

CALC Larger Councils Committee

I attended my first meeting of the Committee on 25 July 2024. The main item discussed was the proposal by Cornwall Council to transfer around 30 car parks to Cormac, with management and enforcement contracted out to a third-party operator (Initial Parking Services Ltd) who would implement remote ANPR enforcement rather than human enforcement.

All larger council reps present expressed concerns and so I arranged an extra working group meeting to develop a paper to be submitted to the CC Economic Growth and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 4th September, which is due to discuss the issue.

Representatives from six councils (Penzance, Redruth, Truro, Looe, Newquay, Falmouth) agreed on a paper, and also on a written question that will be asked by Lynda Powell (Looe Town Clerk) at the Overview & Scrutiny Committee meeting.

To quote the paper:

“We find it hard to see how this would be achieved by contracting out car park management to a private parking operator (Initial) with its headquarters in Birmingham, and a very poor reputation among users of the car parks it currently manages in Cornwall. Experience shows that town and parish councils often bear the brunt of user dissatisfaction about car park management in their local community. This consumes staff resources and damages our reputation, even though responsibility generally lies elsewhere.

Rather than outsourcing to an out-of-county business with a one-size-fits-all solution (thereby taking jobs and money out of Cornwall), CC should live up to its “local focus” aspiration by engaging in dialogue with local councils to find appropriate solutions that work within the specific local context of each community.”

Also, CC have not yet released a list of the car parks included in this proposal, and the working group has requested this information be shared.

More broadly, there was a feeling among the Larger Councils group that CC should extend to local councils the “no surprises” approach currently applied with division members, given that there have been many recent instances of local councils only becoming aware of major policy proposals affecting their community through the media, or even via members of the public. This would encourage early engagement and partnership working with local councils on possible alternative solutions.

Finally, the Devolution White Paper issued by Cornwall Council to central government in late July includes a request for “powers devolved by Government to enable Cornwall to develop improved funding arrangements for town and parish councils”, which would “enable them to support their communities in an effective and sustainable way”.

Along with the Town Clerk, I am arranging a face-to-face meeting of larger council reps (Mayors and Clerks) in September to progress this issue, because it’s vital for town and parish councils to be involved in any negotiations about future funding arrangements (as well as on broader devolution issues).

Councillor Stephen Reynolds

Penzance BID

As Town Mayor, I am a director of the Penzance BID, alongside the BID Manager (Sarah Shaw) and representatives from local business, and as such regularly attend the monthly Board meetings.

The Town Clerk and BID Manager have been working closely together on a number of town centre issues, and the quality and depth of partnership working has improved significantly since Sarah Shaw took on the role earlier this year.

One good example was the rapid response when rumours surfaced of a far-right demonstration in Causewayhead on Saturday 10th August. Contacts between the Town Clerk, BID Manager and the police provided reassurance to traders in the town centre that they should open for business as usual, defusing a potentially difficult situation.

Penzance Council and the BID have also worked closely together on an accelerated deployment of the Street Marshals to tackle ASB and other issues, ensuring that the best possible use is made of the PCC funding for this initiative.

Similarly, the upcoming Penzance Food Festival in Penlee Park has benefited from close partnership working between the BID and Penzance Council.

Having a proactive and engaged BID is proving very positive not only in tackling some of the issues affecting our town centre, but also in promoting the positives about the town and its businesses. The Council and the BID each have a role to play, and working together can do more than if they act alone and in isolation.

The ballot for the third term of the Penzance Bid opens on 6th September, and ballot papers have already been issued. If the outcome of the ballot is supportive of a third term, this will begin on 1st June 2025 and last for a further five years.

Councillor Stephen Reynolds

Penzance / Concarneau Twinning Association

As Town Mayor, I also serve as President of the two active twinning associations, with Concarneau (France) and Cuxhaven (Germany).

Concarneau

The Concarneau twinning has been particularly active recently.

