

Dear Caroline

I am writing on behalf of Citizens Advice Tunbridge Wells & District (CATWD) to make my annual request that Benenden Parish Council considers making a further contribution towards our charity's work in the 2020/21 financial year.

After the highs of last year, when we celebrated our charity's eightieth birthday, this year has been exceptionally challenging, in so many ways, for the local people we support. Our team – staff and volunteers – is currently home-based and is overseeing an increase in demand for advice that continues to grow as the measures put in place to support people, such as the furlough scheme, the eviction ban and mortgage and rent holidays, are changed or come to an end.

Since lockdown, we've dealt with around a third more cases than usual, mostly employment and benefits cases, with many people seeking our help for the first time and a noticeably younger demographic. We urgently need to recruit and train more volunteers and build our staff team so that we can rise to the challenge of the tsunami of need for advice that we know is coming in the months and years ahead as the fallout of the pandemic continues to bite.

We're aware that Parish Councils are not generously funded but our service offers a lifeline across the borough and makes a material difference to many of your parishioners, particularly those who are least able to help themselves.

I attach a copy of our annual report for 2019/20 and an overview of the charity's work since March, which I hope you will find of interest. I am also attaching an invitation to our virtual AGM, which takes place this year on Wednesday 25 November at 6pm – we would love to see you there.

We're extremely grateful to have received support from the Council in the past and we would be delighted if you were able to support us again in the current financial year and enable us to ensure that local people have access to the free, impartial advice they need – this year more than ever before.

Thank you so much.
With very best wishes

Liz de Villiers

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