

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 24th February – 21st June 2020

I normally produce a monthly report for each meeting of St Enoder Parish Council but, because of the health emergency, my last report was presented to a meeting in February.

This report covers the last four months and will be presented to the “virtual” meeting of the Parish Council taking place on 23rd June.

1.0 Council and other meetings

Prior to the lockdown, I attended a number of formal meetings and briefings at Cornwall Council and elsewhere (24th February – 17th March). These included Full Council, Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee, a workshop on the Council’s environmental growth strategy and a briefing for the Electoral Review Panel (ERP), which is carrying out a Community Governance Review (into the boundaries of parishes). As vice-chairman of the ERP, I was present at a further meeting with officials from the Local Government Boundary Commission and I also attended three related public meetings in St Austell, Newquay and Pool.

In addition, I participated in a mock council meeting with a group of young women as part of International Womens Day.

I attended a meeting of the Parish Council’s working group on climate change and I joined with an officer from Cornwall Council to give a presentation about neighbourhood planning at a meeting of Probus Parish Council.

My last meeting prior to the lockdown was the local VE Day Committee, which had to cancel the events planned for 8th and 10th May.

2.0 Indian Queens School visit to New County Hall

On 11th March, I was pleased to welcome two classes from Indian Queens School to Cornwall Council. The children did some budget exercises and asked me (and two other councillors) a series of questions. The children were very inquisitive but also well behaved, and they are a credit to our local area.

3.0 Meetings in lockdown

When the UK Government announced the lockdown on 23rd March, it became necessary for me to thereafter participate in numerous virtual meetings through Microsoft Teams or Zoom video-conferencing.

As one of the group leaders on the unitary authority, I have taken part in a large number of meetings with the leadership of the authority, senior officers and the other group leaders, to discuss the Council's response to the coronavirus crisis. Initially, there were two meetings a week but this has now been reduced to one. Also, once a week, the six councillors from the China Clay Area hold a meeting to share our experiences and discuss local initiatives. Other virtual meetings have included a Clay Area community hub, an update meeting for the Community Governance Review and briefings for the Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee. In recent weeks, there have also been weekly briefings about the crisis for all councillors on the Council.

4.0 St Enoder Parish Council

The Parish Council meeting on 24th March was cancelled and responsibility for day-to-day matters was delegated to the Clerk, Chairman, Vice-chairman and me as the local Cornwall Councillor.

We have followed government advice and closed local play areas and cemeteries, though the burial grounds were quickly re-opened when the UK Government re-interpreted its own guidance.

The play areas are still shut, but at Indian Queens Recreation Ground children can use the skate park and kick-about area as long as they practice social distancing. The skatepark at Summercourt is presently out-of-bounds as it cannot be accessed except through the play area. We are however monitoring government guidance on a daily basis and will update local people when things change through the Parish Council Facebook page and website.

During this time, the Parish Council has been carrying out some works in the new extended part of Indian Queens Cemetery, in advance of the road and path that will hopefully be laid in there later in the year.

The Parish Council has also had to comment on a range of planning applications being considered by the unitary authority and comments were collated via email.

5.0 Volunteer activities

In late March, the Clerk of St Enoder Parish Council (Amanda Kendall) and I were registered as the local parish hub with Volunteer Cornwall. We agreed to co-ordinate responses to issues that were brought to our attention by the charity, as well as those concerns that we might identify locally.

It would be fair to say that we have received fewer requests for help than we anticipated and we have not had to call on many of the individuals who had volunteered to help. I believe this is because of the large number of people who have reached out to their friends and neighbours at this time, helping to collect groceries or keep in touch via telephone. The Facebook page called "the little things that matter" has been particularly effective at bringing people together and everyone associated with the page should be commended for their fine efforts.

I was pleased to be able to link with the St Columb Road Surgery and to be one of five volunteers who have delivered prescriptions to people who are shielding or deemed vulnerable. This has been ongoing on a daily basis since 1st April. Most residents in the west of the Parish are served by the Probus Surgery and prescriptions have been delivered by Andrew Waters.

I have also dealt with numerous inquiries during the lockdown which has included concerns about the furloughing scheme, the coverage of the small business grant scheme and problems with the availability of PPE.

