

Itchingfield Parish Council 20th July 2026

County Councillor's report

County wide matters

At the first regular meeting of the Council, LibDems and Greens proposed a motion aimed at persuading the Government to review the funding formula for Education in West Sussex. Despite the introduction of the National Funding Formula in 2018, West Sussex remains among the lowest-funded local authorities in England for both primary and secondary school funding. The motion also highlighted concerns that current funding arrangements do not adequately reflect the county's labour market and housing costs, creating additional challenges for schools in recruiting and retaining staff.

The motion follows a letter sent by headteachers from across West Sussex to the county's Members of Parliament in May 2026, expressing what they described as their "profound and growing concern regarding the chronic underfunding of our schools". This was passed unanimously.

A further motion put forward by the Reform Group, which sought to restrict subjects that can be discussed at Council, beyond the rules that already exist, was voted down.

My Council roles

I reported last time that I had been appointed to the Performance & Finance Scrutiny committee. I have been elected Chair of the committee and will use this position to hold the administration to close account.

Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution

The Government's programme of devolution and local government reorganisation continues to progress. The Combined County Authority (West and East Sussex and Brighton) is now in place, albeit that elections for the Mayor to lead it won't take place until May 2028. In the meantime the CCA is led by a board made up of leaders and deputies from the three authorities, with a rotating chair.

Alongside this the Government's proposals to replace two tier authorities with a single Unitary is scheduled to take effect in April 2028 with elections for a 'shadow authority' next May. We were expecting a decision from the Government last week on the geographical split in West Sussex for the expected two unitaries, however they announced that the decision would be delayed until October. This is deeply disappointing.

Local Engagement

Following my reports to Highways on the state of the road surface in Emms Lane, remedial work has been scheduled for the beginning of September.

If you would like to raise any local (or other) issues with me, please do so.

Mark Baynham, County Councillor for Billingshurst Division

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