

Cornwall Council report

Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 20th January – 28th February 2023

1.0 Council and other meetings

In terms of physical meetings of Cornwall Council during the last five weeks, I attended Full Council (2), Cabinet, Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee, China Clay Area Community Network and a meeting about Community Levelling Up (Good Growth) funding for the China Clay Area.

Further meetings through Teams video-conferencing included meetings of Cornwall Councillors in the China Clay Area (2), Cornish National Minority Working Group (2) and an associated public forum (plus two associated preparatory sessions), briefing on Cornwall Council residents' survey, Group Leaders meeting and briefing in advance of a Full Council meeting.

Other physical meetings have included St Enoder Parish Council (3) and St Dennis Parish Council, the Incinerator Community Forum, the Board of ClayTAWC (of which I am Chairman) and the annual general meeting for Indian Queens Pit (of which I am a trustee). ClayTAWC is hosting a community hub on the first Wednesday of each month at which a range of organisations are present to give advice to local people. I attended the hub in February.

I also had further online meetings about a range of local issues.

2.0 Cornwall Council

2.1 "Devolution deal"

Since my last report, the ten-week consultation into the so-called "devolution deal" agreed between the UK Government and Cornwall Council has closed. I can confirm that I submitted a detailed response on behalf of Mebyon Kernow, which called on the Conservative unitary authority to reject the "deal" that comprises local government accommodations, and to use their political influence to secure a more meaningful deal that should include the transfer of far-reaching powers from Westminster to Cornwall as has happened in Wales and Scotland.

I also took part in a debate about the "deal" at the university at Tremough on 6th February and I was a guest on the BBC Politics Show on 10th February, on which we covered the same subject.

2.2 Review into Homechoice

Cornwall Council and a series of Registered Providers (Housing Associations) have commenced a review into the Homechoice system for the allocation of publicly owned rental properties. I attended a meeting of the Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee about this on 28th February, and argued that all the partners should be prioritising the provision of affordable housing to local people. I also sent an email to other councillors and officers dealing with the review. It was as follows:

I am a strong supporter of assisting local people to access affordable housing in their local parish. Indeed, I feel that the whole concept of affordable / local-needs housing is greatly undermined, if processes make that difficult for local people.

Obviously, local people have a preference for properties, where occupation is controlled by Section 106 agreement or a nomination agreement.

But I believe it is extremely important that a significant number of those affordable homes without S106s / nomination agreements (such as old council housing) should also have a local (parish) connection applied. This is especially important, where there is a high percentage of "old" affordable housing units.

About 12 months ago, I did a study into the provision of affordable housing in one of the two parishes that I represent (St Dennis). At that time, there were a total of 236 publicly-owned rental units in this parish. Of these, 190 (80%) had no "parish connection" criteria, while 20 units (9%) were tied by a Section 106 agreement and the two most recent affordable housing developments totalling 26 units (11%) were controlled by nomination agreements.

I wrote the report because, due to mistakes, the nomination agreements on the 26 properties noted above were not applied. On one of the developments (ten units), not one went to a family with a parish connection to St Dennis.

Through this study, I looked at lettings over a three-year period. I identified 33 rental properties, for which no S106s or nomination agreements had been applied and for which I was given letting information. I can confirm that only eight (24%) went to households with a parish connection to St Dennis.

There is considerable anger at what has happened in St Dennis Parish and I believe that any review of the allocations system must look to apply "parish connection" criteria on a significant number of non-S106 properties in such places.

Over this same three-year period in the other parish I represent (St Enoder), I can confirm that nine non-S106 properties came up for re-let. Only two (22%) went to local households. In St Enoder, local households very much have preference for the newer S106 properties (most of which are the more expensive affordable rent units), but are largely missing out on the older "social rent" units.

I do not think it appropriate that households with a parish connection are, disproportionately, missing out on social rent properties in their home areas.

It is my view that considerable work should be done to understand the split of Section 106 / non-S106 properties and social rent / affordable rent units in all parishes across Cornwall, which can be used to boost the provision of parish connection in parishes such as St Dennis and St Enoder.

It is my intention to update the evidence in the coming days and I will formally submit this as part of the review.

