

WSSC Report March 2024

Just a few updates from previous months.

You will be glad to hear it's not about the budget except to say that we have a balanced budget for 24/25 and I mention this because a resident wrote to me concerned to know if West Sussex was in debt like so many Councils at the moment. I am happy to say we are not. We have a balanced budget and we have not cut any of our Services plus some welcome extra money came from central Government just a couple of weeks before we settled the Budget and that meant that nothing had to be taken from our reserves which we were only considering for items that we know we would be able to replenish the reserves in fairly short order. Of course the next budget is already being worked on between Cabinet members and the Financial Officers.

Not sure if I said this last time but you all know Becky Shaw is returning full time to East Sussex so we are already in the process of finding a new Chief Executive but on top of that the Director of Finance who has been absolutely brilliant for this past budget is off to pastures new in one of the London Boroughs. Lots of discussions were held but although the borough she is going to does not have such a big budget as us they were offering more salary than we could think of doing. Such is the way of things I'm afraid.

It's a bit the same with other parts of Councils whether it's WSSC, CDC or SDNP, some Services like Planning and Highways for instance everyone is after the best Officers. However that's for us to deal with and we do.

Recently we had OFSTED in for our SEND department and on the whole they appreciated what strides we have made in this Service but there are still delays in getting children tested through the CAMS system and it's up to us to find the appropriate amount of spaces in Schools and special Schools for these children to give them the best start we possibly can.

A few years ago now we had our first HMI for the Fire & Rescue Service and as ever there were some items that needed to be improved. One of these was the visits to residents in their own homes to go through any safety issues there may be. We were quite behind with things like this but I am happy to say that we are now absolutely up to speed with this Service and also with our response times. We always have up and downs with response times depending on Crew being available and indeed vehicles blocking roadways etc but things have improved over the years and we can now confidently predict that we are as good as any other F&R service in the Country but you can never relax on this and not wishing to tempt fate but we have not had a Fire death for some considerable time and long may that continue.

On the same subject if you know anyone that would like to try for becoming a retained Fireman please tell them to have a go. It is one route into eventually becoming part of the full time Fire and Rescue Service if they have ambitions in that direction.

Please be assured that I report all road problems as I am informed of them or I see them for myself but it's a struggle to get them done in the appropriate time at the moment. I am trying.

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