

Cornwall Council report Cllr Dick Cole

Time period: 22nd November 2021 – 23rd January 2022

1.0 Council and other meetings

In terms of physical meetings during the last two months, I attended two meetings of Full Council, Customer & Support Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee, Chief Officers Employment Committee, 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 Cabinet, Economic Growth & Development Overview & Scrutiny Committee and an associated briefing session, Central Sub-Area Planning Committee, Local Heritage List Advisory Group, Cornish National Minority Working Group, two meetings relating to equalities monitoring, Race Equality Core Group, South & East Cornwall Community-Led Local Development Group, two briefings for forthcoming Full Council meetings and two Group Leader meetings.

In terms of our local area, I have attended China Clay Area Community Network, China Clay Area Community Support Group, a meeting of the four local Cornwall Councillors, plus two meetings in relation to the development of a strategy for Clay Country.

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 budget

Over the last two months, Cornwall Councillors have received more information about the administration's budget. This will go to a Full Council meeting on 22nd February. I will report more fully in my next monthly report.

3.0 Strategy for the China Clay Area

I continue to be involved with the promotion of a strategy for the China Clay Area, which I helped to write. A number of months ago, we met with senior officers from Cornwall Council and, in January, we followed this up with meetings about housing and transport issues. At these meetings, we requested further information about a range of topics including public transport and local HGV movements. The next meeting will be with the Service Director for Planning and Sustainable Development, and we are seeking engagement with the economic development team.

4.0 Network Highways Scheme

Cornwall Council has just relaunched its Community Network Highways Scheme. The four councillors for Clay Country have been informed that our area will receive £45,864 a year for each of the next three years. We have agreed that the funding will be divided equally between the four elected members, which

means I will have just over £34,000 to spend across the parishes of St Dennis and St Enoder. In terms of highway schemes, this money will not stretch too far, but in the coming weeks, I will be discussing options with both Parish Councils in my division.

5.0 Local Listing Project

In recent months, I have also served on the advisory group for a Local Heritage List Project for Clay Country (plus some surrounding parishes). This seeks to identify those historic structures or places that local people deem to be important. It is significant because, as well as being on a "local list," some of the historic assets could end up being considered for statutory protection through Listing or Scheduling.

The China Clay Area has a low level of protected structures and sites. For example, St Dennis Parish has only one Scheduled Monument and St Enoder Parish has just three! As part of this project, I produced a detailed representation about the need to protect historic features associated with the china clay industry, such as local skytips.

6.0 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy

Cornwall Council is developing a new equality, diversity and inclusion strategy. To advance that work, the Customer & Support Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee has agreed to undertake an inquiry to oversee the development of equality objectives. I have been appointed as the lead councillor to take this work forward.

7.0 County Councils Network Conference

In early December, I had the good fortune to attend the County Councils Network Conference (upper-tier local authorities) in Marlow. It was addressed by a range of prominent local government and public sector figures, plus Government Ministers (by video link). There was much rhetoric about the importance of local government, but the sector continues to be under great pressure because of government underfunding.

ST DENNIS PARISH ISSUES

8.0 Neighbourhood Plan

In recent weeks, I have been assisting the members of St Dennis Parish Council with the production of a detailed questionnaire, which will be delivered to all households across St Dennis Parish (along with a freepost envelope for responses) in a few weeks' time. The views of local people will then form the basis of a Neighbourhood Plan, which will contain local planning policies for the Parish. I am also pleased to be able to report that I have secured a grant of £2,490 towards this work from the Locality organisation, which distributes funding on behalf of the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.

9.0 Social / affordable rent properties in St Dennis

I have produced a report about the provision of affordable housing in St Dennis Parish. It has been forwarded to senior officers in the housing service at Cornwall Council including the Service Director for Housing, and I have followed up with a number of phone calls. The report was as follows:

- Publicly-owned rental properties in St Dennis

Since I was elected as the Cornwall Councillor for the parish of St Dennis, I have 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. In particular, I was told about a ten-unit development (Wesley Place) constructed by Coastline and informed that none of the properties went to St Dennis households.

