

CORNWALL COUNCILLOR UPDATE FOR JANUARY 2023



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Cornwall Council and around the Peninsula-

January saw more trips to County Hall in one month than I think I have ever done, with a lot of Council business to engage with, including an extraordinary Full Council meeting a few weeks after a regular Full Council.

In the Children's and Families scrutiny committee we were looking at the budget setting process for the service for the next financial year; as expected there has had to be significant savings made, the officers in the Together for Families directorate have worked incredibly hard to do their utmost to ensure that funding isn't removed from our most essential services. During the same process last year, there were so many red flags around cuts that deeply concerned us all but this isn't something we have seen this year thankfully. We also received a presentation from the adoption and fostering team at Cornwall Council, we often hear moving testimony in this committee but this presentation was the most harrowing I have heard. The committee made a recommendation to the Council's cabinet that Cornwall services are to join the South West Regional Adoption Agency, this should mean a wider pool of adopter families for our care experienced children in Cornwall, and a better chance of keeping sibling groups together as they move to their forever families. As part of my work on the Children's and Families committee, I also attended our first ever Cornwall Youth Council meeting at New County Hall. It was just brilliant to see the work being done by our young people in feeding into the Council decision making processes, with work being done around transport, housing and the economy. If you know of a young person that might be interested in joining the Youth Council, please drop me an email.

In our Full Council meetings this month, we voted to allow the Council to charge a 100% premium on second homes across Cornwall. While this is something that many, many Councillors have campaigned about for years, it is not without its issues. Firstly, we know there are loopholes which will undoubtedly see some avoid this premium, and secondly the Bill allowing this to even happen has not made its way through all its stages in Parliament as yet. All we, as a Council, have done is agreed that **if** the Bill becomes law, we will look to increase Council Tax on second homes. This does not include holiday lets that are classed as businesses and who often are zero rated for business rates. The Council say that this could raise up to £25m per year which would go into General Funds.

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The Council also voted to derestrict Hackney Carriage Licences across the remaining 2 zones in Cornwall that have a numerical limit on the amount of Hackney Carriage licences (black cabs that can pick up from the street rather than being booked in advance) Caradon has not had restrictions for some time.

At our extraordinary meeting, we were looking at Boundary changes for some town and parish councils across Cornwall, none in this area however. Secondly, we voted on the outcome of the Independent Remuneration Panel's advice on Cornwall Councillor allowances. Currently we receive £15,100 per year to carry out our duties, this has not increased in over 7 years. At the Local Elections in May 2021, the Council went from 123 Cornwall Councillors to 87, with a large increase in each Councillors size of division. The average amount of hours worked by a Cornwall Cllr now sits at 37 hours per week, for those of us with large geographic divisions, this is often more. The Independent Panel recommended that our allowances raise to £17,681. While this is still below the National Minimum Wage, if only working 37 hours a week, it is a good improvement and, I hope, would mean more people in Cornwall would consider standing for election to Cornwall Council, allowing a more representative and diverse Council.

I was pleased to see the completion of the upgrade to the coastal path at Tregantle Fort this month, this was funded by a last pot of money from the EU, the path is suitable for walking, cycling and running and has been completed to a high standard. The Highways Manager had allocated some funds to improve the walkway next to the carpark at Tregantle, with those funds no longer needed he has agreed to look at safety features, such as signage and road markings in that area for pedestrians crossing from the carpark.

I was also really pleased that during the earlier part of the month when we had some very cold weather, Highways acted quickly to grit our priority road network, but not only this also gritted some of our roads that are not usually gritted, such as the hill to Portwrinkle, Military Road and St John Village. Thank you, also, to residents that helped spread grit on pavements from the salt bins that have now been refilled, ready for any further cold snaps.

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This month has also seen controversy over the Dogs on Beaches consultation that was undertaken by Cornwall Council last year. I accept that this is a hugely polarising issue, and whatever the outcome there will be a large amount of folk upset by any decision taken on this issue. The Parish Councils of Maker with Rame and Shevioc asked that I represent their submissions to the committee that oversee this area. As part of my role as a Cornwall Councillor, I make many representations to Cornwall Council, both on behalf of individuals and on behalf of Town and Parish Councils. All of the Parish and Town Councils I work with have, at some point, asked me to represent their Council's view on certain subjects. I spoke on behalf of both Councils at the committee meeting, and was pleased to see the committee actually listen to the wishes of both parish councils, plus another 2 PCs further down west. Often times our committees revert to officer recommendations and do not taken on board the wishes of Parish Councils up and down Cornwall and this tends to lead to a lot of distrust and resentment. I do not sit on any Town or Parish Councils, and therefore am not privy or a part of their decision making processes - often times I will have 2 or more Parish Council meetings of various sorts in one evening so I am rarely able to stay for the entire duration of each meeting. I have to take, in good faith, that a local council is representing the views of their parishioners that have attended public meetings and made their feelings known on whatever the particular issue is and this is what I have done here. I have been very happy to explain this process to anyone who contacts me about this, or any other issue, and continue to be happy to do so.

Dates for your diary!

Our next Community Network Panel Meeting will be on **Wednesday 15 March 2023**. Time and place as yet to be confirmed. This meeting will discuss the remaining Highways Scheme allocations, so please ensure that your Parish/Town Council is represented at this meeting.