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### RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

# POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

To be held at the Council Offices, Farnborough on Wednesday, 17th September, 2025 at 7.00 pm

To:

Cllr Abe Allen (Chairman)
Cllr Lisa Greenway (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Adeola
Cllr Thomas Day
Cllr Halleh Koohestani
Cllr Mara Makunura
Cllr S.J. Masterson
Cllr T.W. Mitchell
Cllr M.J. Roberts
Cllr Dhan Sarki
Cllr Ivan Whitmee

#### **Standing Deputies:**

Cllr Gaynor Austin Cllr C.W. Card Cllr Leola Card Cllr Steve Harden Cllr G.B. Lyon

Enquiries regarding this agenda should be referred to the Administrator, Chris Todd, Democracy Team, Tel. (01252) 398825, Email. chris.todd@rushmoor.gov.uk.

#### AGENDA

#### 1. CHANGE OF BOARD MEMBERSHIP -

The Appointments to be noted below reflect those made prior to 2nd September and the new political balance is under discussion with Group Leaders.

#### To note:

- i) the appointment of Cllr Thomas Day as a Member of the Policy and Project Advisory Board in place of Cllr M.D. Smith for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year. The appointment has been made by the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Leader of the Conservative Group, in accordance with Standing Orders and arrangements to secure political balance;
- the appointment of Cllr Dhan Sarki as a Member of the Policy and Project Advisory Board in place of Cllr Rhian Jones for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year. The appointment has been made by the Leader of the Council in accordance with Standing Orders and arrangements to secure political balance;
- the appointments of Cllrs Gaynor Austin and G.B. Lyon as Standing Deputies to the Policy and Project Advisory Board for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year. These appointments have been made by the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Conservative Group in accordance with Standing Orders and arrangements to secure political balance.

#### 2. **MINUTES –** (Pages 1 - 6)

To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 22nd July, 2025 (copy attached).

### 3. **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW - CONSULTATION RESPONSES -** (Pages 7 - 10)

To consider the responses received in respect of the Council's recent Community Governance Review consultation exercise (report attached).

One or more of Amanda Bancroft, Interim Monitoring Officer, Karen Edwards, Executive Director and Alex Shiell, Service Manager – Policy, Strategy and Transformation will be in attendance at the meeting to provide a short presentation and to guide the discussion.

### 4. **PERMITTING SCHEME FOR AUTOMATED PASSENGER SERVICE CONSULTATION –** (Pages 11 - 16)

To consider the Council's response to a Government consultation on driverless passenger vehicles (presentation attached, full consultation here: <a href="https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/automated-passenger-services-permitting-scheme">https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/automated-passenger-services-permitting-scheme</a>)

Rachael Howes, Licensing Officer, will be in attendance at the meeting to provide a short presentation and to guide the discussion.

#### 5. **WORK PLAN –** (Pages 17 - 22)

To discuss the Policy and Project Advisory Board Work Plan (copy attached).

#### **MEETING REPRESENTATION**

Members of the public may ask to speak at the meeting on any of the items on the agenda by writing to the Panel Administrator at the Council Offices, Farnborough by 5.00 pm two working days prior to the meeting.

Applications for items to be considered for the next meeting must be received in writing to the Panel Administrator fifteen working days prior to the meeting.

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# POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

Meeting held on Tuesday, 22nd July, 2025 at the Council Offices, Farnborough at 7.00 pm.

#### **Voting Members**

Cllr Abe Allen (Chairman)
Cllr Lisa Greenway (Vice-Chairman)

Cllr A. Adeola Cllr Mara Makunura Cllr S.J. Masterson Cllr M.J. Roberts

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Cllr Rhian Jones, Cllr Halleh Koohestani, Cllr T.W. Mitchell, Cllr M.D. Smith and Cllr Ivan Whitmee.

Cllr Becky Williams attended the meeting as a Standing Deputy.

#### 8. CHANGE OF BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Board **NOTED** the appointment of Cllr S.J. Masterson as a member of the Board in place of Cllr Peace Essien Igodifo for the remainder of the 2025/26 Municipal Year.

