

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 24th November 2014 – 25th January 2015

1. Council meetings

I have attended a range of formal meetings over the last two months. These included: Full Council (three) and two associated pre-agenda briefings, China Clay Area Network Meeting, informal Planning and Development Improvement Group, two briefings on the unitary authority's "Case for Cornwall," a briefing on future EU funding programmes for Cornwall, and a workshop on Environment Strategy.

2. Other meetings

I also chaired a meeting of the Leader / Community-led Local Development Working Group, which has been helping to devise the framework for the Local Action Groups (LAGs) for the new European funding programme, as well as a joint meeting of the four new LAGs at Fraddon.

At this event, we also held the final meeting of the Clay Country Local Action Group, so that it could be dissolved. It has certainly been a privilege for me to have been involved with the LAG and to have seen countless great projects come to fruition – some of which have been in St Enoder Parish. Many businesses have been able to expand and grow as a consequence of the programme, while projects also included new community halls, improvements to village halls, support for community shops, creation of new allotments, improvements to local play spaces, and so much more.

With the programme coming to an end, I was able to say a formal thank you to a large number of people for their contributions, which was echoed by my fellow LAG chairs, Kim Spencer (East Cornwall) and Julian Rand (West Cornwall). In particular, I thanked all the volunteers, who gave up so much of their valuable time, month after month, the staff at the Cornwall Development Company who supported the LAGs with great professionalism, and the LAG Managers, Clare Leverton and Linda Emmett, who worked so hard to make the LAGs a great success.

I also attended was an Executive meeting of the Cornwall and Isles of Scilly Rural Partnership, and a project meeting of a new regeneration project for St Austell and surrounding areas.

Locally, I attended a large number of meetings relating to the AD plant / pig farm (see below), as well as a meetings of Summercourt School Governors (two), Indian Queens Pit Association and the Indian Queens Under-5s (three).

I also attended a meeting with the representatives of Treliver Minerals, who are presently test drilling for minerals in certain locations in St Columb and St Enoder parishes, to understand their progress. It is my view that we should invite Treliver Minerals to a future meeting of this Parish Council.

In addition, I helped out at the Indian Queens Cage Bird Society, which have been associated with since I was a teenager.

3. Full Council; 25th November 2014

At this meeting, Cornwall Council approved a four-year budget plan, which will see cuts of further cuts of £196 million and the loss of hundreds of jobs. Council tax will rise by 1.97% in 2014/2015, a figure which is just below the 2% threshold which would have led to a referendum on the issue.

I did not support the budget, but was among thirteen councillors who supported an amendment to seek a council tax increase of 6%, which would have been placed in front of Cornish voters in a referendum. It was my view that the additional £9 million would have partially offset some of the damaging cuts being forced on Cornwall, for example, in adult social care, childrens services and one-stop-shops/libraries.

I supported an amendment to safeguard youth provision and brought the attention of the meeting to the fact that St Enoder Parish Council had just constructed a new youth club which needed support. Sadly, this amendment was overwhelmingly defeated.

The final budget was passed with 69 voters in favour with 21 votes against. There were a total of 19 abstentions.

4. Full Council; 16th December 2014

At this extraordinary meeting, Cornwall Council agreed to submit the latest draft of the Cornwall Local Plan to the Secretary of State, prior to examination by an Inspector.

As I have noted previously, it has taken a significant amount of time and there are many elements of the Local Plan which I did not support (for example, the total number of houses for the 2010-2030 period and the eco-town), but I lost the relevant arguments some months, or even years ago. Likewise, many aspects of the process had been dictated from central government, leaving little room for manoeuvre.

5. Full Council; 16th January 2015

At this meeting, the leadership of Cornwall Council tabled a document entitled the "Case for Cornwall," which was designed to request more powers from central government.

I felt the document was weak and totally lacking in ambition. To give one example – that of planning – the document mentioned some poorly thought-out controls over renewable energy developments and an “infrastructure planning and delivery mechanism.” I argued that the document should go much, much further, and make the case for all decisions relating to planning to be made in Cornwall. This would include the right to produce a Cornish National Planning Policy Framework, the right to set our own housing targets – without interference from central government – and to ensure that the planning appeal process is also Cornwall-based.

Put simply, I argued that the document is about a limited amount of additional “freedoms” for the existing unitary authority – not a call for meaningful devolution to a wider Cornwall.

I moved an amendment to strengthen the document, but this was only supported by 15 members. One correspondent who watched the debate described me as bemused and frustrated at the nature of the debate.

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

Further to my detailed report to the last meeting of this Parish Council, I am still heavily involved with the issues relating to the development of the AD plant at Higher Fraddon, and the re-development of the pig farm.

A Community Forum has been set up comprising ten representatives of the Higher Resident’s Action Group, myself as Cornwall Councillor and a representative of the Parish Council. The first meeting was held on 11th December 2014, when I agreed to chair the Forum and our Clerk was asked take notes at the meeting. The second Forum meeting was held on 22nd January 2015. Cllr Mark Morcom attended both meetings, as did Nigel Doyle from Cornwall Council, Graeme Lochhead (Greener for Life) and Dan Johns, the manager of the pig farm. The notes of these meetings are reported elsewhere on tonight’s agenda.

I have also attended:

- One meeting with Graeme Lochhead (Greener for Life).
- Two meetings with Nigel Doyle.
- One meeting of council officers with representatives of the pig farm, including Russell Dodge (Business Location Services) and Dan Johns.
- Two meetings with Nigel Doyle and representatives of Greener for Life including Graeme Lochhead, David Manley and their legal representative Gareth Pinwell.
- Three meetings with local residents, one of which was attended by Stephen Gilbert MP.

And as I have reported previously, Greener for Life and the pig farm are working on new planning applications, which are likely to be submitted in February or March.

7. Community Chest Grants

I have allocated over two-thirds of my Community Chest Grants for 2014/2015, as follows:

Indian Queens Under-5s	£400
Fraddon Play and Toddler Group	£400
Fleet – public access defibrillators for St Enoder Parish	£500
Cornwall Park Homes Residents Forum	£250

I have £645 remaining, which I would suggest that it be used by the Parish Council to support activities at the Youth Club, following the decision of Cornwall Council to end outreach work for young people – see item 8 below.

8. Youth Club

As noted above, Cornwall Council has decided to end outreach work for young people and we need to find a way to continue to support our Youth Club.

Cllr Bunyan and I met with Cornwall Council staff, who are in the process of setting up a CIC (community interest company) to deliver youth works. A proposal for how to proceed is presented elsewhere on the agenda of tonight's meeting.

9. Planning matters

Over the last two months, I have liaised with planning officers in relation to a number of planning applications. These include the "unauthorised" application on land adjacent to the Kelliers, and the latest phase of Ocean Housing development at Higher Harvenna. I have been concerned about how the development would link to the School, as well as some layout issues.

10. Works on the local road network

I am continuing to liaise with Cornwall Council in relation to improvement works on local roads. Recent works have included the patching of Newquay Road, St Columb Road. I will report back more fully in my next monthly report.

11. Inquiries

Throughout the last month, I have also helped numerous people and local organisations with advice and guidance on a wide range of issues. I did have a relaxing Christmas and I am chasing up on many areas.