

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Covering 1st June to 20th July 2025

1.0 Council and other meetings

At Cornwall Council, I have been appointed to the Corporate Finance & Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the Budget Overview & Scrutiny Committee, the Constitution & Governance Committee and the National Minority Working Group.

Council meetings over the last seven weeks have included the Corporate Finance & Performance Overview & Scrutiny Committee and an associated briefing on the unitary authority's approach to consultation plus two sessions via Teams video-conferencing, the Strategic Planning Committee, two briefings about the various departments across the Council, the China Clay Area and Luxulyan Community Area Partnership and an informal get-together for councillors from this area.

In addition, I have attended a range of Teams meeting about a range of council and local issues.

I have attended meetings of both St Dennis Parish Council and St Enoder Parish Council. Other meetings included the Cornish Lithium Liaison Group, Cornish Lithium consultation events, Imerys Liaison Group, Fraddon Village Hall Committee, the Indian Queens Band Committee, and the Indian Queens Pit Charity in advance of our Fete on Saturday 28th June, which sadly had to be held indoors in the Victory Hall.

2.0 Constitution and Governance Committee

The first meeting of the Constitution and Governance Committee took place on 10th June. I am the longest-serving member on the committee and I am pleased to report that I was elected Chairman.

3.0 China Clay Area and Luxulyan Community Area Partnership

The first meeting of the China Clay Area and Luxulyan Community Area Partnership took place at Roche Victory Hall on 30th June. I was re-elected as Chairman and I look forward to continuing to do my best to win a better deal for Clay Country.

4.0 Planning matters

4.1 Top-down planning changes

I continue to be frustrated by the Governments top-down changes to the planning system. In recent days, they have even been "consulting" on proposals to stop councillors on principal authorities from referring developments of nine or fewer dwellings to planning committees.

I am making representations on these matters and discussed my concerns with local MP, Noah Law, at a meeting on 26th June. Specific matters discussed included the weight that will be given to Neighbourhood Plans in the future. See section 13.0 about my discussion with planning officers about the St Enoder NDP.

4.2 Planning matters

The unitary authority has been undertaking preparatory work towards the creation of a new Local Plan for Cornwall and I have been frustrated that elected members have been extremely peripheral to this work.

More in-depth work will be commencing in the near-future and I have written to Cornwall Council's ruling Cabinet requested that a "Local Plan Committee" be set up so that elected members can be fully involved with devising what is right for Cornwall. I am awaiting a response.

5.0 Highway matters

I am following up on a range of highway matters. I had a meeting with the Cormac manager on 4th June and followed this up with a meeting with the portfolio-holder with responsibility for transport, Cllr Dan Rogerson, on 30th June.

More detailed comment related to this is included within the parish-specific sections of this report.

It is also my understanding that the new administration will soon be introducing a local highways scheme, which will help fund some small or localised highway improvements. As soon as the extent of the scheme is confirmed, I will work with both Parish Councils to explore what they would like to see brought forward.

6.0 Interview Panels for new officers

I have also been involved with a couple of member panels linked to the recruitment processes for a new Strategic Director for Community Well-Being and a new Head of Legal Services.

7.0 "Report it"

I continue to report a number of local issues of concern to residents. If you spot any problems, you can also report it yourself through Cornwall Council's website at: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/report-something/>

ST DENNIS PARISH

8.0 Cornish Lithium

Cornish Lithium has submitted a scoping report to the Planning Inspectorate. This is the first stage in their application for planning for their mining project

through central government's "Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project" consenting regime. As I have reported previously, the decision on this proposal will not be taken in Cornwall.

The scoping report is a sizable document – some 370 pages in length – and it confirms that Cornish Lithium consider it necessary to remove the two skytips on the downs (Pointy and Flatty) in order to make their excavation area larger and to make their project more viable. They continue to state that they wish to dump waste materials in Goonvean and Treviscoe Pits [which are owned by Imerys] in St Stephen Parish, and bring forward a multi-use trail along the old railway line that could link the village to the Goss Moor National Nature Reserve. They are hoping to be able to do this by using compulsory purchase powers that would link to the development order that would come out of the NSIP process. It has also been suggested that the access road to their proposed processing plant at Trelavour could also be extended to help take heavy goods vehicles out of St Dennis village.