As a consequence of these representations, I have carried out some research and I am quite shocked at what I have found.

- Extent of resource in St Dennis

Figures from Cornwall Council state that there are 236 rental properties owned by Registered Providers in St Dennis Parish, split between Ocean Housing (177), LiveWest (33), Sanctuary (16) and Coastline (10). The split is 38 one-bed units, 50 two-bed units, 142 three-bed units, five four-bed units and a single five-bed property.

A large number of the properties are over 15 years old and therefore do not have a Section 106 or a local lettings plan / nomination agreement in place that would give preference to parish households. I have further looked at more recent developments to confirm how many of the social / affordable rental homes have legal or nomination agreements to ensure that properties go to households with a parish connection.

- Two developments from Ocean Housing (Downs Close: C2/08/01605 and Hendra Heights: C2/06/01242) contain a total of 20 social rent units. I know that the larger Hendra Heights scheme (17 units) was part-funded by Restormel Borough Council. Re-let adverts for these houses specify that a legal agreement gives priority to households from the parish of St Dennis. It should be noted that these properties are being advertised in accordance with the legal agreement for the wider site though they technically sit outside of the Section 106.
- Sanctuary Housing built 16 affordable rent properties at Hendra Heights (PA17/00826). The planning consent had been mainly an open market development, but Cornwall Council grant-funded turning 16 open market properties into affordable rent units (at 80% of market rents). Because of this planning history, there was not a Section 106 agreement but, due to council funding, a nominations agreement was put in place. This states that there should be priority for families with a St Dennis connection and households could also under-occupy by one bedroom. Nonetheless, I have found that new and re-let adverts for these housing units have not

referred to any need for a parish connection and only a minority have gone to local families. As a result of my research, Cornwall Council has reminded Sanctuary of its obligations to their nominations agreement, though I think much more needs to be done (see below).

- In terms of the development brought to my attention (Wesley Place), planning permission was initially given for ten open market properties (PA17/05442). The site was then purchased by Coastline Housing, which developed the houses as affordable rent units. There was no Section 106 agreement because of the nature of the planning consent, but as the affordable housing was funded by Cornwall Council, it was agreed that there should be a "local lettings plan." This has been referenced in the Homechoice adverts, but it has been confirmed that none of the properties went to St Dennis households. I have been told by a council officer that "Coastline has advised that the properties were not easy to allocate to people with a local connection to St Dennis." There was a subsequent re-let, which also did not go to a family with a St Dennis connection. I understand that the Council has since instructed legal to approach Coastline to agree a nominations agreement, which will reinforce the need for the property to go to St Dennis families. However, I feel that more needs to be done (see below).

In terms of the housing stock, it is therefore my conclusion that St Dennis has:

- 190 properties with no legal or nomination agreements in relation to a parish connection.
- Three properties covered by Section 106 legal agreements (to ensure priority for St Dennis households). In addition, as noted before, a further 17 dwellings at Hendra Heights are being let in accordance with a wider Section 106 agreement though they are not technically tied by it. These are all deemed S106 properties for the sake of this report.
- 26 properties with some form of local lettings plan or nominations agreement, though these interventions have clearly not been working as planned.

- **Recent lettings**

I have approached officers from Cornwall Council / Cornwall Housing about lettings over the last three years (up to October 2021). In particular, I requested information about a total of 42 individual lettings, which I had identified from the Homechoice website. Some of these were first lettings (Coastline and Sanctuary) and some were re-lets. However, incomplete or only partial information was received for six of the units.

My key findings are as follows:

- Four of the properties have Section 106 controls. The most recent one was advertised in October and we have not yet received the letting information. I understand that the other three all went to households with a parish connection to St Dennis.

