**Cornwall Councillor report Mevagissey Parish - June 2019**

After having devoted my entire council report last month to the situation around Mevagissey Surgery, I am delighted to see the future of the surgery resolved following a short and intense campaign less than a month later.

The campaign was a community effort that quickly attracted national and even international attention and my thanks go to everyone who contributed towards the outcome in a positive way.

The surgery now has a new partner from Veor Surgery in Camborne and Dr James will also be staying on. This safeguards continuity for existing staff, patients and the Gorran Haven outreach.

I met with a representative from the new partner and staff in the surgery on Tuesday and have asked to be kept updated of any changes as they happen.

Specific thanks to the Parish Council, who funded the Cornwall Channel video, and to the Parish Councillors, particularly Cllr Facey, who helped in the campaign.

On other matters,

I have asked for the bus stop on Valley Road to be repaired in the short term, and for funding to be released to replace it in the long term. Hopefully the repairs will happen soon.

I have also been working with Cormac around Rights of Way issues and have secured some funding that only two parishes in their area (South East) of Cornwall are getting to improve the right of way (along with Calstock Parish).

Cormac are now looking at how they would like to see the money spent (eg signs, structures, surfacing, drainage) - they have around 12k for each Parish.

I have been working with the Parish Clerk for ideas, which will include surfacing work on Cross Park Terrace as well as a long list the Clerk has put forward for consideration, but am open to suggestions on other areas.

I will shortly be doing some work on some of the benches and one of the black and gold heritage signs in the Parish, having secured some paint from Cormac to allow this to happen.

I also recently met with Mark Groom the sweeper and would again like to commend his excellent work in the village, going above and beyond to do some work on the raised beds at Valley Road during his time off. Thanks Mark!

I have had concerns raised about access being blocked due to poor parking at the end of Cliff Street/The Cliff near the Fountain and have raised with Highways.

Highways have said the only way to change anything there would be for waiting restrictions to be added as part of a future community highways scheme so I wondered if the Parish might look at considering that.

Ditto poor parking on the random bit of publicly maintainable highway in Trevarth.

A community network officer from down west has raised that St Ives Town Council have been asking questions about how communities are dealing with cash point machines being taken away and how there has been some interested in this nationally, especially in how this affects poorer people in society.

St Ives Town Council have now made contact with ‘your cash’ and they are really keen to install cashpoints and are actively looking for new sites. The site owner can opt for them to be free of charge.

‘Your cash’ will pay for the install and any planning permissions. The reason they’re keen and are targeting Cornwall is that they make a higher percentage of commission on withdrawals by foreign visitors so they’re interested only in these areas.

They guarantee income of £200-300 a month. I understand these are free to use machines as opposed to those that make a charge, (apart from foreign currency exchange). ‘Your Cash’ can be contacted via details that I hold on file. I wasn’t sure if this was something that would be of interest for Mevagissey but thought the best way to highlight it would be to raise and put on record at the Parish Council meeting.

Finally, I have asked for the village’s open spaces and verges in and in the approach to the village to be trimmed ahead of Feast Week.

**Addendum – full statement on the surgery campaign**

I have been asked to give a more detailed update on the outcome of the Mevagissey Surgery ‘SOS’ campaign in the absence of Cllr Facey, so have done so, reusing some content from my latest Tower and Spire column in the process.

It feels surreal just a month after that the campaign, run by a number of us in the community, has been successful, securing the future of the surgery and attracting international publicity at the same time.

I am not ashamed to admit that until I heard about the problems around the surgery, like many other people, I had no idea how GP surgeries were operated. If someone had told me that they were just another ‘branch’ of the NHS, with doctors that could be pooled centrally or similar, I probably wouldn’t have batted an eyelid.

Clearly this is not the case, and finding out how the GP business model works, and how intricately it is all tied together by the partner GPs, salaried GPs and the magnificent team of staff at the surgery was a real eye opener to me, both in understanding how a solution could be found, and also in giving a whole new appreciation to the brilliant work carried out by past and present people in Mevagissey Surgery.

So, looking back at the campaign, we had two goals to accomplish in a very short space of time. Goal 1 was to highlight the situation in Mevagissey, to ‘advertise’ what a brilliant place it is to live and work in, stay positive and hope to attract a GP. Goal 2 was to make sure the community knew about the NHS consultation, which only finished on 4 June, and were able to attend the public meetings or respond in other ways, in order to show how important the surgery is to us all, and how devastating it would be should it close.

Because of the time span we used social media a lot, with the Mevagissey SOS Facebook Group created by myself and Kim Andrews, an electronic and traditional petition which was quickly distributed around Meva and nearby villages, and soon a hashtag #willyoubemyGP, which we initially used with some of Matthew Facey’s amazing photographs to get the message out there.

The meetings NHS England held in the surgery and at Gorran Haven were incredibly well attended. I have been told they have never had such a response to local issue, and the petition, which was handed into NHS Kernow as the local decision maker as part of the consultation by Mavis Jones of Friends of the Surgery was signed by nearly 4,000 people in less than three weeks. Word was clearly getting out there. Friends of the Surgery deserve special recognition in the year of their 25th anniversary for their work in producing the banners and placards so quickly, as well as the posters that were distributed around the village.

We also picked up significant media interest, both local, with the St Austell Voice having our story on its front page for three out of five weeks and covering every week. Spotlight and ITV Westcountry got involved, including filming an amazing sand writing event on Porthluney Beach arranged by Jane Blackmore, Joanne Chadwick and Aza Adlam (who also painted a stunning mural that was featured in the national press) . And Alex Williams arranged a Parish Council-funded video by the Cornwall Channel which further highlighted the situation. Alex has been amazing during this campaign, as well as Michael Bunney, both of whom have spoken to media magnificently getting across the positive message we were trying to give. National attention also followed with Steve Double MP asking questions to the Prime Minister and Health Minister in Parliament, and the national Guardian newspaper visiting the village and interviewing a whole range of people.

I even found myself in the bizarre situation, on the same day that the campaign got interest from a doctor in Alaska, of sitting in a lay-by at London Apprentice doing a phone interview with the New York Times. News certainly does travel far and fast!

In the end, on 10 June we heard from the NHS that a new partner has been found, from Veor Surgery in Camborne, after they were attracted by our campaign, to take on the surgery and that it will be business as usual going forward. Staff and services are protected, although services will be stretched over the summer, as Veor don’t take over until 1 August and so can’t officially make arrangements until then.

Even better, Dr James is now able to stay. It couldn’t be a better outcome for all of us, and I would like to publicly put on record my thanks to everyone who took part in the campaign at every level – a real victory for people power, positive thinking and Mevagissey and the surrounding communities!