

**Outside body: Runnymede and Spelthorne Citizens Advice Bureau (CARS)
Councillor: Isabel Mullens**

Runnymede and Spelthorne Citizens Advice Bureau (CARS) aims to give people the knowledge and the confidence they need to find their way forward - whoever they are, and whatever their problem. They provide free, confidential, and impartial advice, and campaign on big issues affecting people's lives.

Over the past year Cit A has greatly increased the number of clients that they are seeing. In 2023-2024 for the two boroughs Runnymede and Spelthorne, CARS has supported a record 6462 clients, and at the end of the year had secured over £3 million financial outcomes for them. Over the year CARS has become more accessible to the public, increasing the percentage of phone calls that they respond to, and they have a regular presence at the foodbanks in the borough. The top two debt issues that they have dealt with this year are fuel debt and council tax arrears.

Over the year I've attended 4 meetings as a board member. A member from Spelthorne Borough Council also attends. I've learnt about the financial challenges they have, and have liaised with Darren Williams about their needs. I was very happy to see that RBC has committed to fund them for a further 3 years and has increased their funding to respond to the need to increase salaries due to the increase in the cost of living.

In November I was asked to address the CARS AGM as an elected member, and spoke positively about the value that RBC places on CitA. I hope to carry on as a board member in the coming year.