Linked to this, the Company has been holding a non-statutory consultation and I attended the two sessions at The Pitch in St Dennis on 7th and 17th July. I also attended the regular Trelavour Liaison Group meeting. I have been raising a range of issues with Cornish Lithium, including concerns raised by local people about the impact of the extraction – such as noise, dust, loss of permissive paths, changes to the landscape, etc – while also asking questions about potential benefits that might accrue to the area.

I also attended the Imerys Liaison Group on 15th July. At this gathering, the UK Director of Imerys made it clear that it was unwilling to make the Goonvean and Treviscoe Pits available for Cornish Lithium, as Imerys consider that they still need them for their continuing china clay industry. In particular, he stated that the pits were needed for waste disposal and water storage.

This is likely to be a contentious situation in the coming weeks.

9.0 Solar farm near Trerice [PA24/09234]

Planning officers at Cornwall Council concluded that the planning application for a 32MW solar farm in the Trerice part of St Dennis Parish should be approved and it was referred to a meeting of the unitary authority's Strategic Planning Committee. This meeting took place on 10th July.

In advance of the meeting, the Parish Council and I sought the views of households closest to the proposal site through a letter drop. The chair of the Parish Council Julia Clark and I represented the views of local people at the Committee meeting. We also raised concerns about the increased industrialisation of St Dennis Parish.

In particular, I noted that a significant amount of renewable energy had already been installed, or was presently being built, across my St Dennis and St Enoder Division, and spoke about how communities in the China Clay Area have a right to expect that landscape and other impacts are properly assessed when planning applications such as a solar farm are submitted. I made it clear that it was my view that this had not been done in this case.

The application was rejected by the Planning Committee by five votes to four with one abstention. I can also confirm that I understand the applicants are planning to lodge an appeal with central government's Planning Inspectorate.

10.0 Highway matters

At the meetings with the local Cormac manager and Cllr Dan Rogerson, I made further representations about the need to resurface Carne Hill / Fore Street / Trelavour Road in St Dennis. As previously reported, I have managed to get these roads on the provisional list for works, but I have been told that it is still unlikely that this resurfacing will be done in 2025. At the present time, I understand it will definitely be nominated for 2026.

In my representations, I have argued [yet again] that more works need to be done in the China Clay Area and more quickly. In particular, I have referenced the recent residents' survey. Average satisfaction with road maintenance across Cornwall stands at 38%, ranging from 53% in the North Kerrier / East Penwith CAP to [second lowest] North Cornwall CAP at 27%. In Clay Country meanwhile, satisfaction is a shocking 16%! As an elected member for our area, I am doing my best to find a way to correct this by pushing for more works to be done.

Some localised patching has been done, including the sunken trench line in the highway on Rectory Road.

Other things confirmed at the meeting with the Cormac manager are that some road and pavement patching will be done on the road by Hendra Downs and in Robartes Road, while there will be some additional repainting of white lines (following representation from me) on the junction with St Dennis Primary School and at the road junction on the eastern side of Whitemoor.

Some speed monitoring has been done on Carne Hill and it has also been agreed to do some at the top of Hendra Road, near the new pinch-point.

In addition, the damaged Listed bridge at Trerice has been repaired.

11.0 Signage project

I am finalising the report to Cornwall Council seeking a quote for "welcome" signs for St Dennis Parish and nameplates for Enniscaven, Gothers and Trerice Terrace. The content of the report was discussed at a meeting with parish councillors on 1st July.

12.0 Hall Road play area

I am pleased that the legal team at Cornwall Council has commenced work on the legal transfer of the Hall Road play area to St Dennis Parish Council and I am looking forward to working up a scheme with parish councillors to refurbish the space in the coming weeks.

The most recent meeting with Cornwall Council on this matter took place on 14th July.

ST ENODER PARISH

13.0 St Enoder Neighbourhood Plan

I have previously reported that the decision of the UK Government to impose a higher housing target on Cornwall and it has been deemed that we longer have a “five-year supply” and housing policies in the Cornwall Local Plan can no longer be given weight in the deliberation of planning applications,

In terms of neighbourhood plans (NDPs), the National Planning Policy Framework makes it clear that, in this situation, weight may still be given to the housing policies in NDPs if the Plan is (i) less than five years old and (ii) contains policies and allocations to meet identified housing need.

