

Cornwall Councillor report – St Austell Bay Parish - March 2022

March has been another busy month with a lot going on.

There were several areas affected by power cuts in my division, particularly Porthpean, and I spent time over that weekend meeting with Western Power Distribution to understand their work and their own response to the quite unprecedented situation. They are aware of areas where they could have done better, particularly in identifying vulnerable people who might have otherwise been missed apart from the strong response from Cornwall Council and volunteer groups, and this will all be addressed in their wash-up session to ensure their response to storms like this is improved in the future.

Storm Eunice also saw a large number of trees come down over a relatively short space of time in the parish and kept me busy reporting them over that weekend.

In particular the B3273 was blocked twice in the same place but reopened relatively quickly by Cormac and contractors, I've also reported other trees down around Penrice House and Mill Lane that were blocking footpaths and these have also now been cleared.

Regarding the question under the Protocol for Local Councils, I had an update from the Development Management Group Leader on this who confirmed as follows:

'Electoral Division Members will need a planning reason to request a planning application to be determined by the planning committee under the provisions of the Protocol for Local Councils.

It is not simply a matter of requiring a scheme to go to committee.

Below is a flow chart which sets out the process of the protocol; this makes clear that it is ultimately the decision of the Head of Service as to whether or not the planning application is determined by committee [by saying whether it is unreasonable to call an application in or not] and also the important role of the division member in this process by discussing the application with the Head of Service (or her nominated officer) before her final decision.'

The officer said the protocol itself was established in 2010.

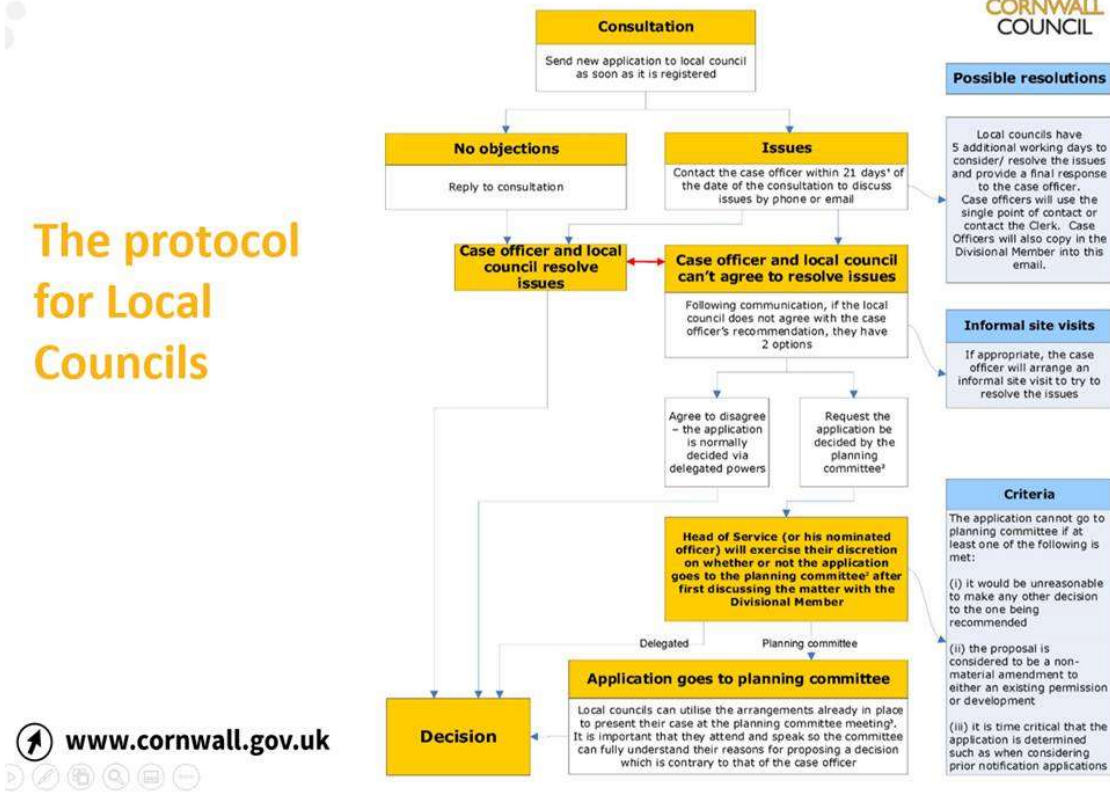
If the Parish Council wishes to see Cornwall Council change this protocol, and wishes to see applications called in without valid planning reasons or to allow 'unreasonable' applications to be called in by removing input from senior planning officers, then perhaps they should discuss with CALC, if they are a member, the best way to do this.

Obviously from Cornwall Council's perspective, decisions from planning committees have to be based on sound planning grounds and able to be defended at appeal if necessary.