#### 9. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 10th June, 2025 were agreed as a correct record.

# 10. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION - CONSIDERATION OF OPTIONS FOR UNITARY COUNCILLOR RATIOS AND WARDING PATTERNS AND ENGAGEMENT UPDATE (ITEM DURATION - 60 MINUTES)

The Board welcomed the Leader of the Council (Cllr Gareth Williams), Mrs Karen Edwards, Executive Director and Jill Shuttleworth, Corporate Manager – Democracy, who provided an update on recent work that had been undertaken in relation to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). In particular, this item was to consider options for Unitary Councillor ratios and warding patterns and their implications for Members. Also, an update on the LGR engagement process would be delivered, ahead of the submission to the Government in September, 2025.

The Board was advised that the devolution process had been progressing well, with the strategic authority due to be established in Spring 2026 and the inaugural Mayoral election taking place in May 2026. In relation to LGR, it was confirmed that the establishment of a Unitary Council covering the areas currently served by Basingstoke and Deane, Hart and Rushmoor Councils was the preferred option in

each of those areas. A number of governance groups across the three Councils had been meeting now for some time. These included a Leader Group, a Chief Executive Group and a S151 Group.

Regarding engagement, it was acknowledged that this was a confusing picture for residents, with a number of options within the preferred approach. A countywide public survey had been externally commissioned by the twelve (of fifteen) Councils that had continued working together with KPMG. There had also been engagement sessions with countywide partners such as the Police and the Integrated Care Boards. In North Hampshire, a more detailed and focussed public survey had been commissioned. There had also been partner workshops held in relation to sectors including businesses, town and parish councils, the voluntary and community sectors, public sector partners and faith groups. In Rushmoor, several engagement exercises were underway, including roadshows and static displays.

In terms of the timetable of key upcoming decision points, following submissions to the Government in September 2025, the decision of the Government was currently expected by March 2026. This was likely to lead to elections to shadow unitary authorities around May 2027 with new unitaries replacing existing councils in April 2028.

Members were informed of the need to consider the optimum ratio of Councillors to population for the proposed new unitary comprising the Basingstoke, Hart and Rushmoor areas. It was reported that there was a considerable range of ratios currently at Councils that had a similar total population to the proposed new authority. Within Hampshire, Rushmoor had the lowest number of residents per Councillor at 2,737, with Hart at 3,226 per Councillor and Basingstoke at 3,597. Overall, district councils in Hampshire averaged a ratio of 1:3,391, whilst the Hampshire unitaries averaged 1:4,731.

Another consideration would be the warding arrangements of the new authority. It was confirmed that the Boundary Commission would be unlikely to undertake a review before 2028. It was necessary to consider the optimum number of Councillors for the new council. It was confirmed that the total number of Councillors across the three North Hampshire authorities was currently 126. Given levels of representation in other Unitary councils and advice from the Boundary Commission it was considered that this number would have to reduce in the new unitary authority.

The Board was requested to consider the following in its discussions:

- What was the most appropriate Councillor ratio for the unitary configuration area (North Hampshire Authority), based on the population figures and therefore, also, the number of Councillors?
- Given the Government steer, what approach to area committees would best suit the proposed North Hampshire Unitary configuration?
- What were the implications of these arrangements on Members and how could future Councillors manage the enhanced role given to the likely increase in population served and extra demands?

 What did PPAB feel needed to be taken into account in terms of Member support, workload etc?

In discussing the content of the presentation, the Board raised the following points:

