

I'm afraid that once again there are not a lot of local issues but all very general regarding County Council business

Not least among these are the budget for 25/26.

We have had another workshop on the 25th October not so much to put our ideas forward but to listen and hopefully learn from the heads of departments and the Cabinet member for Finance and the Council Leader.

These are informative sessions for Councillors and on the whole very little that is for passing to the residents at the moment.

I've said it before and it's even more relevant at the moment it does not get any easier trying to make a balanced budget and keep the Services going many of which you know are Statutory and we have to produce in one way and another.

Well at the end of the session it does seem that the coming year we have or will have succeeded in balancing the books and not cutting Services but and it's a big but as yet we as back benchers don't know the cost of the new Employers NI contributions and what we do know is that it will cost us millions and

we await to hear if Government money will come along to cover the extra expense. As ever we are all kept in suspense until, usually just before the Christmas break. We shall see.

On happier notes if I haven't said before I will now, our Childrens Services go from strength to strength and when we have the final OFSTED I will let you know but it will probably be in the press before I write. It's looking good and as all Councillors are Corporate Parents it's very important to us that we succeed in looking after the young people of West Sussex as best we can.

I think I told you last month that our Fire Service had a very good HMI report where one of the only things we are behind on is recruiting our retained Fire & Rescue Staff.

If you know any young (ish) people who would be interested of any diverse range of people women as well as men please point them in the direction of the Fire & Rescue website.

Trading Standards have as ever been busy and in past reports I have told you how well they are doing with illicit products including illicit cigarettes and bringing the cases to Court also of course some who have been taking money for work that they should have done especially on peoples houses and not done the work or in some cases done it badly and taken large amounts of money. Trading Standards do catch up with them eventually.

I think most Parish's now have a winter Plan in place should we get adverse weather conditions which you never know so I am hoping that if bad weather including Snow and Ice occurs we are as prepared as we can be in our Parish's and the Highways generally. You just cannot predict what may come along but where as ready as can be.

SEND education has been a major issue in recent years and we are doing all we can including building new premises to cope with the numbers. There is another piece of fear that may or may not happen and that is if parents who's children were going into Private education and now with the VAT feel they can't do it and want places in State School we could, if this happens find ourselves with a shortage of places and this could especially affect SEND children. However that's jumping the gun somewhat as it hasn't happened as yet so it's watch this space.

At the other end of the age range West Sussex has one of the larger sections of self paying residents in care homes. Of course this concern is that when their money runs short they will then have to turn to County for their care.

In the meantime we are helping all we can to enable what the majority want and that is to stay in their own homes. You know from previous comments that the Fire & Rescue Service do a great many visits to peoples home giving advice on how to keep safe in their homes etc. There is more that can help to keep people in their own homes and it is best to contact the Adults Service department at County to see what help they can get.

As ever if you need to contact me it's janet.dunton@westsussex.gov.uk or my mobile 07979152898.

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