

**COUNCIL MEETING – 19TH MARCH 2026**

**AGENDA ITEM NO. 8**

**REVIEW OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES SCHEME**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 Under Regulations relating to the preparation and review of members' allowances schemes, Rushmoor's Independent Remuneration Panel (IRP) reviewed Rushmoor's scheme in December 2025. The remit of the Panel was to undertake a complete general review of the Scheme to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose, including a review of the basic and special responsibility allowances in the context of the Council's financial position, and taking account of benchmarking information. In addition, the Remuneration Panel was asked to examine the special responsibility allowances for Chairs of Committees in the light of changes to the committee structure, the allowances for Member Champions, to check the basic allowance continues to make appropriate provision for IT and phones and that the allowances for the Designated Independent Person are appropriately paid at the co-opted Member rate.
- 1.2 A copy of the Remuneration Panel's report is attached and set out below is a summary of the outcomes. The Council is being asked to adopt the recommendations of the Remuneration Panel in full.

**2. INDEPENDENT REMUNERATION PANEL – PROPOSALS**

**(1) Background and Context**

- 2.1 Rushmoor's Remuneration Panel has examined all parts of the current scheme and benchmarked the provisions against similar authorities regionally, locally and nationally through a range of indices. As in previous reviews, the Remuneration Panel recognised the importance of obtaining the views of Members and an essential part of this review was to receive this evidence. The Panel met with 13 Councillors in person across all political groups and a range of roles and received one written submission.
- 2.2 In carrying out the review, the Remuneration Panel was also conscious of the need to take account of the Council's current financial position and budgetary constraints facing the Council.
- 2.3 The Report advises that the Panel did not receive a great deal of feedback that the allowances scheme needed fundamental reform; the broad view was that the allowances scheme and levels of allowance were appropriate, with some exceptions. In this way, the main task of the IRP has been to address anomalies arising in the current scheme.

## **(2) Review of Main Elements of the Allowances**

- 2.4 The Remuneration Panel tested the robustness of the 2025/26 Basic Allowance (£6,813) by replicating the original methodology that forms the basis of the current basic allowance (paras 21 to 29 of the Report), and by carrying out a benchmarking exercise (paras 30 to 31 of the Report). The panel determined that the outcome of the recalibration activity showed there was not a case to revise the Basic Allowance, and that the current allowance would not represent a barrier to public service for most people.
- 2.5 Overall, the Remuneration Panel did not see a strong case to alter the Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA). The principal anomaly for the IRP to address was to recommend an appropriate SRA for the Chairs of the Audit & Governance Committee and the Licensing and Corporate Business Committee. The background to this was the outcome of the committee review which discontinued the Corporate Governance, Audit and Standards Committee and split its functions across the two new committees.
- 2.6 The Panel also identified an anomalous situation whereby Opposition Group Leaders receive the same level of SRA regardless of group size, and benchmarking showed that it is typical practice to make a distinction. The view usually taken by IRPs is that the Leader of the Main Opposition Group has the primary responsibility to provide challenge to the ruling administration, and this was generally supported in the representations received. The Report also made provision in the case of two or more main opposition groups of equal size.
- 2.7 The Panel noted the planned changes to the appointment of Champion Roles and was content that the role continued to be above and beyond what is required for an ordinary Member. It was proposed that the allowance for Champions be maintained at current levels and up to a maximum of three payable at any one time.
- 2.8 There was representation to the Panel that the SRA paid for the role of chairing the full Council was too low in the current circumstances, and the IRP concluded that given the current composition of the Council (NOC), the extent of public feeling round a variety of contentious issues and the large variation in the SRA paid to the Council Chair compared to benchmarked averages, that a small increase in SRA was merited.
- 2.9 The Panel also received no evidence that the annual remuneration of the Independent Person for Rushmoor, paid at the same level as co-optees, required revision.

2.10 Taking account of the evidence provided, the Remuneration Panel is proposing:

- the overall Basic Allowance remain at £6,813 for 2026/27, subject to any applicable indexation going forward
- the current Basic Allowance continues to cover Members personal Information Technology & Telecommunications costs
- the special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee is reset at £4,726 to be backdated to the date the post was established on 26th November 2025
- the special responsibility allowance for the Chair of Licensing and Corporate Business Committee is set at £2,835 to be paid from the date the post was taken up on 21st October 2025
- the special responsibility allowance for the Leader of the Main Opposition Group is reset at £4,726, and the SRA for the Leader of a Minority Opposition Group is reset at £2,835
- the special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Council is reset at £2,835
- the special responsibility allowance for the Leader is maintained at £18,900, and the allowance for the Deputy Leader role is maintained at £10,878
- the special responsibility allowance for Cabinet Members is maintained at £9,395
- the special responsibility allowance for the Chair of the Development Management Committee is maintained at £6,374
- the special responsibility allowance for the Chairs of the Policy and Project Advisory Board and the Overview and Scrutiny Committee is maintained at £4,726
- the allowance for Champions is maintained at £1,923
- the allowance for Members attending at least four licensing hearings per year is maintained at £549
- the co-optees allowance is maintained at £604

**(3) Travel and Subsistence and Dependent Carers Allowances**

2.11 The Remuneration Panel also reviewed the arrangements for the other allowances in the scheme and recommended:

- no revisions to the travel and subsistence scope, terms and conditions and maximum rates
- the dependant carers' allowance continue to be paid in respect of childcare at the National Living Wage or, for other care, capped at the hourly wage charged by Hampshire County Council Social Services for a carer. However, a clarification was needed to the policy to confirm that where a Member seeks to claim reimbursement for childcare costs, that they are able to claim for informal childcare upon the production of a receipt. Also, that Schedule 2 of the Allowances Scheme should be amended to state that it also includes the approved duties for which the allowance is claimed within the Borough.

#### (4) **Indexation**

- 2.9 The current arrangements where members allowances are reviewed each year using indices applied nationally or through the local government system are to be retained for a further four-year period (or until vesting day of a new unitary authority).

### 3. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 3.1 The recommendations as set out in the Independent Remuneration Panel's Report are within current budgets for Members Allowances. Most allowances are proposed to be maintained with no change, and where adjustments are proposed to increase an allowance, they are relatively minor.
- 3.2 Allowances will continue to be indexed for four years (the maximum period permitted under regulations).

### 4 **CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 Rushmoor's Independent Remuneration Panel's review of the Members' Allowances Scheme has involved a fundamental examination of each element of the scheme. The main outcome has been to address anomalies arising in the current scheme, and most allowances remain unchanged.

### 5. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 The Council is recommended to adopt the proposals set out in the Remuneration Panel's Eighth Report (attached to this report) for implementation from the date of the Annual Meeting on 26th May 2026.
- 5.2 The recommended changes to special responsibility allowances for the Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee and Chair of Licensing & Corporate Business to be backdated as set out in the report.