

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 27th July – 20th September 2015

1. Council meetings

I have attended a range of formal meetings over the last two months.

These included: Full Council (and associated pre-agenda briefing), Planning Policy Advisory Committee and five associated pre-agenda/preparatory meetings, Resources PAC, Strategic Planning Committee, Informal Planning and Development Improvement Group, Clay Network meeting, working group on Cornish National Minority status, and briefings on a possible A30 link to St Austell and air quality issues across Cornwall.

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

2. Other meetings

I have also attended meetings of ClayTAWC (Chairman), Indian Queens Pit Association (Trustee), the Rural Sub-Group of the Local Enterprise Partnership, and the St Austell Conference on Cornish National Minority status organised by the Gorsedh.

3. St Columb Chamber of Commerce

I also attended a meeting of the St Columb Chamber to give them a briefing on future European funding for local businesses. The Chairman and Secretary of the Chamber both live in St Enoder Parish, and a number of local businesses are also members.

4. Bus depot in Summercourt

In my last report, I informed the Council that First Kernow had purchased the former Western Greyhound yard off St Austell Street in Summercourt and that I was seeking a meeting with Alex Carter (Managing Director) of the bus company to find out more about his plans for the site and bus services in the Summercourt area.

I met with Alex Carter of First Kernow on 12th August and hosted an open meeting in Summercourt New Memorial Hall on 27th August. This was attended by Mr Carter and four members of his management team.

Mr Carter informed local residents that:

- When Western Greyhound ceased trading earlier this year, First stepped in to run a number of their routes, though he acknowledged

that buses between Newquay and Truro no longer stopped at Summercourt.

- First had now purchased the Western Greyhound depot in St Austell Street, Summercourt, and would be using the depot to maintain part of their fleet and run a number of services, particularly relating to their contract with Truro and Penwith College.
- The number of bus movements within St Austell Street – which is quite constrained and does not have a pavement – would be significantly lower than when Western Greyhound ran services from the site.
- First Kernow were keen to be good neighbours and outlined a number of key measures in this regard, which included a code of conduct for drivers, good security on site and regular liaison with local people.

Mr Carter also gave a firm commitment to including 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 was also noted that changes to routes have to be agreed through the traffic commissioner and this could take a number of weeks.

I am continuing to follow up on this matter and I have promised to keep residents in the Summercourt area up-to-date with progress.

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

- Public Meeting

The case officer is presently writing up his reports on the three planning applications relating to the biogas plant and pig farm. The anticipated committee date of 24th September did not prove possible and the applications are now scheduled to go to the Strategic Planning Committee on 22nd October.

In advance of this, I formally requested that Cornwall Council holds a public meeting in Fraddon to allow residents from the local community to address the members of the Strategic Planning Committee.

This meeting will take place on Wednesday 23rd September at Kingsley Village. It will start at 6.00. The case officer will give a short introduction about the applications and then members of the public will be asked to give their views.

I can also confirm that the councillors will themselves be holding a site visit at 4.00 on the same day to view the site and the access road.

- Meeting with Minister

On 5th August, the Roads Minister Andrew Jones MP was visiting a number of projects in Cornwall. Steve Double MP asked that he visit Higher Fraddon so that he could find out more about the problems affecting the area.

We held a meeting at Kingsley Village, where I presented Mr Jones with a briefing note on the situation. This was discussed in detail for some thirty minutes or so. Mr Jones appeared sympathetic to calls for a new road access off the A30 for the biogas plant. He agreed that he would raise the issue with Highways England, but also stressed that he was responsible for the main trunk road through Cornwall and that usually there was a resistance to additional junctions on the road.

- Letter to Highways England

Following the ministerial visit, I secured agreement between Cornwall Council, Greener for Life and the pig farm to send a joint letter to Highways England and Andrew Jones MP, seeking an alternative access off the A30.

I helped draft the letter which was sent off in early September.

- Higher Fraddon Community Forum

Since the last meeting of the St Enoder Parish Council, I have chaired two meetings of the Higher Fraddon Community Forum which took place on 5th August and 2nd September.

I am 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 July Parish Council include the following:

(i) The biogas plant has still been taking very little pig slurry and, as a consequence, the pig farm has had to remove a backlog of about 3,000 tonnes of pig slurry. This equated to some 175 additional traffic movements.

(ii) Greener for Life has carried repairs on three properties in the lane which had been damaged by lorries. Promises have been made to two further properties that works will be done, while an additional property owner has co-ordinated his own repairs and has asked Greener for Life for a financial contribution.

(iii) Cormac has provisionally timetabled the patching of the top section of the Higher Fraddon road for early October.

6. Grant application for Indian Queens Recreation Ground

I have completed an initial draft of an application to the National Lottery for funding for new play equipment in the Recreation Ground. It is my hope that the application will be finalised and formally submitted in the next few days.

7. Flooding problems at Trevarren

For several years, I have made representations on behalf of the residents of Trevarren who remain concerned about the surcharge of waste from the foul water sewer onto the highway at Trevarren. As I have reported previously, in 2014 South West Water confirmed that they had plans to make improvements to the sewerage network in the greater St Columb area from 2015 onwards, and that this would probably include some improvements in the Trevarren area.

