

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 21st September to 26th October 2015:

Please note: I was on holiday from 25th September to 4th October.

1. Council meetings

I have attended a range of formal meetings over the last month. These included: Strategic Planning Committee (x 2), Central Sub-Area Planning Committee, Constitution & Governance Committee, a Group Leaders' meeting, and a meeting of the China Clay Area Network Panel. I also took the lead in six meetings / pre-agenda / preparatory sessions and local briefings about progress towards the preparation of a Local Plan for Cornwall (through my chairmanship of the Planning Policy Advisory Committee).

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

2. Penare Pig Farm, Higher Fraddon and associated AD plant

- Strategic Planning Committee

The three planning applications for Penare are scheduled to be presented to the Strategic Planning Committee on 19th November, now that the previously anticipated committee date of 22nd October did not prove possible. The reasons for the delay are that the committee report took longer to complete due to the complexity of the planning and legal issues relating to the proposals, as well as the need to consult on the addition of two bio-filters to certain buildings within the pig farm complex.

- Public Meeting

As previously reported, I formally requested that Cornwall Council hold a public meeting in Fraddon to allow residents from the local community to address the members of the Strategic Planning Committee.

This meeting took place on Wednesday 23rd September at Kingsley Village and, in advance of the actual meeting, the Cornwall Councillors held a site meeting at Higher Fraddon and spent over an hour looking around the biogas plant and the pig farm.

I thought everyone who spoke at the meeting did extremely well and the councillors I saw after the meeting were very complimentary about the very dignified, professional and measured manner in which local residents put their views across.

The highlight for me was when Tony Bullows criticized the so-called non-material amendment which changed the whole nature of the biogas

proposal as "the worst decision since Noah invited two woodworm onto the ark!"

- Letter to Highways England

As also reported last month, following the visit of Roads Minister Andrew Jones MP and Steve Double MP on August 5th, I ensured that a letter was sent from Cornwall Council, Greener for Life and the pig farm to Highways England and Andrew Jones MP.

A response has been received from Highways England which has stated that it would be extremely difficult to justify an alternative access off the A30, but that they would be willing to meet with Cornwall Council. I have asked senior officers to fast-track arrangements for this meeting.

- Higher Fraddon Community Forum

Because of the imminent meeting of the Strategic Planning Committee, there have been no meetings of the Higher Fraddon Community Forum since 2nd September. I am however continuing to liaise with a range of individuals about the planning applications, the ongoing concerns about traffic movements and smells, etc.

- Recent developments

Since my report to the September Parish Council meeting, I can also report the following:

- (i) The biogas plant has been taking more pig slurry in recent weeks, but it is still taking less than it needs to be fully operational. The pig farm is still taking excess slurry out in tractors and tankers.
- (ii) Problems at the plant have caused the flare to go off repeatedly which has caused concern and discomfort for local residents.
- (iii) In recent weeks, there have been a number of traffic-related incidents on the Higher Fraddon road, which has included blockages caused by large vehicles meeting each other in the lane and damage to trees.
- (iv) I managed to get Cornwall Council's new "sustainable drainage" officer to visit the site to address my concerns about the drainage proposed for the biogas plant and the pig farm. She has raised a number of concerns of her own which have been passed to the case officer.
- (v) Cormac carried out the patching of the top section of the Higher Fraddon road in late September and early October. Some additional works were carried out on an adjacent ditch at this time.

3. Redevelopment of Kingsley Village

The planning application for the redevelopment of the Kingsley Village complex (to include a Marks and Spencers store) was presented to

Cornwall Council's Strategic Planning Committee on 22nd October. The planning officer's report recommended approval; the Parish Council's support for the proposal was presented by Cllr Jackie Baker, while I spoke in detail about the nature of the suggested conditions.

I had been told by council officers that the application would not be placed before the Strategic Planning Committee until November. This was because, at the end of September, the unitary authority was awaiting further information from the applicant and statutory consultees.

I was surprised when it was brought forward to the October in "something of a rush," with some issues such as the concerns of Highways England not having been fully addressed.

At the committee meeting, I made it clear that there was strong local support for the proposal but I was also disappointed that the applicant had positioned the building so close to the residents in Penhale Cottages and that I had made representations on this matter. I explained that the applicants had agreed that a 2.5m high acoustic fence be erected around the affected properties, but I added my disappointment that they were otherwise unwilling to move the new building further away from the residents.

I also expressed my disappointment at the flawed nature of a number of the proposed conditions, which I felt was a consequence of the report being brought forward so quickly.

I will just give a few examples.

Many conditions sought further information to be submitted at a later date, such as opening hours for the retail units and controls on when the new car park would be locked. I argued these controls should be agreed and properly conditioned at this time.

Condition 7 referred to the submission of detailed plans for the new junction on the B3275. I noted that the junction would be within the 30mph speed limit but was extremely close to the 60 mph limit. I successfully requested that this condition be strengthened to include the extension of the lower speed limit away from the junction and to ensure that there be additional lining / signing on the B3275 to calm traffic.

Condition 13 meanwhile referenced the acoustic fences which would be constructed around the nearest neighbouring properties. It incorrectly stated that the fence would be 1.8m high, and added that the fences should be erected prior to the car park coming into use. I successfully requested that the fences be erected prior to the commencement of development (including demolition) in order to reduce the impact on the amenity of local residents.

I also sought a guarantee that a Post Office would be retained at the Kingsley Village complex and requested a unilateral undertaking to this effect. Representatives of Kingsley Developers and CPG reassured me that

the Post Office would not be lost, but I am still seeking a written commitment to this.

