**County Councillor Report from Cllr Janet Duncton, WSCC**

As I write this we are getting an awful lot of flooding along the West Sussex Coast.  Last night at Earnley 180 people were evacuated, Littlehampton 15 evacuated and Bracklesham 20.  Only one resident ended up in Hospital with suspected hypothermia.

Could it get much wetter.  I think one of the main problems now is that the ground is soaked so even if the rainfall isn’t that heavy it has very little space to drain down.  I know on our Farm it is impossible at the moment to do any Tractor work.  We can only hope that we soon get some respite from this dreadful weather.

I am reporting all Highways issues as I know about them either from members of the Public, Parish/Town Councils or ones that I see myself.  The normal time scale for getting these works done has completely gone I’m afraid and at the moment I don’t see timescales for the jobs on Highways improving.

As a County Councillor I have asked that they look seriously and getting the current Highways in good condition before committing to new projects and I include in that Cycle ways.  Not sure anyone is listening but I keep trying.  Probably not the most popular Councillor there at the moment but that’s not what’s important to me.

On the same theme I have noticed that some work has taken place on verge cutting.  I can’t get to the bottom of this as to whether it’s part of County contract or a resident just doing so work which actually is not allowed.  That said what I have seen is some pretty poor verges that begin to look like ploughed fields because they were just so wet and soft when they were cut.

On a brighter note recent OFSTED inspections on our Childrens homes have been great with 2 judged outstanding which is very hard to come by and the other 4 is good.  We still have work to do in our Childrens Services but gradually getting there.

You will have noticed on your Council Tax bill notes that Childrens Services and Adult Services take the bulk of our finance and it has to be admitted that they are the 2 most important issues for the County but where does it leave us with the other important issues.  They all have to be delivered and I am pleased to say that this year we have balanced the budget without cutting our Services and despite the state of the roads more and more millions are going in to that part of the budget.

You probably all saw that we have a new Chief Executive who can of course join us for another couple of months yet as he has to work out his notice as deputy Chief Executive Surrey County Council.

His name is Leigh Whitehouse and until he can join us Becky Shaw will stay with us and then return full time to East Sussex County Council.

As ever please feel free to contact me at either of my County or District addresses or mobile 07979152898.

Janet Duncton

County Councillor Petworth division

Chichester District Councillor Loxwood ward

**District Councillor Report from Cllr John Cross, Chichester District Council –**

Spring has arrived, my favourite time of the year, that vivid lime colour on the trees and hedge leaves. So vibrant, and short lived. Spring is a renaissance, a renewal, a rebirth, everything comes back to life, and we are very fortunate to live in a National Park where there is great effort being put into protecting the landscape. So, for this edition, I thought Id concentrate on what the South Downs National Park is doing to help biodiversity and enhancing the landscape.

As one of my Chichester District Council roles I represent CDC on the South Downs National Park Authority and last week we had one of general meetings where the work of the South Downs National Park Trust was discussed and reviewed. The trust is the charitable arm of the Park and give money to help achieve the aims and objectives of the National Park. For example, obtaining Green Finance for securing 324 hectares of land for nature, restoring 10 ponds, restoring 8.36km of hedging, planting 31 thousand trees (16,000 for the Downs). I can go on and on about the work this Trust is achieving to improve the National Park.

Clearly, this is not all about the ploughing money into flora and fauna, much of the 1.4m that the Trust raises each year is used to engage communities in and around the Park. Over 40% of that funding is spent on engaging communities and improving their experience. This funding is focussed on improving walking and cycle access, for example near us the Centurion walk is now nearing completion of a new 6km route from East Dean to Cocking. The hope is to continue the Centurion Way all the way to Midhurst, opening a new pedestrian and cycle route from Chichester to Midhurst. Other projects include working with schools on various mini conservation grants and initiatives to support youth volunteering. If you want to help, young or old the Rangers of the Park are always needing extra hands. Finally, I wanted to give a ‘Shout Out’ for the Sustainable Communities and Volunteer Fund. This fund gives support and funding to community led projects that promote the aims of the park in enhancing and protecting the landscape. One such project in this Ward, Botany Bay Conservancy Community Interest Group, in Graffham, has received funding to ecologically restore a meadow and for tree planting projects too.

I hope this has been helpful, there are funding sources that can help your community if it coincides with the aims of the South Downs National Park.

John Cross

Fittleworth Ward