

### **WSSC December Report- Janet Duncton CC**

Were well into winter and Parish/Towns all have their winter plans in place as do the County Council. The gritters have already been deployed in November and every Service is prepared for the horrendous winds that we are experiencing.

I sincerely hope that your area is as safe as we can be. The older you get the more I think I dislike the winter but it's always around and we just have to see it through and wait for what we hope will be a great Spring and Summer. Well you have to be positive don't you and after all we have Christmas and the New Year for some fun.

Personally I always feel better when there's a blue sky and the Sun shines through. It just helps. Enough of that, our lives have to go on and they will with the County Council doing the best it can to help.

Good or bad weather we still deliver the Services that the community need and not least the Fire and Rescue Service which I can assure you is the best it's ever been and that isn't me telling you this it's His Majesties Inspectorate telling us the Service is in good shape. On the charts we use in committee to check all the Services they provide there are only a couple that still come up Red. One of these is a problem that as yet we haven't been able to solve which is retained Firefighters. I can only say once more, if you know of any person in your community that could be interested in being a retained Firefighter please encourage them to go to the web site and see what it entails. It's sometimes tough but other times very rewarding.

The other area we need to be constantly aware is our home safety visits. Pretty much under control but with the Counties ambition to let as many as want to stay in their own homes during their later years and believe me many would like that option, it means that more in depth safety issues need checking in residents own homes. It's an excellent Service though.

Over the last 4 or 5 years we have put a lot into our Childrens Services as I have said many times before and now it is paying us all back by being what I would call an excellent Service although of course it will be important to see what OFSTED call it when they come to inspect which could be January/February time. What I do know with confidence is that it is improved out of recognition over the last few years and that's so important as it is our responsibility to look after children in Care up to the age of 25.

I should also mention that State Schools whether maintained or Academies are doing well across the County. You can't relax I know but it's encouraging to know that we seem to be in the right direction.

Highways as ever need constant attention and although I've said it before it's worth saying again that the Patching machines we use when faults appear on the highways are by far the best method yet for making the roads good. They really do a great job and although I can't give an accurate account of where they are I do know that in some situations we can't use these wonderful machines and I think it's mainly on some of our smaller Country roads which is a shame. That said I have to say that the Highways Steward in my division is pretty good at getting out to look at issues on the roads when I report them. Things are never perfect, but we do try.

The other issue we are grappling with at the moment is of course the Budget for 2005/6. It hasn't helped with the announcement of employer's contributions to National Insurance. This will need several millions to be found on top of what we are already struggling with in the Budget. However as ever I am sure we will have a balanced budget to present to the February Council meeting.

Do take care during this period of very unsettled weather with wind and rain and please let me know if you need some County assistance. I will always follow it up.

A quick word re South Downs National Park. Our new Chief Executive is now with us and of course has hit the ground running. He's got a big job, but I have every confidence that he will be up to it. We are very busy at the South Downs NP as ever and my personal involvement is mainly with the Planning side of the NP which takes me to parts of Sussex that I really didn't know too much about but not only Sussex of course but Hampshire as well. It keeps me constantly busy but very interesting work.

As the County rep on South Down NP authority, I also sit on the Trust which although set up by the NP is an arms length organisation set up to raise funds for use on the NP purposes. At the moment there is a Grant for litter picking which can be applied for by PC & TC as well as individuals who are keeping the litter picked. Individuals can put forward a case for buying equipment for this purpose but a Parish or Town Council in the Park can apply for a slightly bigger budget if required. I think this is a great initiative as it still beggars belief the amount of litter people think it's fine to drop everywhere especially on road verges. Please apply if you have a problem but look at the Trust pages on the web not the SDNP.

If you need to contact me it's

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