

Report from County & District Councillor Janet Duncton

Meeting – 08.03.2023

You will all know by now that County Council have set their budget and the Council Tax increase for County is 4.99%. The County Services part of this is 2.99% and the 2% is ring fenced for Adult Services. You no sooner finish one budget than you start the next, but for this year at least we have managed to balance the budget without losing any of our Services.

I know I have told you about the special needs School we are building called Woodlands Mead College; well, a topping out ceremony was held last week so we're getting there. This will be a wonderful facility for a large number of special needs pupils in West Sussex.

There still seems no end in sight for water neutrality in this part of the World. This puts a huge delay on any development. Horsham District Council is taking the lead on this with Southern Water. Talking of Southern Water, I am still trying to get a date when some of the Parishes can put some questions to Southern Water especially about flooding issues. As soon as I have some dates I will get them out to the Clerks.

As you can well imagine, as if it wasn't bad enough trying to keep up with potholes, they have got considerably worse since the first of all the excessive rainfall and then the intense cold. However, I do all I can to report potholes and report all I see and those reported to me. Once accepted as needing attention they hope to get them done within 28 days. I can't pretend that this isn't a struggle at the moment, but I am assured that the patching machine will be back in action again this Spring and this does do a wonderful job.

At the moment there are several large Planning issues especially in the northern part of the District. These create a lot of work and often take some time to get answers. I know that at the moment it is difficult getting qualified Planning Officers and so many Councils are after the same people. Everyone is trying to get a full compliment in their Planning departments, and it is on occasion delaying things.

I know that some Parishes have been having a problem with some Social Housing properties and the possibility that the residents have mould. The Cabinet member and Leader have been in talks with the Housing providers and Government departments and the situation is being taken very seriously. I believe the Government have now said it must be dealt with and although Chichester doesn't own the housing stock it will be making sure that the providers deal with this problem. It is unacceptable if the residence is unfit due to mould.

The new Fire Station and Training Centre at Broadbridge Heath is nearly ready now and I will let you know when it is proposed to be up and running. On the same theme, always looking for recruits to

either be retained Fireman or full time Fireman - so if you know of anyone who would like to try and apply, please encourage them to get in touch with West Sussex Fire and Rescue.

I wish I could give you better news on the A29 at Pulborough. As you know the heavy rain, a couple of months ago, brought down the banks on both sides of the road. I am not in any position to give you a timescale, but I do believe it is not going to be a quick fix. If I hear anything that would mean action was happening, I would let your Clerks know.

As yet we do not know when OFSTED will turn up to do the big inspection on our Children's Services, but we are expecting it to be quite early this year. The good news is things are still improving; but we're not there yet, so the inspection will be good so that we will know exactly what we have left to do.

As ever please feel free to contact me at either of my County or District addresses or mobile.

Janet Duncton

County Councillor Petworth division

Chichester District Councillor Loxwood ward