I have been in contact with South West Water again recently and they have confirmed that improvements are planned for Trevarren and that it is in their work programme with funding allocated to the project. They are presently finalising the details of what they intend to do.

8. Planning

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

- Land west of Kilburn, Fraddon (PA14/00882)

Earlier this year, I reported this application for housing had been consented and that I had written a detailed letter of complaint about how this development has been handled. I have yet to receive a formal response to my complaint.

- Trenithon; planning appeal (PA14/06049)

As requested at a previous meeting, I had produced a statement on behalf of the Parish Council, setting out opposition to the proposed wind turbine. The Planning Inspectorate ruled the appeal was invalid due the failure of the applicant to demonstrate adequate pre-application consultation.

- Laburnum Cottage; planning appeal (PA14/09872)

As requested at the July meeting, I produced a statement on behalf of the Parish Council, setting out opposition to the proposal to allow unrestricted occupancy of the annexe as a separate dwelling. The Planning Inspectorate upheld the refusal.

- Five dwellings near Manor Drive, Fraddon (PA15/00763)

I have previously reported that I did not consider the application to be policy compliant, and that there was to be further negotiation between the applicant and the planning authority. This happened but the proposal was refused under delegated powers.

- Pines Tip, Fraddon (PA15/00955)

Keeping up with the ongoing discussions about the proposal for three wind turbines on the tip has taken up a considerable amount of time, but I have done my utmost to keep the Parish Council up-to-date with what has been happening.

- Mobile homes on the Kelliers (PA15/06186)

This second part-retrospective application for mobile homes on the Kelliers has been refused and enforcement officers are now continuing their investigations into the present unlawful activity on the site.

9. The Kelliers

In the July meeting, I reported that I had formally requested that the freehold of The Kelliers be transferred to St Enoder Parish Council, instead of being leased as previously agreed following the refusal of the unitary authority to honour the arrangement with the former Restormel Borough Council.

I can report that I have spoken to the relevant portfolio holder and council officers, and I believe that I have brokered an arrangement so that there can be a freehold transfer of the land to the Parish Council.

10. Traffic requests

I have been in contact with Cornwall Council / Cormac about a range of outstanding requests for works in our area, as well as updates on other more strategic requests. It is my intention to include a more detailed report on this in my October report.

11. Open space at Lindsay Fields

As noted in July, Cornwall Council is liaising with the developer of Lindsay Fields in Fraddon about the adoption of the open space to the rear of the estate. The applicant is undertaking a list of outstanding works, prior to adoption by the Council. There is an ongoing discussion about whether seating is provided in the open space and, if so, where.

12. Open space at Fairview Park

I have also been continuing to put pressure on all parties to transfer this area of land into the ownership of the Parish Council as previously agreed. I can confirm that Kingsley Developers have asked their legal representatives to commence the transfer.

13. Full Council: 15th August

An increasing problem in our area is Japanese Knotweed, which I do not believe the unitary authority is dealing with well enough. As we know, it is the responsibility of landowners to deal with the knotweed and, because of budget cuts, the unitary authority is only treating the invasive plant on its own land and is no longer being pro-active with other landowners.

In this Parish, I have received complaints about untreated knotweed in Higher Fraddon, which could spread and cause problems for other landowners. At the last Full Council, I formally requested that the unitary authority review its approach to this matter.

14. Planning PAC

Over the last two months, through my role as Chairman of the Planning Policy Committee, I have spent a considerable amount of time organising additional meetings and briefings (for October, November and December) to take forward the Cornwall Local Plan.

This follows the Public Examination into the Cornwall Local Plan, when the Inspector informed the unitary authority that further work needed to be undertaken on a range of topics. In particular, he ruled Cornwall's increasingly unpopular housing target of 47,500 new properties for the period between 2010 and 2030 should be increased.

At this point, it is anticipated that Cornwall Council will finalise a new document in December, which will be consulted on in the New Year and re-presented to the Inspector in the Spring.

15. Resources PAC

I attended a meeting of the above committee on 3rd September, to hear an update on the so-called Strategic Partnership, which could be described as IT out-sourcing to British Telecom.

On 24 June 2015, the Council formally notified BT Cornwall in writing that they intended to terminate the contract because BT had failed to meet its commitments in terms of service provision and job creation. BT are challenging this and the parties are due to go the High Court in December.

It is a bad situation and I am glad to be able report that I opposed the original deal and will continue to oppose other such out-sourcing arrangements which I believe are not good for Cornwall.

16. "Affordable rent" properties

Members of the Parish Council will know that the last Government decreed that new affordable properties for rent should not be let out at traditional "social rents," but at an "affordable rent" which it defined as 80% of the rent levels in the private sector.

I have consistently challenged the way in which the "80%" is calculated and I often feel that the resultant price fails to fall within 80% of average open market rents in the local area. This was brought home to me again recently when I was approached by a local resident who is now paying £616 a month for a three-bedroom house.

In addition to the lobbying I have done in recent years, I have now written to Cornwall Council to formally request that a review is undertaken into the cost of "affordable rent" properties, how the rents are being set by Registered Providers, and what can be done to pressure central government on this issue.

17. Inquiries

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