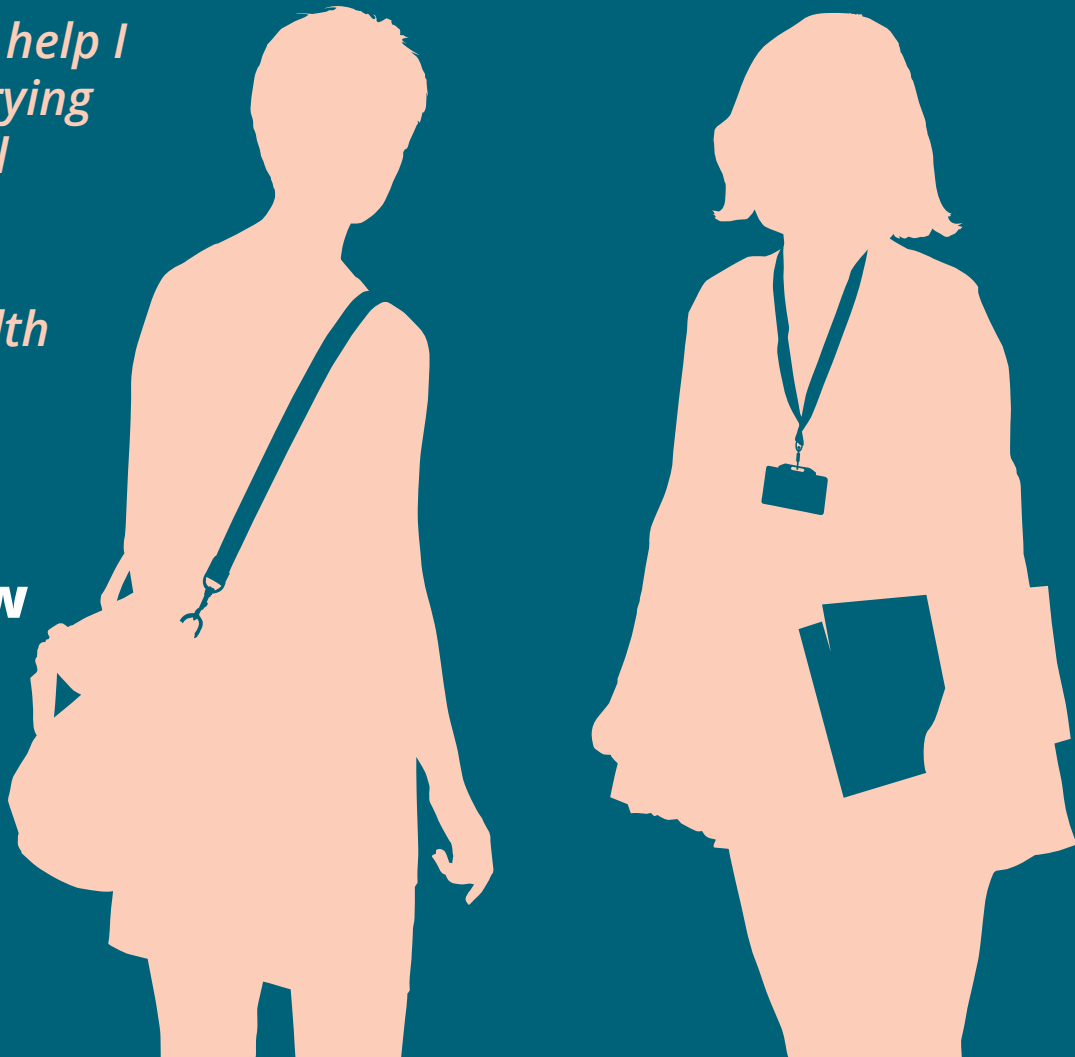


*As a result of your help I  
am no longer worrying  
about my financial  
situation, so I can  
concentrate on  
improving my health  
and getting back  
to work ...*

## **Annual Review 2016-17**

**citizens  
advice**

**Rushmoor**





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Welcome to this annual review, outlining the many achievements of Citizens Advice Rushmoor in 2016/17. I am proud to be part of the work that Alex and her team have delivered, helping local residents at critical times in their lives.

