

At a Hearing of the Standards Commission for Scotland, held in Paisley on 17 October 2016, Councillor Paul Mack of Renfrewshire Council was suspended from meetings of the Council's Education and Children Policy Board for a period of three months for breaching the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

The sanction was imposed as a result of a failure by Councillor Mack to treat the Convener of the Council's Children Policy Board with respect and to comply with a ruling she made at a meeting on 20 August 2015.

In reaching its decision, the Hearing Panel:

1. Found that during an item to discuss an invitation for a small delegation from Renfrewshire Council to visit the Council's twin town of Furth, Councillor Mack had been disrespectful when he accused the Convener of going to Germany 'on the lash' with the intention of 'playing hide the frankfurter with the Oberburgermeister'.
2. While it may have been the case that Councillor Mack did not intend these remarks to be offensive, his comments and, in particular, the use of a sexual innuendo, were inappropriate and disrespectful. He gave no consideration to the impact or potential impact of his comments on the recipients.
3. Determined that Councillor Mack failed to comply with a ruling from the Convener and continued to speak despite being asked to cease, which resulted in her having to adjourn the meeting.
4. Noted it was Councillor Mack's personal responsibility to be aware of, and comply with, the provisions in the Councillors' Code of Conduct. He had failed to do so and, moreover, has openly admitted he was willfully ignorant of the content of the Code.

The Panel Chair, Mr Kevin Dunion, in delivering the Hearing Panel's decision said:

"The Hearing Panel reminds all councillors that while they are entitled to challenge other councillors, they should not do so in a personal or offensive manner. Abusive or offensive language and/or unnecessary disruptive behaviour should not be tolerated."

17 October 2016

Note for editors:

It should be noted that complaints in terms of the Councillors' Code are made to the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland (CESPLS). It is for the CESPLS to investigate and determine if any matter should be referred to the Standards Commission for Scotland as alleged breach of the Councillors' Code. It is for the Standards Commission for Scotland to determine if there has been a breach and if so proven, to issue an appropriate sanction.

The Hearing Panel concluded that the Respondent had breached paragraph 3.2 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.