



THE STANDARDS COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND

PRESS RELEASE 18 February 2015

At a Hearing of the Standards Commission for Scotland, which concluded on Wednesday 18 February 2015, the Hearing Panel censured Councillor George Black for breaches of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

The Hearing Panel considered evidence from witnesses and documents concerning two allegations:

1. Councillor Black had sent an email to the Chief Executive of West Dunbartonshire Council that criticised her for releasing information to another Councillor and alleged this action displayed political bias. That same evening, Councillor Black posted the correspondence on a Facebook website without giving the Chief Executive an opportunity to respond to his allegation. The Panel concluded this action was a breach of the Code which requires Councillors and Officers to work in an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect.
(The Councillors' Code of Conduct, Annex C: paragraph 20 (Public Comment)).
2. The second allegation relates to Councillor Black's attendance at a public meeting of the Educational Services Committee on 8 January 2014. Following the presentation of a report by the Executive Director of Educational Services on the proposal to re-site a local school, Councillor Black made critical and inappropriate comments about the Executive Director's performance in producing the report. The Panel concluded that the comments made were directed personally at the Executive Director and that they showed a lack of both respect and courtesy to a Council employee and that these comments were made in public.
(The Councillors' Code of Conduct, Section 3: paragraphs 3.2 & 3.3(Conduct at Meetings) and Annex C: paragraph 20 (Public Comment)).

The Chair of the Hearing Panel said:

"Councillor Black is an experienced Councillor who should understand and be seen to uphold the Ethical Standards Framework. Councillors hold Public Office and therefore must observe the rules of conduct stemming from the Ethical Standards in Public Life legislation and the Councillors' Code of Conduct which is issued by Ministers. Employees of West Dunbartonshire Council or any other Council, are entitled to respect and courtesy from their Councillors".

Notes for editors:

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The Standards Commission for Scotland's Hearing Panel decision will be available to download from the Commission's website within 15 working days.