2.3 Full Council meetings

Since my last report, there have been two meetings of Cornwall Council. The first of these was an extraordinary meeting, which dealt with the completion of the Community Governance Review that considered changes to parish council boundaries. I was heavily involved with this and I am pleased that the attempt by St Austell Town Council to extend its boundaries into Treverbyn Parish was not successful.

The second meeting agreed the Council's budget for 2023/24. It included a (maximum) 4.99% increase in council tax and was voted through by the Conservative majority on the authority. The Mebyon Kernow / Green Group did not support the

budget and challenged the leadership of the unitary authority and Cornwall's six MPs to better lobby for fair funding for local government in Cornwall.

2.4 China Clay Area CAP?

Cornwall Council's Cabinet has taken the decision to change the present 19 Community Networks into 12 Community Area Partnerships (CAPs). I am pleased to be able to report that the new CAP for our area will largely cover the same patch as the existing Network. It will cover the five China Clay Area parishes, plus the parish of Luxulyan. This new CAP will start meeting from May onwards and will have some say over the allocation of some Shared Prosperity (Community Levelling Up) Funding.

ST DENNIS PARISH ISSUES

3.0 Multi-use trail

Last month I reported that I had secured funding from Natural England to produce a report scoping out what would need to be done to turn the section of the defunct railway line between St Dennis and the Goss Moor National Nature Reserve into a multi-use trail. Sustrans have been commissioned to do the study and I was pleased to visit the old railway line with them on 9th February.

4.0 Footpath 20

I am pleased to report that Cornwall Council has inserted a gate into a wall on the route of footpath 20 to the north of St Dennis Church.

5.0 Path between Manson Place and Trelavour Road.

I was also pleased to meet up with some St Dennis Parish Councillors on Sunday 5th February to help cut back vegetation growing out into the path which extends from Manson Place to Trelavour Road.

ST ENODER PARISH ISSUES

6.0 Youth Club

As previously reported, the Parish Clerk and I submitted an application to Cornwall Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding towards the extension of the Youth Club building in the Indian Queens Recreation Ground. I am delighted to confirm that the funding application for £60,000 was successful and it is hoped the works to double the size of the youth club building will commence in Spring / early Summer.

7.0 Housing development at Summercourt (PA22/08134)

I hosted a meeting at the New Memorial Hall in Summercourt on 23rd February, at which residents of New Row met with representatives of the owners of the land opposite their properties, where a development of 20 new dwellings (ten affordable) are proposed. It is likely that the revised plans will be considered at a meeting of St Enoder Parish Council in the near future.

8.0 Highway matters

8.1 Pedestrianised crossings in Summercourt

Works to install three pedestrianised crossings on the crossroads are underway. I have had a number of concerns raised with me about the roadworks, etc, which I have passed

onto Cornwall Council. I look forward to the works being completed later this month and I sincerely hope that the improvements will make the heart of Summercourt much safer for pedestrians.

8.2 Zebra crossings

Last year, zebra crossings were installed on Chapel Road and St Francis Road, Indian Queens, along with some associated calming measures. I have just been supplied with new speed data reports, which show that the installations are slowing speeds in the area – especially along Chapel Road. The figures are as follows:

Chapel Road

North-eastbound

Pre-scheme

- Mean speed – 26.3mph
- % compliance with 30mph limit – 77.5%

Post scheme

- Mean speed – 19.2mph (7.1mph reduction)
- % compliance with 30mph limit – 99.3%

South-westbound

Pre scheme

- Mean speed – 29.5mph
- % compliance with 30mph limit – 51.6%

Post scheme

- Mean speed – 20.8mph (8.7mph reduction)
- % compliance with 30mph limit – 97.8%

St Francis Road

North-westbound

Pre scheme

- Mean speed – 25.5mph
- % compliance with 30mph limit – 84.9%

Post scheme

- Mean speed – 23.1mph (2.4mph reduction)
- % compliance with 30mph limit – 96.0%

South-eastbound

Pre scheme

- Mean speed – 25.5mph
- % compliance with 30mph limit – 79.6%

Post scheme

- Mean speed – 23.4mph (2.1mph reduction)
- % compliance with 30mph limit – 95.0%

I hope that people will agree that this is a positive impact for the local community.

HELPING LOCAL FAMILIES

9.0 Advice

Over the last month, I have also assisted numerous households and individuals with guidance and advice on a range of topics, including housing, planning and fly-tipping.