council greater control over those developments which it is involved with, for example, increasing the amount of affordable housing. The associated council report made a lot of positive "place-shaping."

The first allocation for the programme which, was agreed, was £70 million, though this is projected to grow to £600 million across the life of the programme.

In addition, it was made clear that the development would generate a return to the council and some of this could, in the long-term, go towards

the (revenue) funding of those basic council services that have been starved of cash by central government cuts.

It is well-known that I have had major disagreements with how the unitary authority has approached certain developments (and place-shaping) in my home area of Clay Country, where it imposed an oversized incinerator and has worked with developers to push forward a so-called eco-community in spite of significant local opposition.

And while I appreciated that there was potential for the development programme, I therefore had questions about how it would operate. In a number of formal meetings, I queried how the sites for intervention would be selected, how the local elected members would be able to influence the programme and ensure that the Council did not invest in proposals that were not supported by local communities.

These queries were not adequately addressed by the officers and senior councillors that I had spoken to and, because of this, I was unable to vote to support the programme.

4. Strategic narrative for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

In recent weeks, there was considerable coverage of the work being done by a consultancy firm on a "strategic narrative" for Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly. I have been extremely critical of what has been happening and it very much came into the public domain when a presentation was made to the "Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Leadership Board," which comprises senior councillors and representatives of various public sector bodies.

In particular, I had written to the leader of Cornwall Council on this matter as follows:

"You will already be aware of our misgivings about how the leadership of Cornwall Council commissioned this report for the 'Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Leadership Board' without any input from the wider democratic membership of Cornwall Council.

"On numerous occasions I have raised concerns about this, and I have also, quite often, asked about the progress of the work being undertaken by the consultants thinkingplace, but have had little or no meaningful feedback. This includes at the most recent meeting of the Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 1st November, which was only two days before the presentation to the 'Leadership Board' on 3rd November.

"I have received a number of concerns from people who have heard about Friday's briefing at the 'Board' meeting, and I took some time over the weekend to view the webcast. I share the concerns that have been raised with me, and I note that it was confirmed at the Board meeting that the 'strategic narrative' would be launched in January 2018.

"I am seeking clarity on what the role of the Cornwall Council's elected

members will be in this process in the coming weeks, and when we will be able to have our say about the 'vision' for Cornwall should actually be.

"In addition, I was concerned to see that in the Board's work programme, under 'regional and sector collaboration,' there was the 'development of a Great South West' proposition. This is not something that my group supports. We remain concerned at the significant effort going into this 'regional' experiment from representatives of the public sector in Cornwall when they should be making a better case for the primacy of Cornwall in all forms of governance, administration, etc."

5. Waste Collection and Cleansing Contract

Since the last Parish Council meeting, I have made representations about the limited extent of street cleaning in rural communities and the number of public waste bins in communities such as ours.

The Neighbourhoods OSC and the Cabinet have agreed that, as part of the ongoing work setting out the content of the next contract (for waste collection, street cleaning, beach cleaning, etc), additional analysis on these areas of concern. Further to the Parish Council's formal request to Cornwall Council for enhanced bin coverage in St Enoder Parish, I am in discussions with council officers and will update further when I have firm feedback.

6. Outreach Post Office at Indian Queens

The outreach Post Office continues to be run from the ante-room of the Indian Queens Victory Hall for two three-hour sessions each week.

Unfortunately, there have been some technical problems which meant that, on a few occasions, it could not be opened, but it looks like these issues have been sorted.

7. St Enoder Neighbourhood Plan

An additional consultation was about the appropriate level of housing growth in Summercourt has taken place. The forms were hand-delivered to all properties in the village along with a freepost envelope, and all responses received will be assessed in the near future and fed back into the work to produce our Neighbourhood Plan.

8. Planning matters

I am dealing with a range of planning and enforcement matters in St Enoder Parish, and will report in more detail in my next monthly report.

At this time however, I can confirm that the appeals relating to conditions at the Higher Fraddon biogas plant will be heard by an informal hearing. This will take place at Roche Victory Hall on 7th February.

9. Highway matters

I am also following up on a host of highway issues, including speed recordings at three locations, and I will also report in more detail in my next monthly report.

10. Grass cutting (Cornwall Council)

With regard to my ongoing representations to Cornwall Council about the maintenance of those areas in our parish which they own, I can report that the unitary authority has finally started to sort out the garden area in Clodan Mews, St Columb Road.

11. WW1 project

I am very pleased to be able to lay a wreath at the St Enoder War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday, and that our First World War project is up and running. We held our first community engagement event at Summercourt's New Memorial Hall on 4th November and similar events are planned elsewhere in the Parish.

We have already received photographs of soldiers from two local families, which will be featured in the book.

12. Opposition to Devonwall

At the recent Cornwall Council meeting, I moved a motion reaffirming the unitary authority's opposition to a cross-Tamar parliamentary seat. There was massive support for the motion – and it was across all political parties.

The strength of the vote for the motion (and against Devonwall) was so great that the Chairman, Mary May, did not even bother to ask if there were any votes against the motion.

The agreed motion was as follows:

"1. Cornwall Council write to the Prime Minister and the UK Government to request that they (a) take measures to end the parliamentary boundary review and stop the imposition of a cross-Tamar Devonwall constituency, and (b) ensure that future boundary reviews respect the articles of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and guarantee that parliamentary constituencies remain fully within the boundaries of Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly;

"2. Cornwall Council write to all the Members of Parliament for Cornwall to seek their urgent and active support for the efforts of the unitary authority and others to ensure that Cornwall's territoriality is respected."

13. Inquiries

During the couple of months, I have also helped numerous people with guidance on a vast array of issues.