

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 1st August – 22nd September 2024

1.0 Council and other meetings

There have been fewer meetings at the Cornwall Council over the last few weeks as it has been the main two summer months, but physical meetings have included Corporate Finance and Performance Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Constitution and Governance Committee, a meeting of the Chairs and Vice-chairs of Community Area Partnerships and a briefing on the new Government's likely approach to devolution. I have attended meetings of Dennis Parish Council (2) and St Enoder Parish Council (2).

I have also attended a range of online Cornwall Council meetings via Teams video-conferencing. These have included a discussion on the production of a White Paper on devolution, a preparatory meeting for Full Council (due on 24th September), Group Leaders and the monthly get-together for councillors in the China Clay Area and Luxulyan CAP.

In addition, I have had informal meetings with a wide range of groups and individuals.

2.0 Devolution discussions

I continue to be frustrated by progress towards Cornwall Council's White Paper, which will set out a request for more powers for Cornwall. The present draft is not as ambitious as I would like, but debate is ongoing. I was however pleased to co-sign a joint letter to the Deputy Prime Minister from all six MPs and representatives of all political groups on the unitary authority, which seeks "devolution settlement enshrined in law that reflects the status Cornwall shares with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life ..."

3.0 Meeting with Noah Law

I was also pleased to have a meeting with the new MP for St Austell and Newquay to discuss a wide range of issues of concern to Cornwall and, in particular, Clay Country.

4.0 Roll-out of 20 mph limits

I have received a number of representations about the new 20mph limits, which has included issues with signage – see St Enoder section for further comment.

5.0 Local Lettings Plans

Further to my recent reports, I have received a draft of the agreement that will ensure that 75% of rentals from the older social housing in St Dennis and St Enoder parishes will go to households from the host parish.

There are a couple of points which need clarification and a further meeting has been timetabled for 23rd September.

6.0 "Report it"

Over the last month, I have reported a high number of local issues of concern to residents. This has included fly-tipping, potholes and overgrown verges. If you spot a similar problem, you can also report it through Cornwall Council's website at: <https://www.cornwall.gov.uk/report-something/>

ST DENNIS PARISH

7.0 ClayTAWC

I would also like to start the St Dennis section of this report with some very positive news.

As the chairman of the Board at ClayTAWC, I am delighted that our purchase of the Old School Building went through on 30th August, and that more than 200 people attended our double celebration on the following day. This marked both 25 years of service to the local community as well as becoming owners of our premises.

I am so pleased that we have been able to buy the building and safeguard it as a community hub, which will allow us to carry on all the fantastic work we have been doing over the last quarter-of-a-century. We are especially grateful to the previous owners, the Church Charity of John Arundell, for giving us this opportunity to make the purchase and the funders for their really positive support.

The funding was £96,560 from Shared Prosperity Funding (SPF) and £73,899 from the St Dennis and Nanpean Community Trust (incinerator fund), which also covered improvements to the kitchen and some of the flooring.

Thank you to our team (Kerry Merrifield, Chloe Prangle and Tracey Hutton) for organising the celebratory event, my fellow board members (Sharron Kelsey and Simon Margetts), and all the volunteers who helped out. We were particularly delighted that the St Dennis Branch of Cancer Research raised £627 on the day.

8.0 Planning matters

8.1 Cornish Lithium

The UK Government has just classed the Cornish Lithium project at Trelavour as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP). NSIPs are dealt with under the Planning Act 2008, and this means that the planning application(s) will not therefore go to Cornwall Council. The Planning Inspectorate (PINS) will write a report with recommendations to the Secretary of State who will then make a decision on whether or not to grant consent. Cornwall Council will be a statutory consultee.

The planning situation at Trelavour is complex and I acknowledge that there are some existing mineral permissions in the area, which will already allow Cornish Lithium to do a significant amount of development. But I am more than a little taken aback by this recent news. It has always been my view that planning decisions for Cornwall should be taken in Cornwall, and I am disappointed that this will not be the case at Trelavour.

I have spoken to senior planners on Cornwall Council to get a greater understanding of what this announcement means, and I have received assurances that the process will still be significant and there will be multiple opportunities for local people to make comment on what is proposed. This will include an inquiry or public examination that looks in detail at the proposal(s).

In addition, I have already met with representatives of Cornish Lithium and I have made it clear to them that I will work hard to ensure that the views of the local community are well represented and properly fed into the planning process.