- Twelve properties were let by Sanctuary and I was supplied with information for 11 of these units. There is a nominations agreement in place, but only three of these properties went to households with a parish connection to St Dennis (27%). I simply cannot comprehend how a development with a nominations agreement did not house more households with a parish connection to St Dennis.
- As noted above, in terms of the ten properties developed by Coastline Housing at Wesley Place, plus one re-let, not one went to families with a parish connection to St Dennis. Again, I cannot comprehend how a development with a local lettings plan did not house any St Dennis households at all!
- Of the 11 other re-lets (for which we have data) – made up of ten properties from Ocean Housing and one from LiveWest – five went to families with a local connection to St Dennis (45%).
- The remaining four properties, for which we do not have the necessary information, two were from Ocean Housing and two from LiveWest.
- Overall, this means that of the 36 properties for which we have letting information, 11 went to households with a parish connection to St Dennis (31%).
- In addition, of the 33 non-S106 properties for which we have letting information, only eight went to households with a parish connection to St Dennis (24%).
- Of the 22 properties with some form of local lettings plan or nominations agreement for which we have letting information, only three went to households with a parish connection to St Dennis. That is an unbelievably and disturbing low figure of only 14%.
- If the five non-S106 properties, for which we have no letting information, went to people without a parish connection, it could mean that the number of successful “local” lettings for non-S106 properties over the last three years could be as low as 21%.

In my view, it is little wonder that the people of St Dennis are so disgruntled about how the lettings of affordable housing properties have been handled in recent years. The system as presently constituted and / or the approach of Registered Providers is clearly not working.

- **Homechoice data**

To add value to this representation, I feel it is also appropriate to include information about Homechoice. The last time I asked for a breakdown from Homechoice was in July 2021. This showed that the database then contained 122 households (seeking rental accommodation) with a parish connection to St Dennis. It should be noted that 30 of these households were already occupying

affordable homes but looking to move.

Of the ten households in Band A (made up of households in greatest need or existing tenants who were looking to down-size, thereby also freeing up a large property), nine were existing tenants who wish to down-size. It should be noted that there were 31 households in Bands B-C (ie. those deemed in significant need), of which ten were already occupying affordable homes.

- **A formal request for further discussions within Cornwall Council and with partners**

Given the above evidence, could I formally request a meeting with the Cabinet Member with responsibility for housing and the Service Director for Housing, plus what other officers may be deemed appropriate.

The situation that I have uncovered is totally unacceptable. In addition to this meeting, I would like to formally request a formal investigation into why so few of the properties linked to a local letting plan or nominations agreement actually went to parish families, and I am particularly keen to investigate how many St Dennis households applied for such properties but were not offered the homes.

I would also request that further meetings be arranged with the necessary Registered Providers to discuss how we can address the failings that I have identified and to see what can be done to better support the population of the parish of St Dennis. At the moment, I feel that, in order to recompense for the recent failures to let to St Dennis households, there should be a new approach where all properties go to St Dennis families for the foreseeable future.

10.0 Multi-use trail to the Goss Moor

St Dennis Parish Council has requested that Cornwall Council investigate the possibility of turning the section of defunct railway line between St Dennis and the Goss Moor National Nature Reserve (NNR) into a multi-use trail. It recently came to my attention that funding has been made available, following last year's G7 Summit in St Ives, for a G7 Nature Recovery Project.

The published project area is focussed on Mid Cornwall, and the project partners have written about plans to build greater connectivity between nature reserves, such as the Goss Moor NNR, and other SSSIs, china clay pits and areas of natural and historic interest across Mid Cornwall. There was a request for expressions of interest (EOI) for related projects. I spoke to Cornwall Council and I have submitted an EOI for the creation of the multi-use trail.

11.0 Highway matters

11.1 Local highway issues

As previously reported, a number of residents in St Dennis have brought concerns to my attention about various highway matters. I have been following these up with representatives of Cormac and, in early December, the local manager visited a number of locations around St Dennis with me. Issues that we

looked at include the poor condition of various roads and potholes, speeding cars, overgrowing vegetation and visibility issues, parking problems in the centre of the village and linked accessibility problems for local residents, and the condition of ditches on the downs.