6.0 Neighbourhood Plan

As reported previously, the St Enoder Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to Cornwall Council last year and it then went through examination by an inspector. It was due to go to referendum this year, but this has been delayed because of health emergency.

We have received guidance that "no referendums can take place until 6th May 2021. This includes neighbourhood planning referendums" and that "current planning guidance has updated and sets out that neighbourhood plans awaiting referendums can be given significant weight in decision-making."

7.0 Planning matters

Throughout the last four months, a large number of planning applications have been submitted to the unitary authority. A number of these have led to objections from local residents. I have been liaising with planning officers on these matters and decisions have yet to be made on many of these applications. Examples of the cases I am dealing with are as follows:

7.1 Indian Queens Industrial Estate (PA19/05975)

Last year, there was considerable opposition to a proposal to create a new access, from Moorland Road, into Unit 2 of Indian Queens Industrial Estate for an area of additional car parking. The Parish Council and I argued that vehicular access to the various employment units should be through the central Lodge Way road within the estate. No decision has yet been taken on this application, but the applicants have secured additional car parking off Lodge Way which I believe undermines the whole basis of their application.

7.2 Land on approach to Clodan Mews, St Columb Road (PA19/08162)

A number of local residents raised concerns about this application for two dwellings on the land associated with the old Vet's building. I shared these concerns and suggested that there should be a less cramped development on the site such as a single dwelling. It would normally have been referred to a planning committee but, at the end of May, it went through an "emergency planning protocol" when information about the application was circulated to

members of the Central Sub-Area Planning Committee for comment. In spite of my objections, the plans were passed

7.3 Land adjacent to Lindsay Fields, Fraddon (PA20/01508)

Planning permission already exists for 23 dwelling on this site and the owner has submitted a new application to instead build 20 residential units of which five will be affordable. The Parish Council has supported this application which in principle is in accord with the St Enoder Neighbourhood Plan, but has asked the planning officer to look carefully at any local concerns about drainage or boundaries.

7.4 Carvynick Holiday Park, Summercourt (PA20/02147)

In 2019, a government planning inspector granted planning permission (PA18/04360) for 38 residential dwellings and a leisure building at this site. This latest application is a reserved matters application, which sets out the details for 16 of the 38 housing units, but does not include details for the leisure building. The Parish Council has raised concerns that the leisure building promised by the applicants might not be developed.

7.5 Land to rear of Manor Drive in Fraddon (PA20/02308)

The application is for a large storage building, measuring 21m by 10m, plus associated groundworks. The Parish Council has raised an objection, as the development extends into green fields and is against policies in the St Enoder Neighbourhood Plan.

7.6 St Columb Road (PA20/02929)

An application for fifty houses has been submitted for the land to the rear of the development presently being built opposite the doctors' surgery. A large number of people have objected to the scheme on Cornwall Council's website, by telephone to me or parish councillors, or via Facebook.

The Parish Council has objected to this development on a wide range of grounds. This includes the extent of development in St Enoder Parish in recent years, queries about the basis of the indicative proposed scheme, traffic concerns, insufficient parking and adverse landscape impacts.

The development is supposed to be an exception site on which at least 50% of the housing would be affordable. But the affordable housing team have submitted a very strong objection to the scheme, which it says is not in accord with the policies of Cornwall Council. It notes that the "gross internal floorspace of the affordable housing is indicated as being equivalent to just 33.7% of the total floor area of all units across the scheme. This indicates that the total land-take of the affordable housing would be significantly less than the minimum 50% requirement."

The proposal has a clear imbalance with more of the affordable homes being flats or smaller houses, while more of the open-market properties would be larger houses. The developer has suggested that the affordable units should be 13 one-bed flats, 9 two-bed houses and 3 three-bed houses, while the open-market units would be 4 one-bed flats, 7 two-bed houses and 11 three-bed houses and 3 four-bed properties.

7.7 Little Meadows, Toldish (PA20/03553)

In 2014, a caravan park was constructed on their site without planning permission. Two subsequent planning applications were refused and Cornwall Council took legal action to get the site cleared. In 2017, a planning application (PA17/03198) for six traveller pitches was also refused by Cornwall Council, but it was then granted on appeal by a government planning inspector in 2018.

