Cllr Tim Dwelly November report

Some good news on the future of the St. John's Church play zone. The dispute between the project and the church may be coming to a close, with the church offering to allow the project to take the tall tower and bouncy castle to a new venue: St. John's Hall.

As I have previously told the town council, my role on Cabinet includes running Cornwall Council's buildings and land. And I am also the divisional member covering both St John's Hall and St John's Church. There is no doubt that St John's Hall itself (the actual hall) is underused and only generates around £11,000 per year to Cornwall Council which barely covers the cost of staff time. The soft play project met property officers at the hall and discussed a possible location there for the play zone. It was agreed that the stage in the building was the best place. This allows for markets and many performances and public meetings to take place in the main floor space.

Our hope is that we can bring in more markets and other activities that can take place alongside children being able to play in the soft play zone (more customers). So for example someone could do some market stall shopping or have a coffee while their kids are playing on the secure stage area. The stage itself and its lighting and sound as a venue have never been properly invested in. Given the proximity of the youth club over the road in the Old Town council buildings, having a an affordable playspace for local families could be the start of a young people's indoor activity zone in Penzance. The hall will also of course continue to host Mazey Day parades organised by Golowan who I helped to gain the building opposite Saint Johns Hall.

There may be some minor displacement of performances to other venues in town. But places like the Acorn, the Ritz (both funded through Town Deal), Penlee Park and St Mary's Church are all venues we as a town should support. And there are many live shows that don't use the stage.

I was delighted to hear from the Reverend Jackie Wise that the Penlee cluster church group have finally agreed to let the soft play equipment be moved to this new venue. I'm also pleased to report that the project coordinator is willing to drop a claim made against the the Church for what happened a year ago when the facility was abruptly closed. A painful stand off can now hopefully be resolved.

My thanks to the town council for its support on this. My hope is that you all as councillors may want to consider some TC grant funding alongside my £1000 of community chest to help move the equipment and perhaps help towards a crowd funder to bring in new equipment for the soft play zone. My thanks also to former town councillor Rob Crago for in principle offering to provide a free removal service to the project which will reduce the cost of the setup. I don't know when all this can happen but if things go well and we act quickly we can all give a Christmas present to the people of Penzance: the reopening of an affordable play area for young children.

The recent introduction of traffic enforcement cameras in Market Jew Street has seen a huge (circa 90%) reduction in vehicles entering the street between 11-4. This will improve further as fines kick in. In the first six months anyone ignoring the rules gets a warning letter but if they do it a second time they get fined during the first six months. I personally lobbied for cameras at the outset (it was obvious to many of us that without enforcement the 11-4 system would not work properly). But Cornwall Council was too slow to get permission from Government (required for any council wating to introduce Moving Traffic Enforcement (MTE) cameras. We can hope that years of disruption and road works blighting Penzance (not just council but utilities especially gas) are finally coming to an end.

The congestion on MJS that was a major problem before cameras came in has also been reduced hugely during 11-4. One of the problems (outside the no car hours) has been people parking in spaces meant to be layby space for cars to let buses come down the hill. These pull in bays are now double yellow lined and are being actively enforced. For those suggesting no buses on MJS, this is not possible and would undermine bus passengers who can currently catch buses home in either direction.