Our Pension Wise team has seen a huge rise in the demand for guidance; whilst our work in mental health, and Nepali language services, continues to support the most vulnerable members of our community.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped to fund our work, in particular, the unfailing support from Rushmoor Borough Council at the core of our service.

I hope that you will find this report helpful in understanding the vital work the service provides.

# *Mark Chatterton*

## **Chair's foreword**

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This has been another successful year for Citizens Advice Rushmoor, as we continue to develop our service to meet changing needs. Top of the agenda is welfare reform, as our volunteers and caseworkers support vulnerable clients with nowhere else to turn.

Our light touch interventions, face-to-face, by phone and online, enables early access to our service to prevent future crises. Tailoring our service to different needs enables a full range of support to be given; including specialist casework, to achieve resolution for very vulnerable individuals. Our positive impact on health and wellbeing is shown on page 11.

Our implementation of “ASK Routine Enquiry” during 2016/17 is part of a new initiative to prevent harm from domestic abuse. Building on known links between financial and domestic abuse, we aim to enable victims to disclose domestic abuse in a sensitive and safe environment – and link to appropriate services.

Demand for our Nepali Language Drop-in increased by nearly 20% in 2016/17, responding to over 1,675 issues, enabling quick resolution on day to day issues, alongside weekly briefings which contribute to overall community cohesion.

Our Pension Wise service goes from strength to strength, providing expert guidance on pension options across Hampshire, Surrey, Berkshire and West Sussex.

The roll out of Universal Credit will dominate the coming year, where our unique combination of evidence and experience helps inform and influence to prevent problems at source, harnessing the strength of our national network.

All of this works to deliver a strong and flexible service, adapting to constantly changing needs.