- A view was expressed that around 75-90 Councillors would be appropriate, around two thirds of the current number. This would result in increased workloads for Councillors.
- In coping with increased workloads, would new authority consider more daytime meetings? Or Councillors being considered full time positions?
- Point made that Councillor ratios and wards would be different under shadow authority and would be amended as a result of the Boundary Commission review.
- Broad consensus that around 85 the right number, possibly in two-Member wards.
- In answer to a question, it was confirmed that the three existing authorities
  would need to come to a consensus view on these matters in relation to the
  proposed new authority. It was reported that it was thought there was broad
  consensus between the three at this point.
- Must be careful to avoid 'democratic deficit' as a result in the reduction of the number of elected representatives and take steps to ensure that representation was both diverse and representative of local communities.
- Suggested we should only change member numbers in Rushmoor when instructed to by Boundary Commission.
- Confirmed that Basingstoke currently had 54 Councillors across 18 wards.
- Southampton Unitary allowance = £14K not considered high enough to be considered a full time role.
- Felt that lower than two Members per ward would lead Members feeling unsupported.
- How can Councillors be supported with casework? Could there be a formal 'caseworking system'?
- Could the introduction of 'hybrid' decision-making meetings increase capacity for Councillors?
- Confirmed that ward changes would be likely to take some time first elections would be using existing wards.

 In relation to Local Area Committees, the view was expressed that there could be just one that cover the whole of the Rushmoor area to avoid the establishment of 'silos'. An alternative view of at least two Area Committees to cover the Rushmoor area was expressed, possibly around Aldershot and Farnborough.

In summarising the Board's feedback on these matters, the Chairman made the following points:

- The Board agreed that given the guidance from the Boundary Commission the suggested figure of 85 for the number of Councillors on the new authority was about right, subject to concerns over the level of representation in areas with a high level of deprivation, as set out below;
  - Concern was expressed that the Member to resident ratio should take account of whether the area/ward has high levels of deprivation. This should be taken into account when considering ward changes.
  - Appropriate steps should be taken to ensure that future Councillors were properly supported including case management systems, training and development and working arrangements that would ensure that future representation was both diverse and representative of local communities.
- The Board's view on Area Committees, should they be established by the new authority, was that there should be two or more covering the current council area

The Chairman thanked Cllr Williams, Mrs Edwards and Ms Shuttleworth for their input.

### 11. IMPLICATIONS OF THE SUPREME COURT JUDGEMENT ON THE INTERPRETATION OF THE EQUALITY ACT (ITEM DURATION - 30 MINUTES)

In introducing this item, the Chair explained that he had been advised by the Council's Interim Monitoring Officer that the publication of statutory guidance had been delayed. This delay, along with the need to give full attention to the Local Government Reorganisation agenda item, had led to the Interim Monitoring Officer recommending that this item should be deferred to a later date.

The Board **RESOLVED** that the agenda item on the implications of the Supreme Court judgement on the interpretation of the Equality Act be deferred.

#### 12. WORK PLAN

The Board noted the current Work Plan.

It was agreed that future items would be based around the Council's Delivery Plan and would be discussed in detail at the next Progress Group meeting.

The meeting closed at 8.30 pm.	
	CLLR ABE ALLEN (CHAIRMAN)



### POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD

#### MONITORING OFFICER

17 September 2025

Report No. LEG2511

#### **COMMUNITY GOVERNANCE REVIEW CONSULTATION RESULTS**

#### SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### **SUMMARY:**

This report sets the scene for a Policy and Projects Advisory Board (PPAB) discussion on the results of the first Community Governance Review consultation and the future publication of a report to Council.

The consultation closes on the 12 September and the Council report will be published on the 17 September. PPAB will be briefed on these items at their meeting on the 17 September.

#### **RECOMMENDATION:**

PPAB is invited to have a cross-party, comprehensive and considered discussion to inform the Council debate.

#### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report sets the scene for a Policy and Projects Advisory Board (PPAB) discussion on the results of the first Community Governance Review consultation and the future publication of a report to Council.
- 1.2 The consultation closes on the 12 September and the Council report will be published on the 17 September. PPAB will be briefed on these items and invited to have a cross-party, comprehensive and considered discussion to inform the Council debate.

