

Annual Report from the Parish Council Chair 2023-2024

St Keyne & Trewidland Parish Council
Cllr Kevin Shovelton

Welcome

We welcomed two new Members onto the Parish Council. Roger Cook joined in July 2023 and Patricia Hopwood joined in September 2023. Their inclusion ensured that we maintained a full complement of nine Councillors. It is very reassuring that we have residents keen to volunteer their time and energy as Parish Councillors and make a contribution to the life of the community.

The Informer

We re-launched the 'Informer' quarterly Community Magazine in December 2023. The old 'Informer' hadn't been published regularly since our local volunteer Editor, Val Bourne, retired, so the Parish Council took the lead in producing the new 'St Keyne and Trewidland Informer'. We are very pleased to be receiving little articles from local residents and lots of information about events happening throughout the Parish.

Facebook

We also launched a Parish Council Facebook page. Our aim is to provide information for local residents using different ways of communicating and our Facebook page is already reaching lots of you. We get data from our Facebook page showing how many people are looking at our 'posted' messages – so we can see which 'posts' are the most popular. This gives us important feedback on which issues are the most important to our community and will help to inform our future priorities. For example, our posts about Road Safety generated a great deal of interest.

Budget

Every year Councillors vote to approve the Parish Council budget for the following year and to set a 'precept' (local Council tax) that will be charged to local residents as part of their Council Tax for the following year. For 2024-25 we were pleased to be able to make no increase in the precept for the second year running. Bearing in mind current financial pressures on households we were determined not to increase the precept and to make efficiencies elsewhere in our spending.

Local 'Infrastructure'

We have been using our Parish Council budget reserves to purchase new 'infrastructure' across the Parish to ensure that our local facilities, however small, are replaced and improved. These have included: a bespoke new entrance at St Keyne Lawn Cemetery; new outdoor Noticeboards for Trewidland Village Hall and St Keyne Lawn Cemetery; four new roadside Grit Bins in St Keyne; a new field gate on the public right of way (FP607/19/1) from Lower Town to Lake in Trewidland; and roadside planting at various locations in the Parish.

Road Safety

We have been working with Cornwall Council Highways and the Road Safety Team for Cornwall and the Police in a bid to improve safety for road users on the B3252 at Horningtops and Bylane End junctions. There have been several serious accidents, including two fatalities near the Bylane End junction within the past three years. We have pressed the relevant agencies to ensure that positive changes should arise from these tragic accidents to protect road users now and in the future. Following our discussions we are pleased that improved new warning signs and road markings have

been installed and speed monitoring has been taking place. The impact of the new signage and the information from the speed monitoring will be kept under review with the relevant agencies and additional safety measures may arise as a result. Road safety along the B3252 remains a high priority for the Parish Council.

Safeguarding

We have developed and adopted a policy for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults. Although the Parish Council is not one of the primary safeguarding agencies it is essential, as a public body, that we respond appropriately when a potential safeguarding issue is brought to our attention. We will promote the welfare of children, young people and adults, and work together with other agencies to ensure that there are adequate arrangements in place within the Parish Council to identify and support those who are suffering harm. The Parish Council has identified one Councillor to act as the 'Designated Person' for Safeguarding, to whom concerns and incidents should be reported, and all Councillors have undertaken 'in-house' training. Having the policy in place enabled us to respond on two occasions during the year to concerns brought to our attention.

Housing and Development

Local developments, including Housing, are relatively small scale in our Parish, but they can still have a major impact on the local community and surroundings. Consequently we spend a lot of time carefully considering the details of new applications. While Cornwall Council are the decision maker on Planning matters, we are always consulted for our views and they take our comments into account.

We have considered 15 planning applications this year. Three were extensions or alterations to existing houses; two were to create houses from old stone barns; two were single house new builds; two were to create storage buildings; and there was one 'change of use' from holiday let to residential. In addition there were 5 'Class Q' applications. 'Class Q' is a planning application to turn a farm building into a house without the usual planning restrictions and permissions applying. The Parish Council has no right to comment on these and even Cornwall Council has very limited scope to object. Unfortunately non-farming developers have spotted this loophole and buy up recently redundant farms to turn all the agricultural sheds and barns into houses. While this brings essential new housing to the market, it does so without the usual scrutiny. For example, the Parish Council would have objected to the 5 recent Class Q applications because the new houses appear to be overcrowded on the site and there do not appear to be any of the houses which could be classed as 'affordable' for local people.

We are also keeping our eye on a site along the East Looe River, between Trussel Bridge and St Keyne Station, which is being used as a storage and maintenance site by a Construction Company. Our objections to this development were upheld by Cornwall Council and by the National Planning Appeals body. The matter is now with Cornwall Council Planning Enforcement, but the site remains in use and is both an environmental hazard and an eyesore.

Neighbourhood Development Plan

The Parish Council has supported the on-going work to produce a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Dobwalls and Trewidland although we have had no direct involvement as it was begun by Dobwalls and Trewidland Parish before Parish boundaries were changed. However we welcome its acceptance by recent public vote. We are grateful for the huge amount of work on its development over several years by people in our Parish, particularly Mhairi Mackie in Trewidland. It will be a useful tool in our future consideration of planning applications in Trewidland.

16 May 2024