SC 62-26

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

STANDARDS COMMITTEE MEETING – 9 NOVEMBER 2026

SCHEME OF MEMBERS' ALLOWANCES

Report by: Gareth Hale, Solicitor and Monitoring Officer and Nigel Stone, Chief Finance Officer

1 Current scheme of members' allowances

1.1 Members will recall that at its Authority meeting on 23 March 2023 the Authority resolved to adopt a Scheme of Allowances for a period of 4 years with effect from 1 April 2023. As such, the current scheme will come to an end on 31 March 2027 and it is necessary to consider the options for the new scheme, the allowances and the duration of that scheme.

1.2 The current scheme followed a recommendation from the Standards Committee, to the Resources, Audit and Performance Committee (RAPC) which in turn recommended the current scheme for approval to the full Authority as above.

1.3 The current scheme permitted an annual basic allowance of £2,132 pa increased for the (4 year) duration of the scheme with any staff cost of living awards being matched and applied to that basic allowance in the same percentage increase. The current basic allowance for 2026/27 is £2,420 (post pay award).

1.4 By way of background, when the Scheme was reviewed in previous years, and on recommendation from the Standards Committee, the Authority resolved that in view of the time, expense and administration involved in convening an Independent Review Panel (IRP) and the fact that the review of allowances undertaken by the original IRP in 2006/7 had been thorough with sound and tested outcomes and little change to members' roles, it would not be appropriate to convene another IRP (see original review attached as **Annex 1**). Future schemes were accordingly based on the original recommendations of the IRP. At the review of the scheme in March 2011, the Authority then resolved to link future increases in the basic allowance to any Authority staff cost of living pay awards instead of the Retail Price Index (RPI).

2. Conclusions

2.1 The conclusions of the informal members' working group in 2022/23 were that it was not necessary to appoint another IRP at that stage and that the members' basic allowance, first arrived at by the IRP following a comprehensive review in November 2006 and subsequently applied to future schemes, was based on the sound and tested formula originally recommended by the IRP and should be

continued. Future increases in members' allowances should continue to be in line with any corresponding staff pay awards.

2.2 Subject to any further changes, the Standards Committee or Resources, Audit and Performance Committee may wish to make to the allowances or other aspects of the scheme, it is proposed that a new scheme be adopted from 1 April 2027 with an annual basic allowance of £2,420 pa increased for the duration of the scheme with any staff cost of living awards (including any inflationary increase for 2027/28 itself). A copy of the proposed new scheme (modelled on the current scheme with the current members' allowance included) is attached as **Annex 2.**

2.3 The duration of the new scheme is also requested to be considered which may be 'up to 4 years'. In previous years, the informal members' working group recommended that the Standards Committee be authorised to monitor any unexpected economic or political impacts which may affect the duration of the scheme and report accordingly to the Authority via the RAPC. It is suggested that the same would be included in the subsequent recommendation with that delegation to Standards Committee.

2.4 The potential alternative would be to introduce a new scheme from 1 April 2027 for a 12-month period to allow a further detailed review of allowances if members wanted to explore that in more depth, subject to the previous considerations discussed above.

Papers:

NFNPA SC 62-26	Cover Paper
NFNPA SC 62-26	**Annex 1** – Original IRP Document
NFNPA SC 62-26	**Annex 2** – Proposed new scheme of allowances effective from 1 April 2027

Equality and Diversity Implications:
There are no detailed equality or diversity implications arising out of this report, however, as stated in the report, the level of any payment or allowance can affect and influence those who may apply to perform that role.

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