#### 2 BACKGROUND

#### General

2.1 The Government have <u>invited proposals</u> for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and asked that two-tier areas, such as Hampshire, form unitary authorities that combine all powers into a single Council. One criterion for LGR proposals is to "enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment"

- 2.2 On 20 March 2025, Cabinet approved the Council's LGR Interim Plan on 20 March 2025 (Report No. <u>ACE2506</u>). In line with the principles set out in the interim plan and at this stage of the process, the Council believes that both the sense of place and economic geography of the area favours a North Hampshire unitary council (comprising the areas of Rushmoor, Hart and Basingstoke and Deane).
- 2.3 At its meeting on the 10 July, the <u>Council confirmed</u> that this approach continues to be its preferred option, representing the best balance of a Council large enough to deliver high quality services and value for money, but small enough to be connected the place and the needs of the people the council serves.
- 2.4 The Council <u>approved the terms of reference for a Community Governance Review</u> at its meeting on the 10 July. A first stage consultation seeking resident views on the principle and nature of a lower tier of local government in the borough was conducted from 21 July to 12 September. This consultation was promoted through social media, email newsletters, a special edition of Arena, and in-person events throughout the borough.
- 2.5 The <u>Council Delivery Plan</u> commits the Council to achieve the best outcome for Rushmoor residents and business from LGR, to engage with residents and business, and to ensure their needs are met.

#### 3 DETAILS OF THE PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The first stage consultation seeks resident views on whether introducing parish councils or neighbourhood committees in our area would help make sure that local communities can have their views heard and influence what happens in their local area.
- 3.2 The consultation closes on the 12 September. Policy and Projects Advisory Board (PPAB) will be briefed on the results of the consultation and the published Council report at their meeting on the 17 September.
- 3.3 As of the 29 August 2025, the survey has had 286 responses. This is considered sufficient interest on the principle of neighbourhood governance. Therefore Council will be recommended to proceed with the second consultation on several specific options to establish neighbourhood governance in the Borough. These options will be informed by the full consultation responses.
- 3.4 PPAB is invited to have a cross-party, comprehensive and considered discussion on the consultation results and the report to Council, to inform the Council debate on this item. The outcomes of the discussion will be reported to Council by the Chair.

#### 4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This report sets the scene for a Policy and Projects Advisory Board (PPAB) discussion on the results of the first Community Governance Review consultation and the future publication of a report to Council.
- 4.2 The consultation closes on the 12 September and the Council report will be published on the 17 September. PPAB will be briefed on these items and invited to have a cross-party, comprehensive and considered discussion to inform the Council debate.
- 4.3 The Community Governance Review supports the <u>Council Delivery Plan</u> commitment to achieve the best outcome for Rushmoor residents and business from LGR, to engage with residents and business, and to ensure their needs are met. It contributes to the Council's Local Government Reorganisation submission meeting the criterion to "enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunities for neighbourhood empowerment."

#### LIST OF APPENDICES/ANNEXES:

None

#### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:**

House of Commons Library – Parish and town councils: recent issues

House of Commons Library - Unitary authorities: The role of parish and town councils

Department for Communities and Local Government and the Local Government Boundary

Commission for England Guidance on community governance reviews

You've got the power: a quick and simple guide to community rights - GOV.UK

#### **CONTACT DETAILS:**

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## **Automated Passenger Services**

Permitting Scheme

The Automated Vehicles (AV) Act 2024 will introduce the automated passenger services (APS) permitting scheme, a targeted regulatory framework for automated passenger services.

## **Automated Passenger Services**

- Automated passenger services in the UK are transport systems that move people with automation (partly or fully driverless), currently most visible in the DLR, airport shuttles, and autonomous bus trials. They are seen to improve efficiency, safety, and coverage.
- The UK government passed the Automated Vehicles Act 2024, which sets the framework for self-driving vehicles to be used commercially by late 2020s.
- This law will allow for licensed operators (companies, not individuals) to run automated taxis and private hire services. Passengers will still be protected by insurance and safety oversight, but the "driver" may legally be the automation system rather than a human driver.
- The Department for Transport (DfT) is carrying out a consultation which seeks views on the proposed automated passenger services SI to support the deployment of commercial self-driving pilots.
- Part 5 of the AV Act 2024 (the act) introduces APS permitting, designed to provide a new, flexible scheme to issue permits for automated passenger services and provide businesses with the regulatory confidence to invest in testing and deploying these innovative services.
- APS permits not only apply to self-driving vehicles (those without a human driver and listed or authorised as self-driving). They are also available, as set out in the act, for trials 'with the aim of developing vehicles' able to carry passengers without a driver.
- Given the importance of APS permits in providing clarity to enable commercial passenger carrying services, including for trials with or without a safety driver, the government intends to bring Part 5 of the act into effect in spring 2026.