PROTOCOL FOR LOCAL COUNCILS



The protocol for Local Councils



Regarding Porthpean Outdoor Education Centre, in my capacity as Chair of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee on Cornwall Council I was pleased to bring forward through the committee a number of amendments to the officer's proposals for Cornwall's Outdoor Education Service at last week's meeting of the committee.

I would like to thank the officers for your work behind the scenes on this, as well as to the Cabinet for the original extension, in December of last year, of the proposed date of the changes to this service from 31 March to 31 July, vital breathing space to allow the best possible outcome for the service.

As Local Member for Porthpean Outdoor Education Centre, since last May, I have been privileged to have had the opportunity to attend advance briefings on the futures of these sites, along with the other divisional members, since November last year. Again I would like to thank Barbara and the officers for facilitating those, and giving us as local members insight into what has been going on.

Having grown up and lived in the Mevagissey and St Austell Bay area all my life, I have always known the Porthpean Outdoor Centre as a centre for local children to take part in outdoor education activities, but since becoming member for the site, I have seen it as much more, a strategic asset for the whole of Cornwall, not just for

local children but also for children from across the Duchy, some who have never seen the sea before, something unfathomable to me before I became a councillor.

And of course when I was elected last year, I visited the site and saw for myself not just the excellent facilities and investment that has clearly gone into it, the passion of the team who work there, but also the potential for so much more, something that Cornwall Council had thus far, for a variety of reasons, for many years been unable to realise.

So looking at the recommendations before us today, and away from the theatre of Full Council, scrutiny was the chance to make some meaningful changes to what is before us, and ensure that in as much as is practicably possible within our remit as an Overview and Scrutiny Committee, we ensure that Outdoor Education remains open, affordable, and accessible for the children and young people of Cornwall, as well as the myriad of other ways in which these centres support and enable both our schools and the wider outdoor activity and tourist economies of our Duchy.

I would like to put on record my thanks, both to the residents of my division and from across Cornwall who have contacted me during the consultation, as well as to everyone who took the time to fill in the consultation.

I proposed the following amendments of relevance to Porthpean Outdoor Education Centre as well the wider service, which as they stood previously simply stated that they recommended the service should close and that Porthpean should be relet.

The following recommendations were added to guide the council in the decisions on the future of this service

- (i) *'That taking into account feedback from the consultation, that the council bears in mind the importance of securing continuous and ongoing outdoor education facilities for Cornwall's young people, even if not run by Cornwall Council, as well as the vital role these facilities provide in supporting our schools and the wider outdoor activity and tourism sectors across Cornwall.'*
- (ii) *'That taking into account feedback from the consultation, the council bears in mind the paramount and absolute importance of keeping future outdoor education services affordable and accessible to all young people in Cornwall, and that this should be a key feature of negotiations to secure a future provider.'*
- (iii) *'That the council recognises the importance of maintaining, wherever possible, a continuous and ongoing service at the sites which are being put to tender, and that in recognition of this, that if negotiations are at a late stage but not complete before 31 July, that the council considers additional measures to ensure there is no gap in service provision before the negotiations conclude.'*

(I believe Cabinet has demonstrated they are able to be pragmatic in circumstances like this, as demonstrated with their decision to extend the procurement process because of late stage discussions at Wadebridge Leisure Centre earlier this month.)

- (iv) *'That again recognising the importance of maintaining future outdoor education services for Cornwall, that a cross party group of Cornwall Councillors is established to monitor the process to ensure a smooth transition to the new providers.'*

I was pleased to see my amendments reach broad agreement from across the committee, from all parties, and in turn hope the scrutiny and oversight provided will guide Cabinet who are of course, the ultimate decision-makers on this important matter.

Cormac have now completed the East Charlestown SWCP works to an excellent standard and the path there is now open again.

The Duporth side continues to go through the legal process.

Cormac have been unable to put down temporary surface chippings on the various areas previously identified earlier this year, but have said they will do a permanent improvement of surfacing on these paths ala what they did on Mill Lane last year, when they progress the other works later this year.

Thanks to Cormac for all of their continuing efforts in this area.

Finally, on Tuesday this week I met with Andy from the Charlestown History Group to discuss their continuing work to refresh and restore the Battery above the village's western approach.

They've done a ton more work since I last went up there, including more scrub clearance and tree planting, and the wall itself looks great.

I've worked with Cormac to get some wildflower seeds for the area which have now been planted by volunteers, and Cormac have also cleared a lovely view on the approach to the site.

They now have planning permission to restore the flagpole, which hasn't stood since the early 20th century, just in time for the bicentenary of Charles Rashleigh's death next year.

This is a fantastic community project and one I look forward to continuing to support and see grow and develop over the coming years. Well done to all concerned for making this happen. I have another meeting scheduled with Andy and Cormac in April to look at further ideas for the site moving forward.