

WSCC J Duncton April 25 Report:

There hasn't been much to report that you will not have picked up.

Perhaps because of all the devolution talk and yes, I know I have said before but this is as I know it at the moment.

You will know Government cancelled the County elections due to be held on the 1st May. This means that I am your County Councillor for at least one more year until April 2026. I say at least because everything is all in the air and there is a possibility that members like me that will not be standing for the Mayoral authority could be in situ until April 2028 when as I've said before County, District and Borough Councils disappear and the Strategic Mayoral authority takes over together with the new Unitary authorities.

The latest that I have heard is that the Unitary elections will be in 2028 and discussions are going on between all the Sussex Councils regarding who will join with who etc and latest is that there will be 2 Unitary authorities for Sussex but, as I've said discussions are taking place as to how this will be divided and as ever some Councils are not cooperating should I say.

Crawley has been talking to Surrey in places like Reigate to see if they can join Surrey which in truth the majority don't want but for a reason all their own they have asked. I don't think it will happen because one of the first things the White Paper told us is that they don't want cross boundary and as a Sussex born and bred person with relatives that have been in and around Crawley I think it's a silly idea as well. Pretty sure the Government will not want this and actually Surrey have already put in their Unitary authority bid and it does not include Crawley. Brighton and Hove as you know are already a Unitary but if the Government guidance is followed it is much too small for a stand alone Unitary. However, Brighton are looking at the option and sadly I don't know of a Council including Worthing which is Labour controlled that want to join up with Brighton so again it's watch this space. As you can imagine there is a lot of 'playing Politics' going on.

I don't think it will be very long before the Government make their decisions so we shall see.

One more point and that's regarding the new Mayoral authority. It is expected that this will consist of 7 members, 2 from each of the County Councils and Brighton and Hove. Plus of course including the Mayor. There is a proviso on this and that is if Brighton do get their go it alone scheme they will still be part of the Mayoral Strategic authority for the whole of Sussex and the wish to stay as a Unitary and take some or other of the neighbouring authorities it would be in that scenario that Brighton only have one member on the Pan Sussex authority.

As you can tell it's a complicated situation at the moment and I hope I have explained as well as I can. Please feel free to ask if you have some queries on it.

County Councillors are all Corporate Parents and as such we hope to keep all our children safe. There is as you will know quite a number of your people and as young as 7 and upwards questioning their gender. I don't intend to say more about this here but we passed a motion and asked the Leader of Council and Cabinet member for children and education to write to the Secretary of State asking that a review known as the Cass review be implemented in full as soon as possible.

If you would like to know more about this you can find Dr Cass review online but I do warn you that it is nearly 300 pages long so is not a quick read.

You know the Library Service in West Sussex is celebrating 100 years. The Libraries are having their own celebratory tea parties and if anyone would like to go along on the afternoon of the 16th May they will be welcomed in Petworth Library.

Other County matters are all being fulfilled with the normal requests for highways issues being a very regular email send for me and I guess every other County Councillor. I know individuals and Parish Councils play their part as well so thank you for that.

Sorry I can't make this evening.

Janet

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