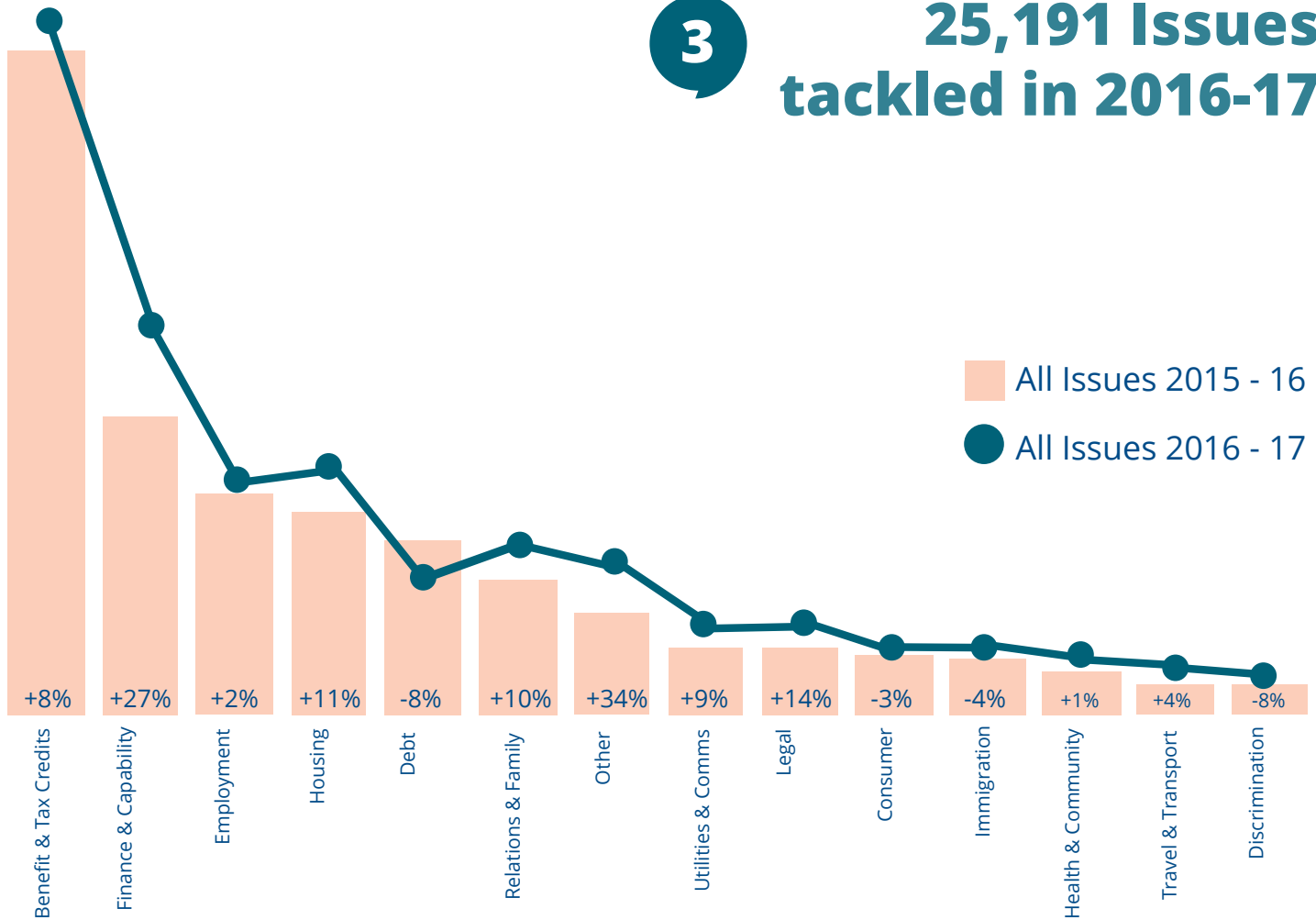
# *Alex Hughes*

**Chief Officer**

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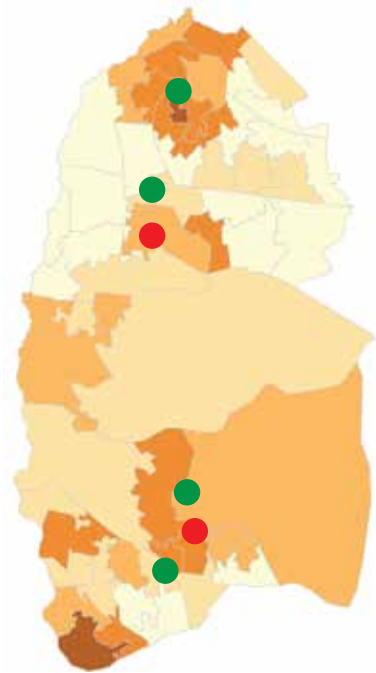
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# 25,191 Issues tackled in 2016-17



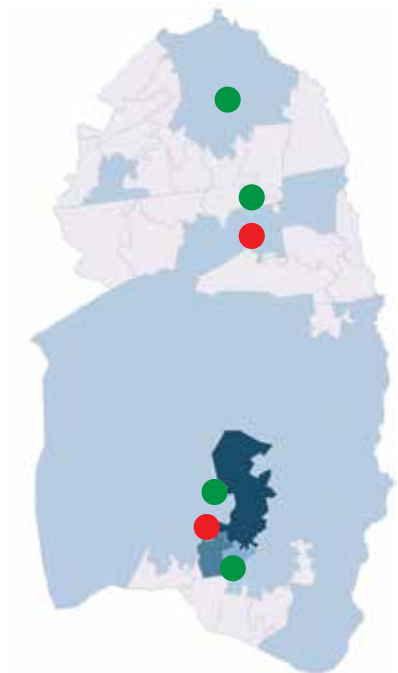
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*We're here to help everyone who needs us, but we also support people most in need.*



**Citizens Advice reach 4.4% of any local population; this rises to 9% in areas of deprivation.**

- Outreach
- Main office



● Least deprived to ● most deprived\*    ● Low client to ● high client numbers

\*IMD 2015

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**Partnership and outreach:** Our work with The Brain Tumour Charity and Prospect Estate Big Local (PEBL), has gone from strength to strength, growing our ability to reach those who most need us.

