



News in Brief

- The Standards Commission's Annual Report for 2015/16 is due to be laid before the Scottish Parliament at the end of July. The Report contains a summary of the decisions made and sanctions imposed at all Hearings concluded during the year.
- During a consultation exercise, which sought feedback on the Standards Commission's Revised Guidance on the Councillors' Code of Conduct, several contributors indicated it would be useful for the Standards Commission to also produce a Guidance only version of the document, for ease of reference. This standalone version can be found on the website at <http://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/guidance/guidanc>

Hearings Process

We are keen to ensure that we reflect best practice and are continually striving to improve our processes in respect of how we manage and conduct Hearings. If you are someone who has attended a Hearing and/or has been involved in the process within the past 6 months (commencing January 2016), we are interested in your views and feedback on the different aspects of how Hearings are conducted.

We would, therefore, be grateful if you would consider completing a short survey, which contains questions about how the Standards Commission:

- Arranges Hearings
- Conducts Hearings
- Provides information and answers queries about Hearings

The survey can be found at <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/HearingProcessSurvey>.

It should take no more than 5 minutes to complete and is anonymous. All feedback received will be used to inform, and hopefully improve, the Hearing process. The survey will be closed on Friday 29 July 2016.

Guidance for Councillors on Arm's Length External Organisations

The Standards Commission intends to produce an Advice Note containing guidance for Councillors who are nominated or appointed to sit on arm's length external organisations (ALEOs).

The Advice note will contain suggestions on how councillors can enhance their understanding of their different roles and responsibilities and how they can identify risks to governance and accountability. In addition, it will contain guidance on identifying potential conflicts of interest, registering interests and making declarations of interest.

Before we finalise and issue the Advice Note, we intend to consult with stakeholders on its content. If you would like to be involved in the consultation, please contact us on 0131 348 6666 or send an email to enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk by 31 August 2016.

CASES

Overview

Since the last briefing in March 2016, no new cases have been referred to the Standards Commission by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland. The Standards Commission concluded one Hearing and held a further two Hearings in respect of three councillors from Clackmannanshire, Highland and Dundee Council respectively. The Standards Commission also held a Hearing into a breach of the Model Code of Conduct by a member of a Devolved Public Body; Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park Authority.

Outcome of Hearings

The Standards Commission determined there had been breaches of the Councillors' Code of Conduct in respect of all three Hearings held concerning councillors. In one, it suspended the councillor from all meetings of the Council and any Committees or Sub Committees thereof on which he is a representative for a period six months. In the other two cases, the Standards Commission censured the councillors. The Standards Commission also found a breach of the Authority's Code of Conduct in the case concerning a member of a Devolved Public Body, and censured the member.

Learning Outcomes from Cases

1. A key aim of the Councillors' Code of Conduct is to ensure there is mutual trust and respect in relationships between councillors and officers, and a mutual understanding of their roles, to enable a Council to function effectively. Councillors should ensure they do not seek to become engaged in, or influence, operational decision-making. They should also ensure that they are courteous and respectful in their dealings and communications with officers. Councillor should not disclose confidential information about officers in public.
2. The declaration of interests (including non-financial interests) is a fundamental requirement of both the Model Code of Conduct and the Councillors' Code of Conduct. A failure to declare interests removes the opportunity for openness and transparency in a member's or councillor's role and denies any member of the public the opportunity to consider whether their interests may or may not influence the decision-making process.

Details

Details of the outcome of cases and about scheduled Hearings can be found at:
www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/cases/case-list



INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC LIFE

For further information on the support we can offer councillors and members of devolved public bodies, please either speak to your Monitoring Officer or Standards Officer or look out for new information on our website.

Alternatively, please contact us at:

Room T2.21

Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh

EH99 1SP

T: 0131 348 6666

E: enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk

W: www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk