REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

2025/26 was largely dominated by planning for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and Devolution, following the Government's announcement of December 2024. From April to September, the Local Authorities were developing proposals to respond to the Government's requirements, which required consultations with the public, the VCSE sector and partner organisations, pre and post submission. We worked closely with Rushmoor Borough Council to engage the VCSE sector in this.

The year also marked the start of the migration towards the dissolution of Frimley ICB and the migration of Rushmoor into Hampshire & IoW ICB at March 2026. Whilst this certainly impacted upon on the health inequalities work previously aspired to, we were proud to take-on and complete two, significant projects for Frimley NHS.

The team were delighted that Rushmoor Voluntary Services (RVS) was recognised by the inaugural Pride of Rushmoor Awards and that a special award was presented in recognition of the support that we have provided to the Borough for over 50 years.

Core Services

We have supported an average of 332 member organisations throughout this year, in various ways.

Volunteering*:* The increasing demand for volunteers is evidenced by the number of volunteering opportunities listed on the Volunteer North Hants database. It is a challenge to meet demand as the culture of volunteering is shifting away from traditional, long-term volunteering to bite size opportunities. In response, we have maintained a team of ad-hoc volunteers.

To support volunteering in Rushmoor, we:

- Maintained an average of 100 volunteering opportunities in Rushmoor on the shared North Hants database.
- Placed 192 volunteers into a wide variety of opportunities.
- This equates to a financial value of £335,237 *(Based upon a calculation by the Institute of Volunteer Research).*
- Successfully hosted two Volunteer Fairs.
- Promoted volunteering at Job Fairs and 6th Form College events.
- Celebrated Volunteer and Trustee Weeks with social media campaigns, workshops and events.
- Hosted a wonderful event celebrating Volunteer Recognition in Rushmoor in November.
- Developed a toolkit to support groups to remove barriers and encourage youth volunteering ad placed 11 young people into roles.

RVS Responders: In addition to the traditional brokerage approach to volunteering, we have continued to be supported by our fabulous team of RVS Responders. The team of approximately 100 have not only supported RVS activities, they are also in great demand from our member organisations and have supported various community events. These 'bitesize' opportunities have ranged from 6th Form Moving on Fair; Farnborough Job Fair; Ticehurst Care Home; Aspire Defence; Limbcare; Donkey Derby; Victoria Day; Music in the Park, Town centre team's Christmas Cracker & Frost Fayre; Aldershot Job Fair; Shots Foundation gift wrap; Community Christmas Nativity; the RBL Poppy Appeal and 6th Form Employment Fair.

Funding Support: Funding grants are increasingly harder to secure as competition for a decreasing number of grants increases. Funders report that an average of only 5% of bids are successful due to sharp increase in the number of bids submitted. Another funder reported that 47% of bids submitted cost more to prepare and administer than the value of the funding received which highlights the on-going need for support.

We routinely share information with our members on the many grants, trusts and funds which are available to community groups. This is achieved through our bi-weekly newsletters, direct e-mailshots to members, sharing funding bulletins, access to funding databases and also via our website and one-to-one support. During 25/26, we supported local groups to apply for over £849,000 in grants.

As CEO, I sat on Hampshire County Council's Grants Panel for the community bids to the Household Support Fund and also on the Rushmoor Community Lottery.

We undertook to host and to manage the Frimley NHS Innovation Fund for Children and Young People. Across the Frimley ICB footprint, we received bids totalling a value of over £630,000 against a funding pot of £76,500. The bids were successfully assessed by a multi-agency panel and ten groups received funding.

Legacy Grants: Two grants were awarded during the year from our legacy fund. Aldershot Baptist Church developed a weekly, craft-based session aimed at supporting people's mental health and wellbeing. Mustard Seed Autism Trust were supported to purchase a refurbished laptop and associated MS office software.

Voluntary Sector Forum: Our programme of events is shared with our partners at Hart Voluntary Action. Our Forums are held alternately at Hart and Rushmoor and have continued to attract an average of 30 groups to each workshop.

The Rushmoor forums provided opportunities to ensure that member organisations are aware of LGR and Devolution and the possible impact on the sector with regular presentations from Rushmoor Borough Council officers. Presentations were also made on the new Civil Society Covenant and from the Communications and Engagement team at Frimley ICB.

Workshops were hosted on Community Ownership and Registering Community Assets,

Rushmoor Link Community Directory: The Rushmoor Link directory continues to be a valuable community asset for information about groups, activities and venues in Rushmoor. The analytics demonstrate an average of 1,205 users per month - Find local support in Rushmoor - Rushmoor Link

Governance and Sustainability. The sometimes-unseen work happening in the background includes our support for the trustees of our member organisations and the formation of new groups. Access to on-line resources have been developed to enable groups to self-help on numerous subjects. More intensive support was provided to 11 groups on setting up new groups, reviewing strategic priorities, diversifying volunteer recruitment, securing accommodation, developing a funding strategy and event planning.