Our Wellbeing Centre outreach, funded by Broadhurst Trust, enables clients with mild to moderate mental health issues to access our service more easily, and prevent escalation of problems. This dovetails with our Heathlands service for those with more severe mental health issues, delivered with the CMHRS in Aldershot and Frimley; and the in-patient unit at Farnham Road.

Working in partnership with others is critical to getting the right solution for our clients. With our Multi-Agency Advice Partnership (MAP) planned for 2017/18 we anticipate further successful developments to help more people.

#### **PEBL debt case study:**

Len is disabled, and moved in with his partner Jess and her two teenage children, just before their baby was born. All the household's benefits stopped after that, and Len didn't know which way to turn. Their rent was already £100 above the benefit limit, and they were at risk of homelessness.

We helped them to work out a plan, prioritise, and update their Tax Credits claim as a couple; then looked at how they could manage their household income together. Len felt much better for being back in control, and knowing how to put things right.

#### **Mental Health case study:**

Tom has some mental health issues, so wondered if he could claim Personal Independence Payment. We explained the criteria and helped him complete a claim, leading to an award of £55.65 pw. As Tom lives alone, we identified other increases he was due, so he ended up more than doubling his previous income to £118.35 pw.

He told us that, as a result of our help his mental health has improved significantly, because he is no longer worried about his financial situation. Tom says he can now concentrate on improving his health and returning to work.



On average, volunteers gave **605** hours per week to supporting local people



The estimated value of our volunteers' contribution to our work was **£528,532**

Our 100 strong volunteer team delivers nearly all our frontline service, benefiting not only our clients, but also bringing wider benefits to the community, including:

- Gaining at least one additional practical skill through volunteering
- 9 in 10 gain an increased sense of purpose and self esteem
- 8 in 10 of our unemployed volunteers believe they are overcoming barriers to employment
- Over half our retired volunteers feel less at risk of social isolation
- 9 in 10 volunteers feel more engaged with the community

Our supervision and training enables all our volunteers to progress, delivering services from webchat and telephone advice to complex casework.

Research and campaigns volunteers bring some great academic skills, to benefit wider service development.

The commitment of our volunteers as active local residents, creates an important link between our service and a deeper engagement with community needs.

A key important additional group of volunteers are our Trustees, who are held to account at our AGM each year, ensuring independence and good governance.

None of this would be possible without the mainstay of our paid specialists, management, and business support, enabling this unique service to be provided to local residents.



All our volunteers contribute something special to the team; their diversity is their strength, reflected below:

- Our youngest volunteers are 16 with 18% being under 25
- Our oldest volunteers are over 80 and 18% are over 65
- Some volunteers have been with us over 30 years
- Other volunteers stay for just a 2 week placement
- 30% of our volunteers are from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds
- 4% of our volunteers have disabilities



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## Trustees

Mr Mark Chatterton (Chair)

Mrs Donna Bone

Mrs Anne Fillis

Mrs Janet Field

Mr Charlie Fraser Fleming

Mr Ricky Hanshew

Cllr Mrs Barbara Hurst (Vice Chair)

Mr John Kelly (Treasurer)