Council officers have decided that the housing policies in most NDPs – including that of St Enoder Parish – are out-of-date. If this was accepted, it would mean that the development envelopes in NDPs would be ignored and affordable housing sites could now become open-market developments.

I have written to the policy team and challenged their views, pointing out inconsistencies in how they have come to their conclusions.

In particular, I have pointed out that:

- The St Enoder NDP works off a “target” of 350 housing units between 2010 and 2030. By April 2025, 334 housing units had been completed and, as of April 2025, there were extant consents for 329 housing units [35 properties under construction and 294 housing units with planning permission, but which had yet to be commenced].
- Within the development envelopes, there is scope for growth in excess of 100 housing units [much of which is already consented].

I have received a response which I did not agree with and I have challenged it, while requesting a meeting to discuss further.

14.0 Highway matters

14.1 Seaview Terrace

A meeting was held with local residents about road safety concerns in the vicinity of Seaview Terrace on 4th June and I continue to be in contact with officers about this.

14.2 Penhale to St Columb Road feasibility study

It is a significant time since Cornwall Council undertook an assessment, at my request, of the road between Penhale and the Halloon Roundabout. Two local interventions have been worked up and consultations will be taking place soon. These are:

- A safety build-out and associated parking bay at Ridgewell Terrace, Fraddon.
- Modifications to the roundabout at the bottom of Fraddon Hill, these are mostly about subtle realignments.

These locations were chosen because of recent accidents.

14.3 Other matters

In the meeting with the local Cormac manager, I again raised a number of ongoing concerns. These included concerns about the poor quality of sections of local roads and the need to repaint various sections of lining [both yellow and white].

15.0 Mid Cornwall Metro

I attended an update about the project to increase trains between Newquay, Par, Truro and Falmouth. At the present time, it is planned that there will be hourly trains [in both directions] but only every other train will stop at St Columb Road.

I have also been informed that Network Rail want to close the footpath that passes from Station Approach to the station car park. I am in the process of seeking the views of the Parish Council on this.

As part of the Mid Cornwall Metro scheme, some highway improvements are planned for the vicinity of Bugle and Roche stations. I have been challenging for improvements around St Columb Road. This has been acknowledged and I attended a meeting on 17th July about potential footway works to improve access to the railway station. Initial discussions have been quite limited, but I continue to seek more.

16.0 Streetlighting

I have previously reported about the number of representations I have had around the decision to switch off streetlights across St Enoder Parish [between midnight and 5.00]. My concerns to the previous administration were not acted upon and I have since discussed the matter with the new portfolio-holder for transport, Cllr Dan Rogerson. I await a formal response.

17.0 Small play areas and green spaces

Also as previously reported, the project to devolve small play areas and green spaces to Parish Councils throughout Clay Country is ongoing. The Parish Clerk and I have been liaising with Cornwall Council about the transfer of six areas of land to St Enoder Parish Council. These are Kingsley Court (2), Penhale Gardens, St James View, Lindsay Fields and Hanover Park.

The Parish Clerk and I have also submitted an application to Cornwall Council's Community Capacity Fund for a grant to cover the Parish Council's legal costs associated with the transfer.

The Parish Council is also keen to take on the greenspace in Clodan Mews, St Columb Road, but they are some landownership issues which still need to be resolved. The unitary authority has taken on responsibility for the site but it is still owned by the developer. This needs to be resolved before the Parish Council could take on the land.

18.0 Fraddon Village Hall

I continue to attend meetings of the Fraddon Village Hall Committee on behalf of the Parish Council. One of the tasks I have taken on is to update the policies for the venue.

19.0 Tunes and Balloons event

I have received a number of complaints about the Tunes and Balloons event, which took place at Penhale between 4th and 6th July. These have ranged from representations about traffic and noise, which I have forwarded to Cornwall Council.

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL FAMILIES

20.0 Advice

In addition, I have assisted numerous households and individuals with guidance and advice on a range of topics.