

Highlights from the Altarnun Parish Council meeting on Monday, 12th May 2014

Chair Retallack; Vice Chair Dowler and 8 Parish Councillors; Parish Grounds man Smart; Parish Project Officer Parsons; and fifty five member of the public attended the meeting in St Nonna's Church Hall. Cornwall Councillor Hall joined the meeting later in the evening due to a prior commitment with the North Hill Parish Council.

They were joined by Mr. Ray Newbury, Principal of Altarnun Primary School and several members of the Board of Governors; and Mr. Glynn Pooley and his Architect Mr. Andrew Wilkes who was accompanied by a drainage consultant, Mr. Jan Clark, from H20K Environmental Water, Truro.

Mr. Newbury kicked things off with his quarterly report to the Parish Council bringing everyone up to speed with the accelerated progress being made in the school. He also shared the status of the Department of Education intervention following a negative Ofsted report last year, in particular the requirement that the school become an Academy.

Continuing teacher training, greater use of IT including new laptops, Math applications and learning techniques, and targeted support for those students trailing in literacy and mathematics were all delivering positive and promising results. Most importantly of all, the children were responding enthusiastically.

After consultation with Cornwall Council, DoE, Ofsted, parents and staff, the school's Board of Governors considered several Academy Trusts and selected the Advanced Learning Academy Trust (ALAT), Truro, as the preferred sponsor. Mr. Newbury reported that this was a multi-academy, non-profit making trust with charitable status. He provided publicity booklets "Helping every child to reach their potential – Learn, Grow, Prosper" containing more information on the Trust. Data could also be found at www.alat.org.uk. Mr. Newbury stated that the school building & land would be leased from Cornwall Council for 125 years. These cannot be sold and can only be used for school purposes. The Trust had confirmed that the existing Governors would be retained and they had offered teaching staff increased professional development opportunities and support. The Governors had liked their focus on creating a challenging environment in which a sense of adventure and curiosity was fostered in the children. The Trust was encouraging greater engagement and communication with the wider community through such things as a regular column in TrePolPen, Facebook and Twitter. The plan was to move to Academy status with effect from 1st June 2014.

The update was followed by an emotional debate between parents, would be parents, governors, councillors and other residents probing the statements made and the assurances given. Questions covered the political implications, the School's history, the potential risks, the Trust's track record & business drivers. There were concerns that funding/resources could be reduced and the future of the school put at risk. Of particular concern was the perceived lateness and lack of community consultation and in depth engagement with parents/would be parents about the decision to implement the directive. Some residents had written to Dan Rogerson expressing their concerns. A petition had been displayed in the Village Shop to elicit support to try and reverse the decision, and keep the school within Local Authority control. Several parents and governors strongly supported the change stressing their desire to secure what was best for the children. Councillor Mason expressed some confusion in that nearby Lewannick School, and both Launceston and Callington colleges were already Academies and doing extremely well. She felt the community should voice its support for the School through this unfortunate but necessary change, and recognise the good progress being made. The Council in closing the session urged Mr. Newbury to see what more could be done to open-up fresh consultation and offer greater engagement with those expressing concern. Mr. Newbury agreed to liaise with the Clerk about bringing representatives from ALAT to the next meeting on 2nd June 2014.

There was then a short interlude in which parishioners and councillors inspected presentational material provided by Mr. Wilkes, architect for the proposed Gratton Field development, commonly referred to as the "Pooley site", in Five Lanes. Mr. Wilkes explained that his company had been working on a design proposal since September 2013. There had been pre-planning application exploratory dialogue with Cornwall Council's affordable housing & planning teams, the Environment Agency, SWW and a leading consultancy - H20K - based in Truro, with expertise in drainage and surface water clearance. He introduced Mr. Clark who would later explain the approach taken to address the historic concerns known to exist about the downhill flood risk to Altarnun Village Centre.

Mr. Wilkes stated that the latest figures of people eligible in housing bands A – D and seeking affordable homes within Altarnun Parish had risen steadily to 35 since the start of the year. The scheme utilised 2 acres of the 4.5 acres site behind Penpont View. It split the site to create two distinct areas – one for 16, two to four bedroom affordable homes of which 70% would be available to rent and 30% available for shared equity agreements, and - the second for 8 open market houses, required to help make the first scheme financially viable in terms of funding the higher than usual drainage and high quality material costs. The affordable properties would be priced in line with Government guidelines at 80% market rental price and 70% market sale price. The design was of a high quality using local stone, slates & render in keeping with local properties. There was an unusually low density proposed, with soft landscaping & care taken to protect existing trees and hedges. Homes would have parking provision in line with national guidelines. There would be a new footpath access via Penpont View and links to the existing footpath into Altarnun. The plan also showed a public play area that would be open to all. This, he said, would be adopted by Cornwall Council. The development would be serviced by a newly adopted road and associated infrastructure. Local consultation had taken place over the Easter weekend with several residents actually submitting written feedback. Of these, four visitors supported the scheme and three opposed it.

