

COUNCILLOR ARMAND TOMS
LOOE EAST AND ST MARTINS WARD CORNWALL COUNCIL
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HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

There has been a recent announcement that Kathy Byrne of Chief Executive of the Royal Cornwall Hospital is to leave her post. This key post will need to be filled immediately as Ms Byrne has filled an important post within Cornwall especially at this critical time of joining up the Health and Social Care across the county. The hospital has had a couple of critical reports and with the Chairman and the Chief Executive going it is important not to slow the work already done to bring change to Cornwall. I have been involved in interviews for two key posts a Senior Manager for Social Care and a new Director of Public Health for Cornwall. There were excellent candidates for both posts and there was more than one that impressed for both posts.

CONTAINER HOUSING TO SOLVE HOUSING ISSUES

I have been working to bring container housing to Cornwall to help with the homelessness in the area. Cornwall Council spends £1.5m on temporary accommodation and over £0.5m on B&B and by providing temporary housing it can reduce this bill. Believe it or not a local company is using container housing to solve this same problem in London and is working with a number of Boroughs. So if it can be done in Reading, London and other places, then why not Cornwall.

A38 CASE FOR ACTION

Having attended all the A38 meetings I was disappointed to not be able to see the Case For Action being presented to the Minister. But I am delighted that from my first letter to the paper about the lack of Cornwall Council support for the road network in SE Cornwall to the final presentation that I was involved. It is also brilliant that Councillors from all parties worked together with the local MP Sheryll Murray to bring this to a paper highlighting the issues. We all use this road and it is at the end of the day our residents safety we are supporting.

MEMBERS BRIEFINGS

I have attended a number of Members Briefings and I wish to highlight just two of the comments made at them. Firstly to the Chief Constable who briefed us on the merger of the Devon and Cornwall Constabulary with Dorset Constabulary. My challenge surrounded the issue of rural policing and the disproportionate cuts to this over the years highlighting the Liskeard and Looe area especially. He did not give any reassurance on this issue but did say that with the extra funding this year 100 new Officers were on the way. He also stated that if there was rate equalisation with Dorset across Devon and Cornwall then with the merger and extra money there could be as many as an extra 450 new Officers for the area. This would mean at least 100 extra for Cornwall interesting idea but this would also mean an extra £20 on rate bills.

I spoke strongly about the proposed increases in the Tamar Bridge and Ferry Crossing tolls. The reason that the bridge was built by Cornwall and Plymouth City Councils was because at a proposed £3m it was too expensive for the Highways Authority to do. Yet the two Councils built the bridge for around £1.7m and have run it ever since. You may remember the minor roads that lead to and from the bridge on both sides which slowed the traffic and numbers using it. Yet the Highways Authority extended the A38 to the bridge on the Plymouth side and put in the tunnel to avoid Saltash. This has increased the number of vehicles using the bridge and the impact on

maintenance and capacity. The tolls support the bridge and the ferries, but any increase in them impacts on mainly on the residents of SE Cornwall. The widening was £34m, the new offices nearly £4m then include bolts, painting and general maintenance the impact is real. Yet the Highway Authority for years have given Transport for London money to support their network which included a number of bridges, so why aren't they doing the same for Cornwall. Yet the strongest case for not increasing the tolls is the Case For Action on the A38, the Case is built around the increase in economic benefit which could be as much as £900m. The accident rate on the Cornwall side of the bridge is far higher then the Expressway to Exeter. Yet if you wanted to invest in Devon & Cornwall and the toll would impact on your business which side of the bridge would you invest in? Would it stop jobs coming to Cornwall with the benefits they give and the rates they pay to Cornwall Council. I believe that this shows that the bridge toll is important for so many reasons as to have a job in Plymouth and live in Looe can cost as much as £1600 a year. This impacts on everyone in this area and I will continue to fight for no increase in tolls. The bridge is to get to its working capacity in the next 30 years so how will the traffic be managed, a new bridge? more ferries? that discussion needs to be started now not when it gets to gridlock.