

First of all a Happy and good 2025 to you all.

This first report for 2025 is full of don't know and uncertainties as you will all know from the reports you have read on the Governments devolution plans.

Nothing I can tell you is as yet set in stone so I will just give you brief outlines on what I know so far and say the situation changes almost daily so it means keeping your eyes on Press reports etc and apologies in advance if things I say don't come to fruition or turn out to be different. It's hard to keep up at this point in time.

What I know so far in broad terms is that the Government is bringing in devolution and Councils need to put forward their plans for what type of Strategic or Unitary Governance they want. The County Cabinet is meeting on the 9th January because they have to make their submission by the 10th. As you can tell with the Christmas period etc it doesn't allow much time and I can only tell you that there have been quite a lot of on line chats over the previous few weeks.

If you are interested the Cabinet meeting on the 9th is webcast so you can look in.

but the agenda will contain 3 items and in brief to ask the Government to join it's priority programme for devolution and consider a mayoral combined authority for Sussex. To discuss preparing to develop plans for Unitary councils across Sussex if invited to do so and to invite Government to postpone County Council elections in May 2025 so that proposals can be worked up. The Government can only delay elections by one year legally and if it happens they need to delay for 2 years I think they need new legislation.

However it's watch this spaces and please don't hold me to account if things change. I can only report what I know so far. It looks like all change though.

The West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service is now open for applications for full time applicants to this Service. If you know of any who are interested apply now.

Obviously as you are all aware it's difficult over the Christmas period but everything has to be kept going. You can imagine with all the wet weather how difficult a time it is for Highways in particular. Saturated land means more likelihood for trees to fall and drains to block cause flooding and I know several roads that have had to close if only for short periods because of the danger of flooded roads. Be careful if your out and about.

When we get the ice etc the Gritters are ready and acting as necessary. They have been out several times already.

The new Chief Executive at South Downs National Park has hit the ground running and although he knows quite a lot of the area he has 100 miles to get to know a lot more and importantly getting to know all the departments and staff that work for us. I have every confidence that he will succeed with this heavy workload and soon come up with his ideas for us all to consider. Along with everyone else we are not expecting more Government money so thank goodness the South Downs National Park Trust which I sit on is able to obtain funds to carry on with environmental work in the South Downs.

One of the smaller items at the moment is a fund raised to help communities with litter picking. Individuals can apply for funds for equipment as can Parish and Town Councils. If a Council applies the amount is more than if an individual applies and I know there are some very good litter pickers around so if they are not Councils please let them know there is this help.

All the best, some interesting times ahead

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