8.2 Proposed solar farm near Trerice

More than three years ago, a firm called Statkraft did some pre-application consultation work on a solar farm proposal in the Trerice area of St Dennis Parish. I was recently contacted by a representative of the company, who has informed me that they are looking to push ahead with the scheme. I understand that they will soon commencing further "community engagement" in advance of a planning application in the near future.

8.3 St Dennis Neighbourhood Plan

As previously reported, a Parish Council working group and I are working on the "direction of travel" document for the Plan, which will then form the basis of the next consultation. The text for the document is complete and staff at Cornwall Council are producing the relevant maps for the publication.

9.0 Traffic matters

Also, as previously reported, I am working on a detailed representation to Cornwall Council about the need for them to do study into traffic problems in and around St Dennis. I will update more on this in my next report, along with further feedback on other representations I am making about road safety issues.

10.0 Signs

I am continuing to work up a project for "Welcome to St Dennis Parish" signs at various points into the Parish, as well as village signs in places like Enniscaven and Gothers. I am trying to organise a meeting with Cormac to discuss this in further detail.

11.0 Newsletter

In August, I distributed a newsletter around St Dennis Parish. We didn't quite get everywhere, but I think we got to around 99% of households.

ST ENODER PARISH

12.0 Indian Queens Under-5s and Fraddon Millennium Green

I would also like to start the St Enoder section of this report with some very positive news. I am very pleased that the refurbishment works on the Pre-School building in the Recreation Ground and the Fraddon Millennium Green have been completed.

The works at the Pre-School Building included new windows and doors, new cladding and guttering on the exterior, new steps by the fire escape, a new floor surface, a new kitchen, a new heating system and improved internal walling. The works were funded with a grant of £70,000, which I secured from Community Infrastructure Levy monies, plus support from the Parish Council, the Cornwall Community Foundation and fundraising by the group itself.

At the Millennium Green, the remains of the old train and safety surfacing across the play area was removed. Volunteers gave the existing play equipment a fresh coat of paint. New safety surfacing was laid down across the whole site and a new "Tommy Tractor" and associated trailer slide was installed by local supplier Outdoor Play People. The works were funded with a grant of £42,000, which I secured from Community Infrastructure Levy monies, plus support from the Parish Council.

Further works in the coming weeks will include significant vegetation management.

13.0 Thomas Playing Field

The "new" play equipment in the Thomas Playing Field was installed in the winter of 2018/2019. There have been a number of problems. These have included the deterioration of the metal equipment, slumpage in areas of the ground surface, and safety surfacing that lost all its colour – coming off on the clothing of users of the park.

The Parish Clerk and parish councillors, including myself and Mark Kessell, have been making representations to the suppliers, who have agreed that the reparations are necessary. They have agreed to carry out a significant "re-fit" of the play area. These fresh works will include the replacement of many pieces of equipment, groundworks to deal with hollows in the play area, and the installation of a new layer of safety surfacing across the whole area.

It is anticipated that the works will commence on or around 30th September, but may take three-four weeks.

14.0 Planning matters

Listed below are some updates on planning applications in St Enoder Parish.

14.1 Storage units, Toldish (PA23/06705)

A number of local people objected this retrospective application for storage units to the NW of the converted engine house at Toldish. It has been refused by Cornwall Council for the following reason.

The site is within the open countryside and is outside of the principal employment areas identified within the St Enoder Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2030. The proposal itself, by reason of continuing to site the storage containers on previously undeveloped land, would harm the distinctive rural character of the area. In the absence of overriding justification for this development in this rural area, the application is contrary to Employment Policy 4 and Landscape Policy 1 of the St Enoder Parish Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2030; Policies 1, 2, 5, 12 and 23 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030; and paragraph 180 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

14.2 Storage units, Summercourt (PA24/04609)

Quite a number of local people also objected to this retrospective application for storage units near Summercourt School. It has been refused by Cornwall Council. The three reasons for the refusal were as follows:

The proposal for the stationing of twenty shipping containers for commercial self-storage purposes, changing the use of the land from agricultural to use class B8, is not considered to be of a scale appropriate to its countryside location or have an overriding locational or business need. The proposal is therefore contrary to Employment Policy 4 of the St Enoder Neighbourhood Development Plan 2021, policies 1, 2, 5 and 27 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030, Policies AG1, C1 7) and T1 of the Climate Emergency Development Plan Document 2023 and paragraphs 8 and 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