Mr Rudra Khadka

Mr William Miller

Mr Richard Robinson

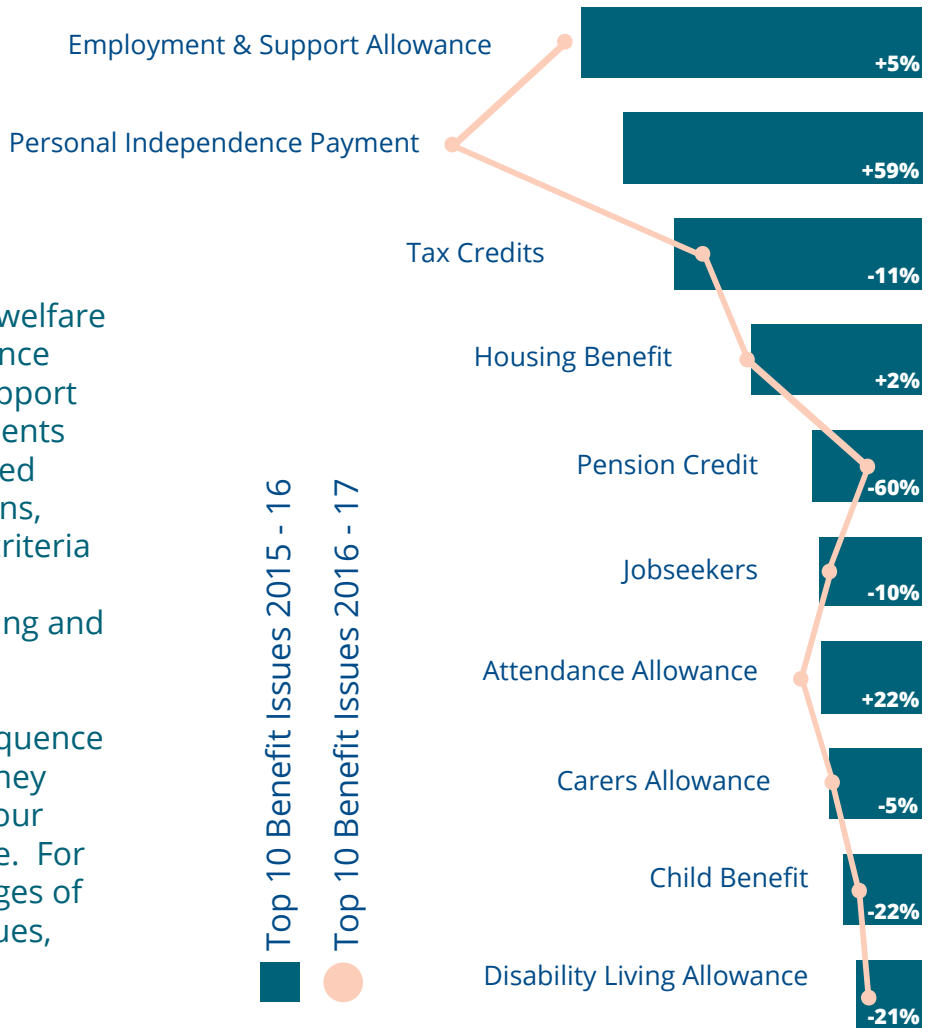
Cllr Frank Rust

8

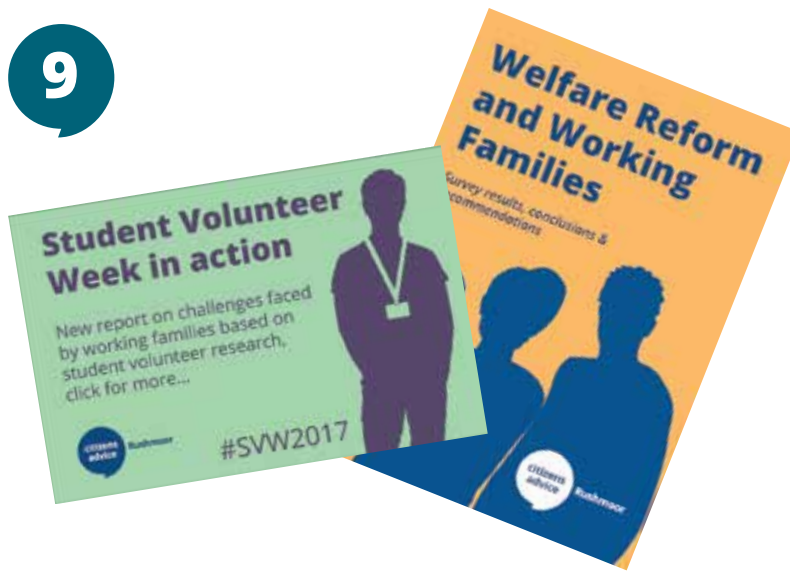
## Advice trends

Our biggest area of work remains welfare benefits, with Personal Independence Payment and Employment and Support Allowance at the top of the list. Clients who have had their benefits stopped need help with challenging decisions, working through complex sets of criteria and appeal processes; all of which require a high level of understanding and skill from our staff.