In this consultation, views are not being sought on the provisions of the act itself: that has already been approved by Parliament. It is a consultation on the initial regulations to be made under the scheme alongside views on practicalities of running the scheme.

## **Summary**

#### **Purpose of the APS Permitting Scheme**

- Provides a clear legal route for deploying automated passenger services without a human driver.
- Ensures commercial certainty for operators entering the GB market.
- Will apply from spring 2026 for pilots and from 2027 onwards for wider deployment.
- Taxi, PHV and PSV legislation is disapplied for APS permit holders (but these licensing routes remain for conventional vehicles).

#### Who Grants the Permits?

- Secretary of State for Transport for:
- Bus-like services (anywhere in GB).
- Taxi/PHV-like services in England.
- The scheme will initially be administered by DVSA.

#### **Local Consent**

- Taxi/PHV-like services → consent required from each local licensing authority (263 in England, including TfL for London).
- Consent procedure:
- Authorities have 6 weeks to respond.
- If no response → consent deemed granted.

#### **Application Process**

Applicants will need to provide:

- Service scope (area, vehicles, operating hours).
- Operational capability (depots, incident response, maintenance, insurance, financial stability).
- Engagement evidence (with consenting authorities, traffic authorities, emergency services).
- Safeguarding policy (DBS checks for staff, including remote operators).
- Accessibility plan.
- Fare information (transparent, published).

## What role do we play?

#### Consent-giving (for taxi/PHV-like services)

- If an APS service resembles a taxi or PHV, the local licensing authority's consent is required before the Secretary of State (via DVSA) can grant a permit.
- In England, this means each district/borough council (or TfL in London) where the service operates must give consent.
- Authorities have 6 weeks to respond once formally asked for consent.
- If they do not respond in time, consent is automatically granted.

#### Policy and standards consideration

When deciding whether to give consent, local authorities are expected to consider local policy issues such as:

- Local taxi/PHV licensing standards and policies.
- Local transport integration (e.g. access to stations, ticketing schemes, congestion management).
- Passenger safety and safeguarding expectations.

#### **Pre-application discussions**

Authorities are encouraged to engage in early informal discussions with APS applicants.

This gives them the chance to flag concerns about:

- Service areas (e.g. sensitive pick-up/drop-off points).
- Operating hours.
- Traffic management.
- Local accessibility expectations.

#### Safeguarding and equality oversight

Authorities remain bound by the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED).

When granting or refusing consent, they must consider:

- Accessibility for older and disabled passengers.
- Safeguarding standards for vulnerable users.

# age 15

### Taxi's and PHV

In your view, what information are taxi and private hire vehicle (PHV) licensing authorities likely to consider most relevant when determining whether to grant approval or authorisation?

# Safeguarding

What information would you expect to see published by permit holders on the safeguarding of passengers?

# POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD WORK PLAN

The purpose of the work plan is to plan, manage and co-ordinate the ongoing activity and progress of the Council's Policy and Project Advisory Board, incorporating policy development work carried out through working groups.

#### **AGENDA PLANNING - 2025/2026**

	LGR – approach to public engagement and involvement (KE/AS)	
10th June 2025	Potential future changes to Integrated Care Boards (KE)	
	Pathways to Work consultation (JC/AS)	
22nd July 2025	LGR – options for councillor ratios and warding patterns and engagement update (60 mins duration) Implications of the Supreme Court judgement on the interpretation of the Equality Act (30 mins duration)	
17th September 2025	Community Governance Review – consultation responses Permitting scheme for automated passenger services consultation	
18th November 2025	Council Plan Themes (Community and Wellbeing / Skills Economy and Regeneration)	
20th January 2026	Council Plan Themes (Homes for All / Pride in Place)	
24th March 2026		
Potential items to be considered for 2025/26 and beyond	<ul> <li>LGR</li> <li>Council Plan Theme (Legacy)</li> <li>Equalities Review – PPAB to look at producing an Equalities Policy</li> <li>Events funding post UKSPF – PPAB look at events programme (measures of success, which events to retain) – would need to be November meeting</li> <li>Civil Society Covenant programme – how we support voluntary sector</li> </ul>	