Community Projects

Community Cohesion Project: Following the successful completion of the project pilot, Rushmoor Borough Council commissioned a further year's of the project. With the invaluable support of our volunteer Buddies, we:

- Facilitated opportunities for Asylum Seekers and Refugees to play an active role and feel part of their local community.

- Provided opportunities for local groups to welcome migrant community members into their organisation.
- Supported groups to break down barriers by promoting a culture of equality, equity and inclusivity within our wider community.

Supporting Independence

Community Transport: We were very pleased to be awarded the new contracts for Rushmoor Connect, Fleet Connect and Minibus Group Hire by Hampshire County Council. We streamlined our timetables ensuring we made the most of our busy times and reduced hours that were not well utilised by the passengers. The new timetable has been successfully in operation from September 2025.

For the year 25/26 we provided a total of 8773 passenger journeys. We also supported 703 individual mini-bus hires for outings/holidays/school activities etc; both represent increases on previous years.

Home Help: Our Home Help service continued to thrive in what was a challenging financial climate. Our team were busy providing valuable support for residents so they can remain independent and living at home. Clients have benefitted from over 8150 hours of assistance with shopping and housework. Our team of approximately 22 Home Helps also provided a smiling face and a friendly chat for residents ensuring they are well and getting them help if they are not. Although reluctantly our costs continue to increase year on year, the value and professionalism of our service is appreciated by the residents across Rushmoor and Hart districts.

Social Inclusion Hub: The Hub offers a selection of services to support those most socially isolated and experiencing loneliness. We can provide a volunteer befriender, a lunch club and for those who are physically able, a Wellbeing Walk:

Befriending: In 2025/26, 8 new volunteers were recruited to join our established, willing and friendly team. 30 individual residents were supported during the year. There were 543 home visits and 236 phone calls made to residents who are mostly housebound and with limited social connections by 26 volunteer befrienders.

Farnborough Lunch Club: This busy weekly group moved to the Civic Offices in January 2026. Our numbers have increased since the move, with 15 residents who would otherwise be socially isolated, regularly attending and enjoying meeting friends each week. We have expanded our transport availability to ensure everyone gets here safely and supported. Clubs like these are essential, especially as some other organisations have reduced or cancelled their local groups.

Wellbeing Walks: Thanks to Rushmoor Borough Council for providing funding, allowing the continuation of the Wellbeing Walks across Rushmoor. Six weekly walks across the year, meant that 1488 attendees enjoyed walking in the lovely parks and canal within the Borough. Thank you to our Volunteer Walk Leaders who gave over 600 hours to support the walks.

Work Well: The Work Well Programme is a free, voluntary health and employment support service in England designed to help people with health conditions or disabilities stay in work, return from sick leave, or find a new job. Funded by DWP, we partnered with Frimley NHS to deliver the polit programme across Rushmoor and Hart. The "no wrong door" approach allows access through self-referral, GPs, employers, Jobcentre Plus, or other local services to a work coach who creates and delivers a tailored support plan. 67 individuals were referred into the six-month programme,

Environmental Projects

The climate remains a priority for our organisation and the team at RVS have worked hard to reduce the environmental impact of RVS service delivery. Our policy and practices support environmental approaches to procurement, resources and activities.

Blooming Marvellous: It is well documented that the benefits of community gardening include reducing depression and anxiety, promoting recovery from stress, and helping people to develop social relationships. Gardening can offer these benefits by providing a distraction from everyday stresses and demands, by immersing people in nature, promoting physical activity, encouraging social interactions, and providing a sense of purpose and meaning.
Over the year, 27 individuals living with poor mental health have been supported to volunteer in community gardening by a dedicated team of staff and volunteers. Together they have completed 95 maintenance sessions in nine community gardens and tidied more than 30 private gardens for people who were unable to do this for themselves.

Recognition for their hard work and community contribution was given by way of some valued awards:

- South & Southeast in Bloom, Level 5 Outstanding for It's Your Neighbourhood category.
- Rushmoor Community in Bloom, Gold for Most Unusual Planted Container.
- Rushmoor Community in Bloom, Silver Gilt for the allotment for Best Community Garden.

Blooming Minds: Funding to run our green social prescribing programme has been sporadic despite the evidence of need and outcomes. This year, we were able to run two programmes thanks to support from Rushmoor Borough Council and Frimley NHS. The ten week, person-centered programme supported 12 people to engage in a nature based, community activity to improve their mental and physical health. Over 30 referrals were received for the limited places from colleagues and healthcare professionals which were individually assessed for suitability.

Through impact assessments, each participant clearly indicated that intervention through attending a social group and engaging with nature had engendered optimistic feelings and had a positive impact on health-related conditions through moderate exercise. Six have gone on to do further volunteering and training, two have engaged with Work Well with the aim of returning to work and all felt more resilient and self-confident and requested to stay connected socially.

We would like to thank Reg's Garden for hosting the programme.

