

Last month I told you that there were plans afoot for Devolution and County had been accepted into the Government's priority group. Some have questioned why we would want to be in a priority group and the answer is simple.

When the white paper came out just before Christmas it made it clear that the Government wanted 6 priority Councils with a Mayor and when this was set up more finance would be with the Mayor of a new Strategic Authority for the infrastructure in the County plus when this was done local Government areas not applying to be Strategic Authorities would have them made for them so County thought and I supported this that it was better to make our own decisions on the size and structure of a Strategic Authority than have it done to us hence the Leaders and Chief Executives made the Plans and sent them in to Government which were then accepted by the Government. I have nothing to add about Unitaries at the moment except to say that all the local Government authorities in Sussex are working together to try and find a solution as to how the Unitary Authorities will be set up. This is ongoing so maybe I will have more information next month.

It is good to see that all the West Sussex Schools that have gone through recent OFSTED have been judged Good. This is an excellent result and I know with my 6 Primary Schools that despite a desperate need for cash and trying to make ongoing improvements to their properties they are still able to impress OFSTED.

One of my Primary Schools Petworth has the most amazing small Farm with Goats, Sheep, Chicken and other things that the children get involved with. All 6 Schools are Forest Schools so all pupils get to know something about nature. Proud to have such fine Schools in the division that I represent.

Fire and Rescue continues to improve and at the recent Scrutiny committee that I sit on the 30 measures that we are judged on 26 were Green, 2 were Amber and 2 Red. The Amber ones were very close to being Green one at 99.7% and the other at 97.7% of what is expected.

There is one Red which I am at a loss to see how we can improve and that one is for retained Firefighters. Each month I ask that anyone who is interested in becoming a retained Firefighter makes contact with the Service on line. If you get through all the training you not only have the right to be proud of yourselves but you will be joining an organisation that cares, trains and looks after those involved in the Service. It is quite tough at times but there's lots of help for all.

The other County Service that does well is Trading Standards and recently apart from illegal cigarettes etc they have successfully taken to Court and won the case of a rogue builder and they have had to pay a considerable fine of I think some £53,000 plus. They do some excellent work with Scamming and illegal trading and are well worth a mention.

Highways are always the top of my postbag. It seems when people see a pothole that nothing is improving. I can assure you that it is and with Spring and hopefully better weather our wonderful Patching machines can get back to full working capacity. They do a great job and don't just fill a pothole but a whole patch in the highway. Nothing will ever be perfect but things have improved with many reported potholes etc being sorted within 3 to 5 days.

I would be happy to know and attend if possible any VE day celebrations that Parish's are putting on.

As ever you can contact me on janet.dunton@westsussex.gov.uk. or my mobile
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Take care

Janet

County Councillor, Petworth division