

COUNCIL MEETING – 26TH FEBRUARY 2026

AGENDA ITEM NO. 7

**EXTENSION OF TERM OF OFFICE FOR DESIGNATED
INDEPENDENT PERSON**

A report from the meeting of the Licensing and Corporate Business Committee held on 15th January 2026.

SUMMARY

This report recommends an extension to the term of office for the Council's Designated Independent Person (DIP), Mr Matt Smith, up to the end of April 2028. This is a role which is required under the Localism Act to assist the Council in promoting and maintaining high standards of conduct amongst its elected Members. The Licensing and Corporate Business Committee supported the extension, and a copy of the role description is attached as Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION

The Council is recommended to approve an extension to the term of office of Mr Matt Smith as the Council's Designated Independent Person (DIP), for the period from July 2026 to end of April 2028.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Mr Matt Smith was appointed by the [Council in July 2023](#) as the Council's Designated Independent Person for a three-year term from July 2023 to July 2026. The appointment followed a public advertisement, application and interview process which included Member representation.

1.2 The Statutory functions of the DIP are: -

- They must be consulted by the Authority before it makes a finding as to whether a Member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct or decides on action to be taken in respect of that Member.
- They may be consulted by the Authority in respect of a standards complaint at any other stage; and

- They may be consulted by a Member or co-opted member of the Council against whom a complaint has been made.

2.3 A person is considered not to be “Independent” if: -

- They are, or have been within the last five years, an elected or co-opted member or an officer of the Council.
- They are, or have been within the last five years, an elected or co-opted member of any Committee or Sub-Committee of the Council; or
- They are a relative or close friend of a current elected or co-opted member or officer of the Council.

2.4 There is no payment for the role, however a small annual retainer allowance is paid which is the same amount allowed for a co-opted committee member (currently £604 per annum). This reflects the need for the Independent Person to maintain up to date knowledge, attend training and to be available to the Council as and when required.

2.5 It is recommended that the Council extend Mr Smith’s term of office from July 2026 to April 2028 to align with the current timescale for vesting day for a new unitary authority. It would be open to the Council to carry out a fresh recruitment; however, there is precedence for a two-year extension and since his appointment, Mr Smith has attended regular update meetings with the Monitoring Officer, engaged diligently and ensured his availability, and developed an excellent understanding of the ethical framework as it operates within Rushmoor Borough Council.

2.6 Members have been canvassed to establish that there are no close personal relations with Mr. Smith.

Candidate Details

2.7 Mr. Matt Smith has over 20 years’ experience working for Housing Associations in the public sector, preceded by eleven years’ experience working for local authorities. During this time, Mr Smith has built significant experience in investigating issues, and has led numerous HR investigations including disciplinaries, grievances and formal consultation meetings. Mr Smith also has qualifications in life coaching and mentoring and is a member of the Association for Coaching. He has lived in and around the Rushmoor area for most of his life and has a keen interest in public life having been involved with several community organisations and projects over the years.

CLLR JACQUI VOSPER
CHAIR OF LICENSING AND
CORPORATE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

ROLE OF INDEPENDENT PERSON (STANDARDS) – RUSHMOOR BOROUGH COUNCIL

ROLE DESCRIPTION

Responsible to: The Council

Liaison with: Monitoring Officer, Deputy Monitoring Officers, Licensing and Corporate Business Committee, Officers and Members of the Council and key stakeholders within the community.

1. To assist the Council in promoting high standards of conduct by elected and co-opted members of Rushmoor Borough Council and in particular to uphold the [Code of Conduct](#) adopted by the Council and the seven principles of public office, namely selflessness, honesty, integrity, objectivity, accountability, openness and leadership.
2. To be consulted by the Council through the Monitoring Officer as part of an initial assessment of a complaint that a councillor has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct, before a decision is taken as to whether to carry out an investigation or that other action should be taken e.g., informal resolution.
3. To be consulted by the Council through the Monitoring Officer and/or via a Standards Hearing before it makes a finding as to whether a member has failed to comply with the Code of Conduct or decides on action to be taken in respect of that member.
4. To be available to attend meetings of a Standards Hearing Panel appointed by the Licensing and Corporate Business Committee.
5. To be available for consultation by any elected member, who is the subject of a standards complaint.
6. To develop a sound understanding of the ethical framework as it operates within Rushmoor Borough Council.
7. To participate in training events to develop skills, knowledge and experience and in networks developed for Independent Persons operating outside the Borough Council's area.
8. To attend any relevant training events organised and promoted by the Council.
9. To act as advocate and ambassador for the Council in promoting ethical behaviour.