The association was instrumental in bringing the Bagad (pipe band) from Concarneau to the Golowan festival, where they took part in two of the Mazey Day parades alongside other performances on Quay Fair Day (and in local pubs!). The band thoroughly enjoyed their visit, as did thousands of festival-goers. It was the Bagad's first visit in twelve years, and all concerned are determined not to leave another twelve years before their next visit.

The visit was only possible thanks to the support of Golowan CIC and the Golowan Band, who arranged a joint fund-raiser with the twinning association to help meet the travel costs. All the accommodation was provided free of charge by local hosts, with a special mention to Colin Mantripp at Poltair Manor who provided two nights' accommodation to 13 of the 17 visiting musicians. The visit was largely self-funded by the Bagad and the Twinning Association, with added contributions from Golowan (especially for meals) and the Mayor's Allowance.

As Town Mayor, I was also honoured to be invited by the Mayor of Concarneau to attend the commemorations for the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Concarneau over three days from 23rd to 25th August, alongside the Mayor of their twin town in Germany.

Accompanied my consort Jane, and by representatives from the Twinning Association, I was privileged to take part in a series of events in remembrance of the Breton resistance fighters who lost their lives during the struggle to liberate their town, and to lay wreaths at the graves of the Commonwealth servicemen buried at Concarneau and Lanriec.

The two visiting Mayors were invited to address to the large crowd at the official commemoration service on Sunday 25th August. I used the opportunity to speak about the origins of the twinning movement in the aftermath of World War II, and its role in encouraging mutual understanding and respect between different countries and cultures.

I would add that the visit was entirely self-funded (except for the poppy wreaths, which traditionally are paid for out of the Mayor's Allowance).

The Mayor and Deputy Mayor of Concarneau are due to visit Penzance in October (his scheduled visit for Golowan 2024 was cancelled due to the French elections). I am working with the Twinning Association to arrange a programme of events, the main priority being a proposed visit to Penlee RNLi (the Mayor of Concarneau is keen to re-establish ties between the two lifeboat stations) and to Nelwyn Harbour.

Meanwhile the Twinning Association continues to organise fund-raisers and socials, and the exchanges of students between the two communities (a key component of the twinning) continue on a regular basis.

The association's chair deserves enormous credit for her energy and passion in every aspect of the twinning, as do her colleagues on the Committee. More information about the association is on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/182763858786714/>.

Councillor Stephen Reynolds

Penzance / Cuxhaven Twinning Association

The Cuxhaven Twinning Association has been less active recently than its French counterpart but has nonetheless managed to keep going into and beyond its 50th year despite the double setbacks of Brexit and Covid.

The next landmark is the visit in October of the Cuxhaven youth group, to be followed next May (provisionally) by a visit to Cuxhaven for members of the Association.

Again, great credit is due to the Chairman (John Richards) and his fellow committee members for their commitment to retaining the strong ties between the two communities.

Councillor Stephen Reynolds

Penwith Community Area Partnership (CAP)

The CAP is a forum facilitated by Cornwall Council and its Community Link Officer that brings together CC officers and councillors with representatives from town and parish councils in the Penwith area.

A key focus currently is transport issues, which of course do not affect each community in isolation but have a collective impact on the whole area.

To this end the CAP has a dedicated Transport and Connectivity Sub-Group) which meets monthly, and has most recently been discussing ways to improve traffic enforcement in our local communities. The group has also been supporting the recent CRCC rural transport survey.

The full CAP holds meetings quarterly, and the next one (2nd October) is due to focus on CC transport strategy. If any members have specific transport issues they want me to raise at the meeting, do let me know in plenty of time.

Another important issue discussed in the CAP this year has been the new Local Plan that CC are required to bring forward. The Cornwall Council Head of Planning Policy gave the CAP a briefing on the initial work being undertaken to inform the Local Plan, and we are expecting an update on this in due course (subject of course to any changes in government policy following last May's elections).