The proposed development, by reasons of the sitting, scale and design of 20 shipping containers would undermine the sense of place and community identity, presenting itself as an over-dominant and stand out feature that appears detached from the undeveloped character. The introduction of a commercial self-storage facility in a predominantly rural and agricultural setting would therefore appear incongruous, detracting from the area's undeveloped rural character and verdant sense of place. The proposed development is therefore contrary with Employment Policy 4 and Landscape Policies 1 and 2 of the St Enoder Neighbourhood Development Plan 2021, Policies 2, 5 and 23 of the Cornwall Local Plan Strategic Policies 2010-2030, policy C1 7) of the Climate Emergency Development Plan Document 2023 and paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

The proposed development, due to the close location of the proposed access relative to the neighbouring junctions, in addition to the increase of vehicular traffic would result in a level of harm to highway

and pedestrian safety. Such concerns are heightened due to the adjacent School for which increased levels of activity would be expected around pick-up and drop off times. As such, the proposed development would result in an unacceptable impact to highway safety, thus failing to comply with Policy 27 of the Cornwall Local Plan 2016, Policy T1 of the Climate Emergency Development Plan Document 2023 and paragraph 115 of the NPPF.

14.3 Burthy Solar farm [PA23/01893]

Last week, the Parish Clerk and I have received a revised draft of the legal agreement relating to the community fund associated with the recently-consented Burthy Solar Farm near Fraddon. We are in the process of feeding back comments at the present time.

The applicants have submitted a fresh application (PA24/06394) for this solar farm, but it is principally to accommodate tweaks to the proposed internal track and the removal of a section of hedge.

14.4 Proposed solar farm at Tresithney

More than three years ago, a firm called Statkraft did some pre-application consultation work on a solar farm proposal on Tresithney Farm between St Columb Road and Whitecross. I was recently contacted by a representative of the company, who has informed me that they are no longer looking to proceed with the scheme.

14.5 Proposed solar farm at Trelion [PA24/05312]

A planning permission for a 49.9mw solar farm has been submitted in St Stephen Parish. The application does not include any information about the route of the cabling that, if the application was successful, would link the development to the Indian Queens Power Station. Previous paperwork had shown two options; one was through clayworks and the second was along public roads, extending from Scarcewater past Seaview Terrace, through Fraddon and Indian Queens, and then past Gaverigan. I have consistently raised concerns about the second option.

I have contacted the applicants and they have told me that they are working on a cabling route which does not go through residential areas in St Ender Parish, and paperwork relating to their preferred route will soon be submitted to the unitary authority.

14.6 Unit 2, Indian Queens Industrial Estate

Last year, planning permission was secured for the extension of Unit 2 on the industrial estate. Previous applications for a new access onto Moorland Road had failed. I was therefore surprised when, in May, a new entrance had been cut through the hedge into the rear of the plot. The developers had secured a streetworks consent from the local authority, which was granted without any reference to me as the local member.

The developers have also inserted a door opening into the rear of the industrial unit, for which they needed planning permission. A retrospective planning application (PA24/07158) has just been submitted to retain the door opening, but I can confirm it does not include any road access.

15.0 Traffic matters

I continue to follow-up on a range of road safety and related matters. I will report more fully in my next report, but some key updates are as follows:

15.1 20mph speed limit

I have received a number of comments about the roll-out of the 20mph limits in my division. The comments have been varied and included the validity of the new limits and their enforceability.

But there has also been the “cock-up” with signs at the Penhale end of Fraddon being replaced with a new sign that said Penhale. I can confirm that I have been in contact with them and this sign will soon be changed to read Fraddon. “Welcome” signs at Fraddon and St Columb Road, that referenced the three villages of Fraddon, Indian Queens and St Columb Road, have also been removed. I will be fostering a debate at Parish Council about whether we would like to see new signage in place of what has been removed.

15.2 Seaview Terrace

It has been confirmed that the installation of the new 40mph speed limit and some related works at Seaview Terrace will be done in October. The timetable for these works has slipped back a number of times, but I am hopeful that it will be done this time.

15.3 Parking at industrial estate

In August I had a meeting with Johnny Hawkins at the Indian Queens Industrial Estate about the parking problems in the area. This is something I taking forward to the Council.

16.0 Fraddon Village Hall

In addition to my other duties, I am now also a representative of St Ender Parish Council on the Fraddon Village Hall Committee. It is my hope to assist with process, financial, policy and other issues at the Hall.

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL FAMILIES

17.0 Advice

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