Mr. Clark was then invited to explain how the developers believed that the perceived flood risk from this development could be managed. Mr. Clark told the meeting that H20K had run trial pits across the site to a depth of 2 metres in March 2014 and found no evidence of under lying ground water. He explained that best practice guidelines and experience showed that capture and filtration into the ground is the best option for the management of excess surface water. The current scheme proposed that each home would have a dedicated tank and soak way to dispose of its surplus water. A similar approach was recommended for the drains on the estate roads. He said that discussions with SWW had revealed that they were contemplating a major upgrade and expansion of the sewage treatment works supporting Altarnun but a final decision was not expected for up to 5 months. The developers were clear that locking into an enhanced public mains sewage system was the better and cheaper option for them. The removal of such water would also significantly reduce the amount of excess water likely to be created on the site. The alternative was a private sewage treatment plant elsewhere on Gratton Field. This was a concern for nearby residents in Penpont View who were also anxious about site access and security risks. Questions were raised about the proposed phasing of the delivery and the risk that the open market homes got built but the affordable homes failed to arrive. Mr. Wilkes assured the meeting that this would be covered in the planning process with Cornwall Council.

Several Parish Councillors and members of the public challenged the validity and effectiveness of the proposed solution to the flood risk. More evidence and specific detail was needed before they would be prepared to support the scheme which they actually liked. The Chair enquired if the architect had looked into water harvesting/grey water recycling which could also reduce potential surplus water. Mr Wilkes said that this could increase the financial challenge but he agreed to take a deeper look at this idea. He was also urged to consider delaying any formal planning application until the outcome of the SWW deliberations on increasing sewage capacity was known. Several members of the public were dissatisfied that “affordable local homes for local people” did not really help them. The Parish Council agreed to take this point up with Cornwall Council’s affordable housing team. It would also look into the significant increase in the demand figures being quoted. In response to a direct question, the Parish Council Chair confirmed that planning permission already existed for 6 affordable homes at Bolventor and 5 affordable homes at Trewint. Some residents questioned if further growth of the existing villages was desirable at all. Others countered that without growth and the injection of new families the community would stagnate and die. The Chair thanked all of the presenters and everyone present for their pro-active participation. She would await confirmation that representatives from ALAT will attend the next Parish Council meeting to continue engagement on developments at the school and she encouraged Mr. Wilkes to consider the input received on the much improved design of the proposed Gratton site affordable homes development and to see what better evidence could be provided to assure both residents & the Parish Council that there would be no flood risk to Altarnun village.

The Parish Council meeting continued with consideration of two listed building consent applications - **PA14/03589** concerning the construction of an extension for an additional bedroom and hall at Trederras Barn, Trewint Marshes, PL15 7SF; and **PA14/02886** for permission to replace 5 rotten windows with new double glazed wooden windows at Beech Grove, Altarnun, PL15 7RW. There were NO OBJECTIONS recorded. Application PA14/03461 to change the use and convert a derelict redundant barn into a single dwelling including extensions to create an entrance onto a parking area and garden at Peggy’s Barn, Lower Tregunnon, PL15 7SX also raised NO OBJECTION. Councillor Scott reported that following representations from Altarnun Parish Council and with the support of Councillor Hall, the Cornwall Council east sub area planning committee meeting on 28th April 2014 had decided to exceptionally approve the proposed erection of a single dwelling on the old Coal Yard at Trewint. Site clearance had now started.

The Clerk reported on the outcome of the spring road inspection tour with Cormac including the new 30mph road sign on the A30/Trewint slip road, and the new “reduce speed now” sign. Following feedback from a local resident that vehicles leaving the A30 were still travelling at speeds way in excess of this, she had asked Cormac to provide the Parish Council with a comparative quote for the potential provision of a digital speed sign and/or a chicane ala those at Coads Green. There was a reprise of the status of Parish Projects with confirmation given that the acquisition of the land for the new toilet block had been completed. Mr. Parsons advised the meeting that attempts were being made to arrange for a public meeting in Altarnun to review feedback from the recent survey of the local health care practice at Lewannick. Details would follow.

Finally, it was with deep regret that the Parish Council Chair –Mrs Ronnie Retallack - informed the meeting that following her appointment into a new job with a wide geographical remit she would have to tender her resignation from the Parish Council. The upcoming Parish Council Annual General meeting, scheduled for 7.00pm on Monday, 2nd June 2014 in the Altarnun Church hall, will be her last. She will hand over the leadership of the Council to her deputy – Vice Chair Mr. Dowler - until a new Chair can be appointed from within the Parish Council. The Clerk will commence the steps necessary to advertise and elect a new Parish Councillor after the June meeting.

Mr. Scott spoke on behalf of the whole Parish Council when he thanked Mrs Retallack for her many years of dedicated service to the Parish, the Council and the community. Honest, hardworking and caring, she had proven to be an exceptional Parish Council leader and she would be missed by all. He wished her every success in her new role & hoped she would drop in to future Parish Council meetings whenever she had the time.

Clerk to Altarnun Parish Council – May 2014.