



News in Brief

- A new Executive Director, Lorna Johnston, has been appointed and commenced in post on 1 December 2014.
- Work on updating the Guidance on the Councillors' Code of Conduct has begun. A workshop with Monitoring Officers to canvas opinion on its content and format is due to take place on 13 March 2015.
- Hearing Panels are due to take place in January and February 2015 to review reports of alleged breaches referred by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards.
- Case findings will continue to be published on the Standards Commission's website.
- A review of the Standards Commission's website is underway with the aim of improving the content and structure.

Launch of Revised Guidance for the Model Code of Conduct for Devolved Public Bodies

Overview

Following the stakeholder consultation on the Model Code of Conduct for Devolved Public Bodies, the accompanying guidance was revised and published in November 2014. This was also published on the Standards Commission's website in November 2014 and will be issued shortly to the Public Bodies. Thank you to all who supported the development of the guidance on the revised Code.

It is hoped that the revised guidance is more user friendly and accessible. However, while the guidance is there to help Members interpret the Code, it is not intended to cover every eventuality. It remains the personal responsibility of all Members to interpret and apply the Code to ensure that the provisions contained within it are met.

Cases

Overview

Since the last briefing in June 2014, a further five cases concerning 11 Councillors were referred to the Standards Commission by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards. The Standards Commission decided to hold hearings in respect of all five cases. Of these, two have been heard and determined. A further three cases referred before June 2014 have also been determined.

Outcomes of Cases

Of the five cases that were heard and determined since June 2014, four resulted in Councillors being suspended and one resulted in the Councillor being censured.

In respect of the five determined cases, the breaches of Councillors' Code of Conduct found by the Standards Commission related to four Councillors failing to show respect, three failing to understand and properly apply the requirements of registering and declaring interests and one failing to demonstrate proper decision-making.

Case Details

Details of the outcomes of cases and ongoing ones can be found at: www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/full_list

Learning Outcomes from Cases

1. Councillors have a duty to promote and support the principles of the Code of Conduct by leadership and example. They have a duty to be respectful to all other Councillors, Council employees and members of the public and to treat them with courtesy at all times when performing duties as a Councillor. This includes informal dealings as well as as a formal meetings. While Councillors have a clear duty to hold officers to account, they must do so in a courteous and professional manner. Abusive or offensive language and behaviour will not be tolerated.
2. It is vital that Councillors understand the particular nature of their quasi-judicial role. When fulfilling that role, they must ensure they maintain the confidence of all sides that they will consider issues fairly and without pre-judging them.
3. Registration and declaration of relevant interests, held by Councillors, is an essential part of the Ethical Standards Framework in Scotland. It is intended to ensure transparency of decision-making by those involved in public life. Each and every Councillor has a personal responsibility to register and declare relevant interests as any failure to meet the requirements is likely to undermine public confidence in decision-making by Councillors.



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For further information on what support we can offer Councillors, please either speak with your Monitoring Officer or look out for new information coming on our website.

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