The application was passed, subject to Highways England being satisfied with the road network, and improvements to the conditions presented to the meeting. Also, due to the nature of the application, it will also have to be referred to central government.

4. South West Water improvements at St Columb Road

South West Water is presently replacing over 200m of old water pipes at St Columb Road. There are presently four-way traffic lights at the crossroads, which have caused traffic problems while the local shops have reported a significant drop in trade linked to this.

Radio Cornwall did visit the area and interviewed a number of local people, including myself. It was broadcast on 23rd October. I strongly made the point that St Columb Road was still "open for business," but also welcomed the investment in the improved piping.

I have been in contact with South West Water and they have confirmed that the works at the actual junction will be completed within two weeks. New piping will then be laid towards the Halloon roundabout, when there will only be two-way traffic lights and the congestion at the crossroads is likely to be much reduced.

5. Flooding problems at Trevarren

As I have reported previously, South West Water are also making improvements to the sewerage network in the greater St Columb area. Members will be aware that I have been making representations on behalf of the residents of Trevarren for over a decade.

The residents remain concerned about the surcharge of waste from the foul water sewer onto the highway at Trevarren, and I am pleased to be able to report that the water authority were due to hold a meeting on 26th October to decide which one of two potential schemes could be implemented in the hamlet. I have also been informed that the works would be undertaken within this financial year.

6. Bus services to Summercourt

Following the open meeting with First which took place in Summercourt New Memorial Hall on 27th August, I have continued to communicate with Alex Carter, the managing director of the bus company.

Members will recall that Mr Carter gave a firm commitment to include a once-an-hour Summercourt stop on the Newquay / Truro route (both directions), and stated that he would work with the local community and Cornwall Council to finalise the details of how this would happen.

It is taking a little longer to arrange than Mr Carter stated at the meeting, but he is still committed to making the improvements. He is meeting with Cornwall Council this week and, having spoken to him last week, I anticipate that I will be able to produce a newsletter to inform local residents about progress within the next ten days or so.

7. Planning

I have been actively involved with a large number of ongoing applications. Listed below are a couple of examples, though this list is by no means exhaustive:

- Mobile homes on the Kelliers (PA15/06186)

As we know, this part-retrospective application for mobile homes on the Kelliers was refused. I am continuing to liaise between local residents and enforcement officers about investigations into the present unconsented activity on the site.

- Single affordable home at Whitecross (PA15/02753)

This application for a single affordable home was considered at the meeting of the Central Sub-Area Planning Committee on 26th October. Michael Hopkins represented the Parish Council and spoke in favour, as did I. It was approved with conditions.

8. Discussions with Cormac

On Tuesday 6th October, I met with the new Cormac team in our area to discuss a range of issues. I am awaiting detailed feedback on most points and I will update whenever I receive more information. The discussions included the following:

- Poorly-maintained areas

I once again raised concerns about the brambles and unkempt / damaged entrance to Heather Meadow, Fraddon, and other areas such as the grassy bank at the top of the Drang, Indian Queens. The present lack of resource means that it is unlikely that the tidying up of such areas are to be prioritised, and now is probably the time for the Parish Council to start a serious dialogue with the unitary authority about taking control over some additional areas as part of our grass cutting.

- Queries from local residents

I reported a number of issues from local residents about health and safety concerns, slight flooding, the untrimmed nature of hedges through Fraddon and towards St Columb Road, as well as infestations of Japanese Knotweed.

- Update from Asset and Design team

I have formally requested an update from the above team on progress with those possible schemes referred to them. These include the need to

improve the drains through Fraddon and address the rising water problem in the pavement to the east of Queens Garage

- Requests for speed checks

I have reaffirmed my requests for a number of speed checks to build up evidence to better assess local problems with speeding traffic.

Blue Anchor, Fraddon
Chapelton, Summercourt
Newquay Road, St Columb Road
Moorland Road, Indian Queens / Toldish
School Road, Summercourt
Sea View Terrace

In addition to my meeting with Cormac, I have written to Cornwall Council for an update on those traffic schemes which I, last year, submitted for consideration by Highways officers.

These included:

- Entrance points into the main built-up areas of St Enoder Parish and other key locations.
- Measures relating to the expansion of Indian Queens Primary School and ongoing problems with traffic congestion / conflict with local neighbours (see School Travel Plan by Hyder Consulting).
- Traffic management measures to combat traffic congestion, parking problems and conflict between car drivers and local residents around the Co-op and along St Francis Road.
- Pedestrian crossings at Summercourt crossroads.
- 20 mph speed limit by Summercourt Primary School, potentially linked to gateway features.

9. Open space at Fairview Park

I continue to speak the owners of this land (Kingsley Developers) on a weekly basis to encourage them to speed up the transfer of this land into the ownership of the Parish Council as previously agreed.

10. Panel to choose new Chief Executive

Some months ago, I was appointed to the interview panel to select a new Chief Executive for Cornwall Council.

I have found the whole process extremely frustrating and, thus far, most of the meetings were arranged around the diaries of certain Cabinet members. It meant that most meetings were timetabled when I was either on holiday or had other existing commitments.

The actual interviews for the applicants will take place over two-days and now clash with Strategic Planning Committee on 19th November when the three applications from Penare will be debated.

I have therefore withdrawn from the interview panel.

11. Inquiries

During the last month, I have also helped numerous people and local organisations with advice and guidance on a wide range of issues.