Related to this is the severe consequence of stopped benefits on clients' money and housing issues - areas where our joined up service proves invaluable. For clients already facing daily challenges of disability and long-term health issues, our help is often critical.



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Using our experience and data wisely, helps to inform and influence policy, to prevent problems, and improve things for everyone.

Our Working Families and Welfare Reform report shines a spotlight on the experience of over 100 local working people, and the impact that planned reductions in tax credits and benefits will have on their lives. Through sharing our findings widely, we are helping to progress improvements in local services, informing thinking within a wide range of agencies, as well as influencing national policy.



We make regular appearances in local shopping centres, raising awareness on issues ranging from scams to energy use, reaching people who might otherwise not access our help.

Working with partners, giving talks and sharing insights into clients' experience, has tangible benefits in shaping services to best meet local needs.

## Research & campaigns

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# Our value to society in 2016/17

In 2016/17, for every £1 invested in Citizens Advice Rushmoor by our local authority we generated at least:



£

**£2.72**

in fiscal benefits  
**Savings to government**  
Reduction in health service demand, local authority homeless services, and out of work benefits for our clients and volunteers.

**£17.56**

in public value  
**Wider economic and social benefits**  
Improvements in participation and productivity for clients and volunteers.

**£13.85**

in benefits to individuals  
**Value to our clients**  
Income gained through benefits gained, debts written off and consumer problems resolved.

To find out more about how we've modelled our financial value, see our full technical annex: [Modelling our value to society in 2016/17](#).

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**1177** clients gain a new award or an increase to their benefit worth a total of **£7,265,101**, an average of **£6,170** per client



**626** clients with debt issues 75% of which were resolved including **£1,187,835** written off, an average of **£11,000** per client



**362** clients successfully claim one-off awards, or other outcomes, worth **£720,985**, an average of **£1,990**



**£9,721,189** improvements in health, well-being, participation and productivity for the **8516** clients we helped in 2015-16



**1120** clients with **2361** housing issues Including **79** possession orders, **60** actually homeless & **95** threatened by it



**£1,911,159** reduction in health service demand, local authority homeless and out-of-work benefits required

## We would like to thank:

**Rushmoor Borough Council**

**Pension Wise**

**Surrey Heath and NE Hants and Farnham CCGs**

**Broadhurst Trust**

**The Brain Tumour Charity**

**Prospect Estate Big Local**

**Citizens Advice Hampshire**

**The Royal British Legion**

## Who enabled us to deliver:

Our core, volunteer led service available to all Rushmoor residents – drop in, face to face, phone and email

Pension guidance sessions across Hampshire, Surrey, Berkshire and West Sussex

Specialist casework services for clients with severe and enduring mental health conditions, in-patient and CMHRS

Outreach services and support for clients with mild to moderate mental health conditions

Benefits surgery delivered by telephone to beneficiaries of the charity

Financial inclusion service for residents in PEBL area

Face to face advice and information as part of wider “health watchdog” service

Own language Domestic abuse service for Nepali residents

**RUSHMOOR**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL



*We would also like to thank all of the local solicitors who regularly volunteer their time and expertise free of charge to help our clients.*

*This service is ever more important as legal aid funding has virtually disappeared.*

**Free, confidential advice.  
Whoever you are.**

**We help people find a way forward with their  
problems and campaign on big issues when  
their voices need to be heard.**

**We value diversity, champion equality and  
challenge discrimination and harassment.  
We're here for everyone.**



**[citizensadvicerrushmoor.org.uk](https://citizensadvicerrushmoor.org.uk)**

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