

Good morning,

Some 3 to 4 years ago we had a wakeup call from OFSTED that we were not performing as we should be for our Children's Services. This caused quite a shakeup at the time and that has worked in our favour together with working closely with the Commissioner that was tasked to guide us, John Macoughlin Chief Executive of Hampshire County Council. On top of the new Leader put in, a new Cabinet member, Jacque Russell and my goodness what a choice this was. She has worked with the Commissioner and anyone else that we need input from, this also included new Social workers who willingly trained in what we needed to achieve, a new Director of Children's Services and I can't praise her work enough. Together, as a team, they have achieved what I believe is the only County/Unitary Council in the Country has struggled to achieve when they also have had Children's Services in special needs. The achievement is that OFSTED has decided on advice from our Commissioner that West Sussex Children's Services has improved to the extent that they will not be taken to Trust status which is excellent news. If you go to Trust status you lose control, but you still pay for the Service. Something everyone can be proud of but believe me we still have work to do and we will not stop improving. By the next report to you I should possibly know what the outcome is of our next OFSTED inspection, and all are feeling hopeful but of course knowing it isn't the end of the road.

As County Councillor I have been pushing hard for my Parish's to get the road improvements many want, mainly in surfacing and of course the never-ending Potholes. It is rather like treading in treacle but slowly, slowly I do get some achievements and I won't stop pushing.

I think I can now boast that all the 6 Primary Schools in my division have achieved Good from their OFSTED report. Now some may say only good, believe me the rules changed somewhat and to get Good is a very high standard nowadays.

The Fire & Rescue Service is about to build its new Fire Station at Broadbridge Heath for Horsham. This new facility will not only become a fantastic Station for West Sussex but it will include training facilities that can be hired by any other Fire and Rescue service from anyone who wants or needs it.

Trading Standards have had a busy time not only trying to make people aware of Scams etc but finding the stores who have illicit tabaco products for sale, usually well-hidden but sniffer dogs find the bounty and we have had several prosecutions.

I need to also mention with regards to Fire & Rescue some 3 years ago when her Majesty's Inspectorate judged that we need improvements, it wasn't for the way Fire or Road accidents were dealt with, it was because we were way behind with our community work mainly in visiting vulnerable people and advising on what could be done to help them in their own homes. I am glad to say this is now caught up with virtually no outstanding community work. Another fine achievement.

My report may appear glowing and yes, I am telling you the good things. On the other hand we have a continuous stream of work in one Service or the other, if we didn't I wouldn't be able to tell you how much it has improved, but, we are aware that some things, like the famous Potholes take longer than others and please be assured that our Scrutiny Committees look at these things in depth and make recommendations to the Cabinet and sometimes those decisions have to go to full Council. You can never stand still.

At last week's County Council (1<sup>st</sup> April), we passed the West Sussex Transport Plan 2022 to 2026. There are some good intentions in this plan, but I want to see them become fact. I did make a please for Services in the Rural villages, but we shall have to see on that one.

Lastly but not least. I must make mention of the Ukraine situation.

You cannot believe the community work that is taking place right now to try and alleviate some of the plight of the Ukraine refugees. This is before any Government directive which will come but so that you know so many are working all hours so hard to raise items wanted for Ukraine refugees and many are already offering accommodation when we know the numbers we are asked to take. Some are already here because of relatives, and I know the gentleman who has worked tirelessly with us all doing our bit for the Petworth Refugee support on Facebook. Of course, financial contributions are welcome but at the Petworth collection point in some Barns between Lodsworth and Lurgashall you have to see to believe the generosity of people from as far away as Dorking and Eastbourne with more local residents giving up their time to sort, pack and label the boxes which we eventually load into lorries 5 so far and counting. It won't stop for some time yet I fear. Should anyone want to offer accommodation the e-mail at County is [Ukrainesupport@westsussex.gov.uk](mailto:Ukrainesupport@westsussex.gov.uk). I thank all now who have put in so much time and effort and that includes some big stores who have sent brand new clothing so that when the refugees arrive they can go to the Barns and choose what they need.

Take Care and thank you

Janet Duncton

County Councillor Petworth division

Chichester District Councillor Loxwood ward