

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 26th October – 21st November

1.0 Council and other meetings

In terms of physical meetings during the last four weeks, I attended the Customer & Support Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the Chief Officers Employment Committee, the Constitution & Governance Committee, as well as meetings of St Dennis Parish Council and St Enoder Parish Council. Other meetings via TEAMS or ZOOM video-conferencing included the Economic Growth & Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee and the South & East Cornwall Community-Led Local Development Group, plus meetings of Cornwall Councillors within the China Clay Area and the China Clay Area Community Support Group.

Some of the above meetings are referenced elsewhere in this report, and I had a number of further online meetings about a range of local issues.

2.0 Cornwall Council staffing reductions and cuts

The Conservative administration at Cornwall Council is in the process of reducing its wage bill by £18 million. They are continuing a recruitment freeze and closing vacant roles. They have invited staff to take voluntary redundancy, but have also instigated a review of employees across the authority which will lead to compulsory redundancies. It is my understanding that employees whose jobs are under threat will be informed of that position during the final week of November.

The leadership of the Council is also seeking to further reduce its "base" by another £70 million next year. This follows a decade of cuts to local government and these latest reductions are undermining the very basis of the Council to provide the public services that people depend upon.

There had been some hope that the Autumn Spending review would prioritise local government and allocate significantly more funding to reverse pressures on the sector, but this has not happened. Extra money has been promised, but even supporters of the present Government were only able to note that the funding would "help meet some – but not all - of the extra cost and demand pressures [Councils] face just to provide services at today's levels." There has been widespread disappointment that there was no additional money to address the pressures on adult social care services. It is clear that there is a need for all Cornwall Councillors to continue to lobby central government for fair funding.

3.0 Leisure centres

Cornwall Council has also been consulting on a proposal to stop operating leisure centres in Wadebridge, Launceston, Saltash and Falmouth, as well as the hydrotherapy pool within St Austell leisure centre. There have been a large number of representations against the move.

I am one of the members of the Customer & Support Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, who challenged the proposal at the meeting on 26th October. Further information will be provided at the Committee's next meeting on 7th December and will allow "back-bench" councillors to scrutinise the proposal. This will take place in advance of the meeting of the ten-strong Cabinet which will decide how to proceed.

4.0 Approach to housing emergency

I attended the most recent meeting of the Economic Growth & Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 16th November, which considered a draft of the plan to "respond to the Cornwall's Housing Crisis." At the meeting, I made a number of representations about the detail of the document, including the failure of the system tasked to allocate affordable housing to local households and the need for the unitary authority to be more ambitious in its proposals to central government to control "second homes."

5.0 Remembrance Sunday

I was pleased to attend the annual Remembrance Sunday event at St Enoder Churchtown and to read out the names of the fallen. I was also pleased to supply information about three servicemen (Herbert John Nancarrow, Summercourt; Eric Charles Noel Kent, Indian Queens; Selwyn Garfield Cole, St Enoder/Fraddon) who were lost in the Second World War and whose lives were featured in the church service. Selwyn was my great-uncle.

The service at St Dennis was held at the same time as the St Enoder event and I was therefore unable to attend. I remain grateful to the Chairman of St Dennis Parish Council, Julia Clarke, who laid a wreath on my behalf at the St Dennis commemoration.

6.0 Community Chest

As a Cornwall Councillor, I have been allocated £3,000 which I can distribute to local community organisations. If you are interested in applying on behalf of a local group, please get in contact with me.

7.0 My next report

I don't produce a monthly report in December, so I can confirm that my next report will be produced in advance of the meetings of St Dennis Parish Council and St Enoder Parish Council, on 1st February and 25th January 2022 respectively.

ST DENNIS PARISH ISSUES

8.0 Social /affordable rent properties in St Dennis

In my last monthly report, I noted that (i) I had received a number of complaints that families and individuals (with a local connection to St Dennis Parish) have been struggling to get access to social / affordable rental properties

in the village, and (ii) that I was carrying out research into these concerns. My initial findings were included in that last report and I have been continuing to seek further information about the lettings. I am afraid that I have not received all the requested additional information from Cornwall Council as yet, so I will present a further update in my next report.

I can add that I raised these concerns about the provision of affordable housing to local households at the recent Scrutiny Committee, that reviewed the Council's approach to the present housing emergency.

9.0 Neighbourhood Plan

St Dennis Parish Council is committed to producing a Neighbourhood Plan and, given my experience with planning policy at Cornwall Council and the production of a Neighbourhood Plan for St Enoder Parish, I have offered to assist with the work. I have just submitted a grant application on behalf of the Parish Council for the initial stage of consultation work.

It is planned that a detailed questionnaire will be delivered to all households across St Dennis Parish in the early part of 2022 (along with a freepost envelope for responses), and a number of drop-in meetings will be held for people to provide feedback.

10.0 Ditch to rear of Hall Road

There has been a further meeting about the ditches on the downs above St Dennis and the ditch which runs down the eastern side of properties on Hall Road, which I understand Cornwall Council have an obligation to maintain. The meeting was attended by one of the Council's land drainage officers and other interested parties. I am awaiting further feedback from the unitary authority about its plan for future maintenance arrangements

11.0 Local highway issues

In recent months, I have received a wide range of representations about issues with the road network in St Dennis, ranging from potholes to parking issues to requests for calming measures. Some localised issues have been dealt with, and I am continuing to liaise with the local Cormac manager about these concerns and I will be showing her around St Dennis at the end of November to discuss them further.

The three-week consultation into the proposal for double yellow lines on Carne Hill, outside the Wesley Place estate, closed on 17th November and I have been promised an update on responses in the very near-future.

ST ENODER PARISH ISSUES

12.0 Highway matters

Listed below are those highway matters where I have specific updates.

12.1 Summercourt School

The work to install the safety measures outside Summercourt School took place between 25th and 29th October. This included the extension of the 30mph limit to the east and two illuminated signs which show a "variable" 20mph speed limit during school drop-off and pick-up times. The sign on the approach towards the School is a temporary one and will soon be replaced with a dual-purpose vehicle-activated sign which, when it is not showing the variable 20mph limit, will flash at vehicles going over the 30mph limit.

During the works, the existing "School" signs were removed, but new ones will be erected soon.

12.2 New footway between the Harvenna Heights estate and Indian Queens School

The works to construct the new footway commenced on 20th October and were recently completed. The path is now open and can be used. Landscaping and reseeding works still need to be carried out on the land around the path, which will take place in 2022 when the ground has dried up. Hedging works are also planned by the gate at the Harvenna Heights end, along with additional "bow-top" fencing at the School side of the walkway.

12.3 Proposed works on A3058 through Summercourt

The 21-day consultation on the A3058 improvements (through the Safer Roads scheme) between Quintrell Downs roundabout and Summercourt crossroads, closed on 10th November. I am expecting a briefing on the feedback, very soon.

12.4 Proposed double yellow lines at Penhale

The 21-day consultation on parking restrictions in the Penhale area closed on 17th November. I have been promised a briefing on feedback to the consultation next week.

13.0 Closed cemetery in St Enoder Churchtown

I have also been helping the Clerk of St Enoder Parish Council to supervise the repairs to the wall around the closed cemetery in St Enoder Churchtown. I am extremely pleased that the works are nearing completion.

HELPING LOCAL FAMILIES

14.0 Advice

Over the last few weeks, I have also assisted numerous households and individuals with guidance and advice on a range of topics including planning matters, housing needs, educational concerns and more.