At the request of the Parish Council, I have asked that speed monitoring be carried out in the following locations: Fore Street near ClayTAWC, Hall Road and Trelavour Road.

11.2 Proposed double yellow lines at Wesley Place

The 21-day consultation on parking restrictions on the road near Wesley Place closed in November. I have been informed that the Council had received no feedback from residents in the immediate area, and I have offered to do a further letter drop to seek feedback.

12.0 Newsletter

In last year's election campaign, I pledged that I would produce a parish-wide newsletter roughly every six months, which would be delivered to households across the Parish. I have produced my first newsletter and I have started my deliveries. Once I have completed the distribution of this newsletter, I will be producing one for St Enoder Parish.

13.0 Recycling bins in Wellington Road car park - update

Unfortunately, my newsletter is already out-of-date. In my newsletter I reminded local residents that, in the 2021 local election campaign, the Conservatives pledged that they would re-instate the recycling banks (removed from car parks by the previous administration) where there were requests from the local community. I added that after discussions with the Parish Council, we had formally requested that the bins be brought back to the Wellington Road car park.

However, there has been a newspaper report following a meeting of the Neighbourhoods Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 20th January, it was confirmed that the new administration had taken the decision not to reinstall any bins in car parks owned by the Council. It was stated by the portfolio holder that they had "agreed to review the service" but that the bins were too costly to re-install. I have not had any formal correspondence to this effect and I have written to the portfolio holder.

ST ENODER PARISH ISSUES

14.0 Planning matters

14.1 Appeal on Highgate Hill, Indian Queens (PA20/08024)

On 20th November 2020, an application for the "planning in principle" of five dwellings on Highgate Hill was refused by Cornwall Council. This was because

the development was not in an area allocated for housing, and it did not fit the policies in the emerging St Enoder Neighbourhood Plan.

The landowner referred the application to the Planning Inspectorate, based in Bristol. The Parish Council backed Cornwall Council's decision and I produced a detailed representation on behalf of the Parish Council, setting out why the development would be inappropriate.

We have just found out that the planning inspector has granted planning permission for the development, even though – as stated by a planning journalist – it was “in a location contrary” to the Neighbourhood Plan.

14.2 Appeal on Moorland Road, Indian Queens (PA21/01683)

On 2nd August 2021, the Central Sub-Area Planning Committee of Cornwall Council unanimously rejected the planning application for four commercial units at the rear of Unit 2, on the industrial estate at Indian Queens, which included a new access from Moorland Road.

Local residents were concerned about the traffic problems that a new access onto the old A30 would cause, and also raised concerns that the screening (trees and shrubs) previously located within the area had been removed. A previous consent had conditioned the need for screening. There has also been a petition of 92 names against the development.

The landowner has now appealed the decision to the Planning Inspectorate, and I have just produced a detailed representation (of over 4,500 words) on behalf of the Parish Council and local residents, which has been forwarded to the planning inspector.

14.3 Central Sub-Area Planning Committee

A proposal for a farm worker's dwelling near Blackcross (associated with the dairy farm at Little Gaverigan) was debated at a meeting of the Central Sub-Area Planning Committee on 17th January. A representative of the Parish Council, Ross Wimberley, and I spoke in favour of the proposal. It was approved by six votes to two, with one abstention.

15.0 Allocation of affordable housing in St Enoder Parish

Further to my review of affordable housing issues in St Dennis Parish, I have also been looking at the allocation of affordable homes in St Enoder Parish. I have been informed that over the last four years, a total of 36 properties have been let.

A new development of 18 properties was completed by Coastline Housing in 2020 near Mitchell (Fair Close / Strawberry Close). This land was in St Enoder Parish at the time of the planning application, but has since been transferred to the parish of St Newlyn East. It had a Section 106 legal agreement, which specified that priority should be given to households from St Enoder and St Newlyn East parishes. Of the first lets, ten went to families with a St Enoder connection, while three went to households linked to St Newlyn East. The

remaining five went to new occupants from further afield. There has been a re-let of one property, which went to someone from St Newlyn East.

