

Chairman's message

For many years now, Citizens Advice has been valued member of the Local Community, supporting the local residents, using a number of different channels across a wide spectrum of issues some of which were simple and others much more multi-faceted.

The organisation has always been a valued member of the community with its services widely used but never so in such unprecedented and extraordinary conditions that prevailed in 2020-21. The Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown periods along with the other health control measures that were introduced, added a complexity to the delivery of our service and also the range of needs and support of the local people in the Arun and Chichester areas.

You will see from the information and detail contained within the rest of the report ,the amazing and herculean effort by the CEO and all of his team, staff and volunteers alike, to not only maintain our excellent service levels but also to exceed them and provide additional support to the local community, especially the most vulnerable, under the most challenging conditions Citizens Advice has ever faced.

The year started with a countrywide lockdown which meant that no face-to-face services could be provided with all offices and outreach facilities closed.

However, through innovation and determination, the staff and volunteers were organised via home working and access to our services were being provided via, telephone, internet, web chat, video calling and following strong safety assessment , home visiting for our most vulnerable residents resumed on a restricted basis.

The Community spirit, togetherness and determination between County and District Councils, GP surgeries, other partnering organisations and Citizens Advice to address the needs of the people of Arun and Chichester was exemplary and the relationship between these organisations was never so important to ensure that the people of the community continued to receive the support they required.

Every year our goal is to support the people of our region, identify areas where we can offer additional required support and to offer these services in a way that addresses fundament issues for our clients rather than just a single issue in itself. To undertake our role continually requires foresight from the CEO and his team supported by a strong and robust fiscal position. I am pleased to say that once again Luca, our CEO, and his management team have, in addition to providing the normal core services, managed to expand our range of services by securing the funding to deliver projects such as the Countywide telephone Energy Advice service, DWP Winter Grant and various other financial hardship schemes. All of this meant that once again the team managed to exceed our financial goals for 2020-21 and maintain our financial stability. Further details of this can be found in the Financial Managers report.

This report is my first as Chairman and it has been an absolute pleasure to be involved with such an efficient and professional organisation.

Over the year, despite the circumstances, we have managed to recruit a further 3 Trustees making 11 in total. This provides a diverse Trustee Board with a varied and encompassing skill set supporting the combined experience of all members. This will be essential as we continue to provide Governance and advice to the CEO as he and his team manage their way through the challenges of a Covid and post Covid world.



Hugh Finlay
Chairman