

Cornwall Council Report – Mullion Parish Council – December 2025

I hope you are all well as we head into the festive season. I'm providing a somewhat lengthier report than usual this month.

Cornwall Council Draft Budget (2026/27–2028/29)

Cornwall Council has published its draft budget for the three-year period 2026/27 to 2028/29, alongside the Council Priorities Plan 2026–2030. This plan sets out a balanced financial framework to meet rising demand, inflationary pressures, and national funding changes. This of course depends on assumptions and pending confirmation of Government funding allocations.

Public consultation on this draft runs from 29 December 2025 to 27 January 2026, and Parish Council precepts must be submitted by 31 January 2026.

The budget supports Cornwall Council's six priorities. To fund these commitments, Cornwall Council's leadership is proposing a 4.99% Council Tax increase (2.99% core and 2% Adult Social Care precept), bringing properties on Band D to £2,086.36. While not ideal, this increase is necessary to sustain investment and reflects Government pressure on local authorities to raise Council Tax to the maximum allowed.

Over the three years, £263 million will be invested in services, including £74 million for children and families, £99 million for adult social care, and £23 million for transport, planning, and housing. The £2.1 billion capital programme includes major projects such as the Evergreen Fund, a £70 million initiative to drive economic growth after the Shared Prosperity Fund ends in March 2026. It will support targeted interventions and new grant streams, including the Chancellor's recently announced Kernow Industrial Growth Fund

To balance the budget, £133 million in savings are required: £50 million in 2026/27, £44 million in 2027/28, and £39 million in 2028/29. These will come from efficiencies, income generation, and transformation, including changes in adult social care, children's services, and corporate operations.

Cornwall Council faces risks such as the removal of the remoteness factor from the Fair Funding Review, rising SEND transport costs, and a growing Dedicated Schools Grant deficit. Final budget approval is scheduled for 24 February 2026.

Parish Councils are encouraged to engage in the consultation via Let's Talk Cornwall, plan precepts accordingly, and attend the stakeholder briefing on 7 January 2026.

Devolution Update

The Government has recently confirmed that Cornwall will not be merged with Devon or placed under a South West Strategic Mayoral Authority. In a recent letter to Cllr Leigh Frost, Communities Secretary Steve Reed MP states that “the Government is minded, on an exceptional basis” to “explore designating [Cornwall] Council as a Single Foundation Strategic Authority”, without the need for a directly elected mayor. This is of course positive news for those of us who did not wish to be merged with Devon.

The Government’s proposal will require Parliamentary approval through the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill and subsequent legislation. Once approved, Cornwall could gain additional powers over transport, housing, skills, and economic development, building on the existing devolution deal agreed in 2023. Discussions with the Government will continue, so that Cornwall can achieve the devolution deal which suits us best.

First Bus Withdrawal

On 21 November 2025, First Bus announced its intention to withdraw all bus services from Cornwall, effective from 14 February 2026. This decision is entirely commercial and was not made by Cornwall Council.

Cornwall currently has one of the largest rural bus networks in the country. Around half of the services are delivered by Go Cornwall Bus under contract and subsidised by Cornwall Council, while the other half are currently operated commercially by First Bus. Aside from the Truro Park and Ride contract, Cornwall Council does not fund First Bus services.

Cornwall Council has been selected as one of five local authorities to participate in a Bus Franchising Pilot study, which will explore alternative delivery models for rural areas. This work will be crucial in determining how services can be funded and sustained in the future.

In response to First Bus’s announcement, Cllr Dan Rogerson, Portfolio Holder for Transport, is working urgently to attract other operators to take over routes and will provide an update to members before Christmas. The Council will also collaborate with Cornwall’s MPs to lobby central government for funding to maintain socially important services, particularly in light of the recent Buses Services Act 2025, which recognises the value of such routes.

Flooding at Poldhu Cove

Recent heavy rainfall has led to significant flooding at Poldhu Cove, affecting both the highway and the National Trust-managed car park. I have been in contact with the Highways Department, who have responded by erecting warning signs to alert motorists to the flood risk. While this is a helpful short-term measure, it does not address the underlying drainage issues.

The National Trust has suggested long-term approaches, such as tree planting in the catchment area, which are welcome and important for future resilience, especially as heavy rainfall events are likely to increase in frequency. However, I will be urging the National Trust to also enact short-term mitigation measures. Specifically, regular dredging around the highway and onto the beach would allow for improved water flow and help prevent standing water during heavy rainfall.

Given the impact on residents and visitors, I'd like to suggest that the Parish Council formally write to the National Trust to express its concerns and request that appropriate short-term remedial action be taken alongside longer-term strategies (something I am of course happy to support, alongside my own communications). A proactive and collaborative approach between the National Trust, the Highways Department, and local stakeholders will be essential to resolving this recurring problem.

Finally, it is my hope that I will begin a series of monthly surgery sessions around the division in the new year, diary permitting.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas and look forward to meeting again in the new year.

As always, I can be contacted at cllr.rory.gow@cornwall.gov.uk.