In terms of the properties owned by Ocean Housing, there have been 17 re-lets. Of these, eight were properties with an associated "parish connection" legal agreement and seven went to local families. Of the remaining nine older properties (without a "parish connection" legal agreement) only two went to households with a St Enoder parish connection.

Putting this evidence in percentage terms, it means that:

- Overall, 23 of the 36 properties went to people with an appropriate parish connection (64%).
- Of the 27 properties with S106 agreements, 21 went to households with an appropriate parish connection (78%).
- However, of the remaining properties without restrictions only two (22%) went to local families.

I am making representations that further preference is given to local families, particularly in relation to the older properties, which do not have Section 106 agreements.

16.0 Highway matters

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

16.1 Local highway issues

The local Cormac manager visited a number of locations around St Enoder with me in December, so that I could share local representations with her. Issues that I raised include flooding problems, the condition of certain road surfaces, parking congestion, the faded nature of lines on some roads, and overgrown boundaries.

16.2 Speed visors

I am very pleased that the Parish Council have purchased two new speed visors for use around the Parish. It was a pleasure to erect them with the Parish Clerk in Mid December. They are presently located on Moorland Road, Indian Queens, the eastern approach into St Columb Road, and School Road, Summercourt. They will be moved again in the near future.

16.3 Summercourt School

As previously noted, the sign on the approach towards the School is a temporary one. It is to 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. There have been delays in getting the new sign, but I have been informed that it should be erected in February. New "School" signs will also soon be put up.

16.4 Proposed works on A3058 through Summercourt

The consultation on the A3058 improvements (through the Safer Roads scheme) between Quintrell Downs roundabout and Summercourt crossroads, closed in November. I have been told that the feedback was supportive of the improvements. I have been pushing for the works to happen as soon as possible, and it is presently my understanding that one of the first interventions will be the erection of the permanent vehicle activated signs in Summercourt. The proposed signalised pedestrian crossings at the crossroads will follow.

16.5 Proposed double yellow lines at Penhale

The consultation on parking restrictions in the Penhale area closed in November. There was a positive response to the proposed works. A couple of slight tweaks will be made and the scheme will be implemented later this year.

16.6 Penhale to Halloon

I have previously reported that Cornwall Council has agreed to carry out an audit of road traffic issues between Penhale and the Halloon roundabout. The assessment has started and I attended a TEAMS meeting last week, at which I updated the officers on local concerns that needed to be addressed.

16.7 Sea View Terrace

I have previously reported that Cornwall Council officers have been carrying out a "road safety" audit of Sea View Terrace, on the road between Fraddon and St Stephen. I have been promised an update of findings in the very near future.

17.0 Parish Council projects

Over the last couple of months, I have been assisting the Parish Clerk with a number of local projects.

17.1 Toilet in Indian Queens Recreation Ground

I am pleased that the Parish Council's the new public toilets in the Indian Queens Recreation Ground have been completed and opened on 6th January. The toilets will be open from 9.00 in the morning, until dusk, and they will be cleaned every day. The works were carried out by local builder, Nathan Chapman, of N & S Builders, while much of the funding came from a lottery grant that I secured for the Council.

17.2 Closed cemetery in St Enoder Churchtown

I am also very pleased that the repairs to the wall around the closed cemetery in St Enoder Churchtown have been completed. This is something very close to my heart as the original capping stones for the wall were supplied by the brickworks at Chytane (now Melbur blockworks) where my great-great-grandfather John Cole worked as the agent. This capping stones did not cover the full length of

the wall, but the Parish Council has sourced some new capping stones for the remainder of the wall.

18.0 Newsletter

As noted above, when I have finished distributing my newsletter around St Dennis Parish, I will be doing one for St Enoder Parish.

HELPING LOCAL FAMILIES

19.0 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, environmental concerns and more.