The six pitches have yet to be constructed and the owner has submitted this application to increase the size of the site to 12 pitches.

The Parish Council has objected to the development. It has challenged the basis of the "needs assessment" for traveller sites and has suggested that a development of this scale would be out of keeping with the character of the area.

8.0 Ongoing projects

The present circumstances mean that many council officers have been focusing on various aspects of the response to Covid-19 while others have been carrying on with their existing projects, albeit from home. Somewhat inevitably, we are seeing delays to various initiatives.

I have continued to liaise with various teams at the unitary authority and I can give the following updates.

8.1 New footway from Harvenna Heights estate

The construction of a new pathway across the field between Indian Queens School and the Harvenna Heights estate is still planned to go ahead. As previously reported, the majority of the field will be fenced off for recreation use by the School and the remainder of the field will be transferred to the ownership of the Parish Council and a path will then be built across this land.

I recently participated in a Zoom meeting with the School about their plans for their recreation space and I am confident that we will soon be able to confirm the exact extent of the land to be enclosed for the School and that transferred to the Parish Council.

8.2 Chapel Road and St Francis Road, Indian Queens

As previously reported, I have been lobbying extremely hard to get Cornwall Council to deliver improvements suggested within the Travel Plan (such as crossings on Chapel Road and St Francis Road), that was produced in association with the planning permission to increase the size of the School.

I can confirm that the Council has just completed a feasibility assessment about the potential for crossings and I am now in contact with senior council officers about how we take this forward.

8.3 Summercourt School

There continues to be a commitment to deliver improvements outside Summercourt School, such as a variable 20 mph limit. This would be funded through the Community Network monies for highway improvements, but no further progress has been made in recent months.

8.4 A3058

Cornwall Council has received funding from central government for improvements along the A3058. As previously reported, I had been seeking specific improvements within Summercourt village itself, such as a permanent vehicle activated sign at the northern entrance into the village and pedestrian crossings linked to the traffic lights on the crossroads. This has been agreed and I have also been able to persuade Cornwall Council to provide an additional vehicle activated sign to face traffic entering Summercourt along St Austell Street.

The lockdown has meant that there has been a delay in finalising the detailed plans for the scheme, but I continue to be in regular contact with the relevant officers.

9.0 Mobile vehicle activated sign

The Parish Council had agreed to purchase a mobile vehicle activated sign which would be moved around the Parish and placed in various areas to record the speed of traffic and to flash to encourage motorists to slow down.

This is on the agenda for Tuesday's meeting and we will be making a decision on exactly how we proceed.

10.0 Strategy for the China Clay Area

It is clear that there will be significant economic impacts caused by the lockdown and the UK Government is already looking at how it will be able to support communities and various sectors of the economy. Some early initiatives appear

focussed on towns and high streets, and councillors from the China Clay Area are keen to ensure that areas such as ours do not miss out on investment.

The strategy for the parishes of the China Clay Area has been on hold because of the priorities of dealing with the Covid-19 outbreak, but we have identified this as a key priority for the coming days. It will provide an evidence base and more when we are lobbying for support in the future.

11.0 ClayTAWC

It recently dawned on me that ten years ago this month, I became the “acting” chairman of the Clay Area Training and Work Centre at St Dennis. I am still chairman and we should have been celebrating the 20th anniversary of the centre’s opening next month. This has been cancelled for obvious reasons and I guess that instead we will have to celebrate our 21st next year.

12.0 VE Day

Many recent events have been cancelled, including our own Parish’s celebration of the 75th anniversary of VE Day. It was good to see so many people marking the event through decoration or family celebrations at home. I was pleased to share photographs of the local Home Guard battalion and air raid wardens on Facebook, and I was delighted to hear from people who identified some of the men.

13.0 Tour of Britain

Amongst the cancellations was the first phase of 2020’s Tour of Britain cycle race which had been due to take place in Cornwall on 6th September. It will now take place next year on Sunday 5th September 2021. The route from Penzance to Bodmin will be the same, and it will still go along the A3058 through Summercourt.

14.0 Inquiries

This report has been a summary of my recent activities, but I have helped a wide range of people with localised issues.