#### **PROGRESS GROUP MEETINGS 2025/26**

Current membership: PPAB Chair (Cllr Abe Allen) + Cllrs Lisa Greenway, Steve Masterson, Thomas Mitchell, Ivan Whitmee

Date	Item	Notes
	Council Plan Theme (Legacy)	Cabinet was due to do some visioning on this over summer but this has fallen behind schedule. For this reason, this item cannot go ahead at this point.
	CGR (new item)	KE suggested its replacement by a new item on CGR consultation – which would be going back to Council by 25 <sup>th</sup> September – PPAB to look at consultation responses.
		PG agreed this is an important and relevant item.
		PPAB's role would be to look at what consultation is telling us:
27th August 2025		<ul> <li>Do we understand who has responded?</li> <li>What are respondents saying?</li> <li>What are we going to do with responses in relation to a wider public consultation?</li> <li>Is there enough here to proceed?</li> </ul>
		Karen Edwards or Alex Shiell will present item.
	Permitting scheme for automated passenger services consultation	Government consultation on driverless taxis.
		Pilot to start – not by licensing authority but we are a consultee.
		PPAB will not go through every question but a couple of key questions.

		Do we have any influence? Pilot will happen but what will LA role be?
		Shelley will not present item as she is Lead Officer but one of licensing team will present.
		PPAB feedback to Portfolio Holder to inform her response to the full consultation.
	Future items	KE talked to GW and these are possible suggestions for future PPAB work:
		- Equalities Review – PPAB to look at producing an Equalities Policy
		- Funding of Council events post UKSPF – PPAB look at events programme (measures of success, which events to retain) – to affect 2026/7 Programme, item would need to go to November PPAB
		- Civil Society Covenant programme – how we support voluntary sector
		Each item would require work by officers before it could come to PPAB.
		No other changes to work plan proposed pending election of Chair.
	AOB	SM – is batch posting by postman a thing in other wards? – CT to pass onto OSC administrator.
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ס	Devolution – effects of community	Not a lot more could be done at the moment – would be quite hypothetical – remove for time being
Page 20 Future it	Future items	AA to check with GW on items Cabinet would like to look at
		LGR submission placeholder on 22nd July (only if something substantial comes up)
		July meeting – add Implications of the Supreme Court judgement on the interpretation of the Equality Act (45 mins duration to be indicated on agenda)
		LGR consultation in Surrey due early August? Agreed not worth PPAB spending its time on this
26th June 2025		Aldershot town centre strategy and action plan to be added as a potential item during 2025/26
		Move main PPAB meeting in September to 17th
		CGR consultation response (Town Councils) – add to September meeting
		Council Plan theme at each meeting from Sept – March
		Comms Strategy – unlikely to emerge at moment – remove from potentials
		Housing equalities – remove from September meeting
		LGR – add to potential items

	Council Plan – September (Legacy), November (Community and Wellbeing / Skills Economy and Regeneration) and January (Homes for All / Pride in Place)
	CT to forward to Work Plan to Cabinet and ask for any comments

Future dates for PPAB Progress Group meetings: 29th October 2025.

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#### **CURRENT WORKING GROUPS APPOINTED BY THE POLICY AND PROJECT ADVISORY BOARD**

<sup>2</sup> GROUP	MEMBERSHIP 2025/26	CURRENT POSITION	CONTACT
Elections Group	Cabinet Member with responsibility for electoral issues (Cllr Sophie Porter), Chairman or Vice-Chairman of Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee (Cllr Bill O'Donovan), Chairman or Vice-Chairman of PPAB (Cllr Abe Allen), Cllrs Gaynor Austin, C.W. Card, Steve Harden and G.B. Lyon.		Jill Shuttleworth Corporate Manager - Democracy jill.shuttleworth@rushmoor.gov.uk  Elections Team 01252 398824 elections@rushmoor.gov.uk