

Citizens Advice Southwest Surrey (CASWS)

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Citizens Advice Southwest Surrey (CASWS) is currently facing challenges in maintaining its services and office hours at its high street location due to budget constraints from its funders. This situation has been worsened by increased national insurance contributions for employers, adding further financial pressure on the charity.

CASWS generates income through charitable donations, grants, and funding from various organisations to provide its services. To enhance its funding, CASWS has strategically invested in paid for employees to provide services aimed at attracting business from organisations such as utility companies. The profits from these activities help support other services offered to citizens at no charge. The revenue is however insufficient and relied on charitable donations and grants.

Recent mergers have expanded the organisation's size, enabling it to apply for a broader range of work. However, the operational landscape remains challenging, and CASWS continues to rely heavily on its volunteers to sustain its core services.

The organisation's leased buildings are now being rationalised, leading to office closures and relocations. Additionally, some leases are nearing their end and cannot be renewed. This restructuring and the associated office moves have placed a strain on CASWS, which is eager to stabilise after a period of significant change.

Over the past year, Citizens Advice staff and volunteers have worked diligently to assist residents in Ash with various issues. The Ash office remains operational, providing support to clients both in person and remotely.

CASWS encounters a diverse range of client issues, particularly in Money Advice Casework, addressing concerns such as Housing Benefit, Personal Independence Payments, Employment Support Allowance, Working & Child Tax Credits, Council Tax arrears, and debts related to credit, store, and charge cards.

The support provided by Citizens Advice South West Surrey (CASWS) is made possible thanks to its volunteers. There are various volunteer roles available to match individual skills, availability, experience, and interests. CASWS is currently seeking additional volunteers, including Receptionists, Advice Assistants, Assessors, and Fundraising volunteers. The organisation is a respected advice network committed to improving the lives of people in the community. For more information, visit their website at <https://casws.org.uk>.

Cllr John Tonks

Ash Parish Council