Rushmoor Green Community Forum: The Forum continue to meet quarterly and gained strength in its commitment and membership. Ther are 31 registered members, made up of active green community spaces and community groups involved in looking after green spaces across Rushmoor and the Forum is supported by Sophie Rodgers, Climate Change Officer, Rushmoor Borough Council.

Members took part in Rushmoor Great Big Green Week over the May half term week. There was a good variety of activities and events taking place throughout the week from community gardening, insect trails, bug hunts, bat walks, litter picks, yoga, orienteering, family picnics and workshops promoting the reduction of single use plastics. Hosting the event during the school half term proved beneficial to capturing a wider audience.

Inspired by this, planning started, and funding was secured, to develop and host a Green Fringe Festival, to be held in May 2026. The purpose of this event is to positively connect communities with their surrounding green spaces through active participation in local activities. We aim to create opportunities to break down social barriers, support participants in acquiring new skills, and foster a stronger sense of belonging, respect, and shared ownership of communal spaces. We will also strengthen connections

between communities and their surrounding green and open spaces by increasing footfall through sustainable, active transport networks, including rail, bus, walking, and cycling.

Frank Rust Memorial Grant - In March 2026, Guillemont Junior School, Rowhill School and Wellington Community Primary School were each awarded grants to focus on redeveloping and enhancing existing school garden spaces. Plans included creating sensory gardens, refreshing raised beds for growing produce and biodiversity, and involving pupils in gardening activities that support wellbeing, outdoor learning and environmental awareness.

Rushmoor Community in Bloom: The competition aims to encourage a greener, more environmentally friendly approach to gardening, creating habitats for wildlife and promoting sustainable gardening practices. 65 entries were received from enthusiastic gardeners, keen to showcase their wonderful gardens that celebrate our green spaces, both at home and in our community.

Those shortlisted for special recognition were invited to join the. heart-warming Schools' Awards Afternoon and uplifting Awards Evening and event in September. We are most grateful to our partners and sponsors for enabling this fabulous event to happen - Rushmoor Community in Bloom 2026 – Rushmoor Voluntary Services.

Partnerships

Rushmoor Borough Council: We continue to work alongside the Community and Partnerships team which currently supports our partnership working. We endeavour to remain a proactive and strong partner to the Council so have worked closely on supporting VCSE engagement in LGR.

We actively contribute to the Rushmoor Together (previously Supporting Communities) and Community Support (previously Community Recovery) groups, and support the Rushmoor Climate Community to support the Council to meet its strategic aims.

Community Infrastructure Partnership (CIP) CIC: For many years, Hampshire County Council's Infrastructure Grant has significantly contributed to the core activities of organisations such as RVS across the county. As this was lost from 31st March 2025, the Hampshire CVS Network, as we have previously known it, also ceased to exist.

From 1st April, the Community Infrastructure Partnership (CIP) came to the fore to lead the network of local organisations, supporting and representing the Voluntary Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector across Hampshire. As an established partnership, the CIP brings together a trusted alliance of unique areas of expertise and approaches from across the county, to provide a shared strength for the communities we serve. Rushmoor Voluntary Services is a founder member of the CIP and we have a strong, trusted relationship with our partner members: Action Hampshire, Basingstoke Voluntary Action, Hart Voluntary Action, One Community and Unity. The CIP will continue working with the other Hampshire Local Infrastructure Organisations (LIOs) (previously known as Councils for Voluntary Services CVSs), as appropriate.

Frimley Integrated Care Board (ICB): RVS continued to support the Integrated Care Partnership (ICP) which brought together organisations, professionals and elected representatives who hold the responsibility for the development of Frimley Health and Care Strategy, in the planning for the reorganisation of ICBs in our region.

Frimley VCSE Alliance: We also worked proactively with the Frimley VCSE Alliance. Planned activities and events continued to consider the health needs of children, older people and those with learning disability, autism and wider neurodiversity albeit at a reduced level, as resources were invested in creating legacy documentation in preparation of its conclusion.

In readiness of the transition, we joined HIVCA (Hampshire and Isle of Wight VCSE Health and Care Alliance), the alliance for engagement between the Integrated Care Board, Partnership and System, and the VCSE sector, and ahead of the transition became involved in the Volunteering for Health programme, held by the ICB.

Thank you! I would like to take this opportunity to extend a huge thank you to all our supporters for working alongside us throughout the year to champion a vibrant, diverse and thriving voluntary sector across Rushmoor.

To our core funders, Rushmoor Borough Council, we are incredibly grateful for your continued belief in the important role RVS plays as a strategic community partner. Your ongoing support enables us to continue making a meaningful difference across our communities.

We would also like to thank all our funders and stakeholders for providing the vital resources that help sustain and strengthen our vibrant community.

To our members, thank you for everything you do for our communities, day in and day out. And, of course, a heartfelt thank you to all the volunteers across Rushmoor whose time, dedication and commitment make such a difference and help make it all happen.

Finally, and most sincerely, I would like to thank the Trustees and staff of RVS for their hard work, dedication and continued commitment throughout the year. Your contribution is invaluable, and we are incredibly grateful for all that you do.

Donna Bone
September 2026