

**For immediate release**

**Aberdeen Councillor suspended for 4 months from Aberdeen City Council committees for breach of the Councillor’s Code of Conduct**

The Standards Commission for Scotland, at a hearing held in Aberdeen on 24 January 2017, suspended Councillor William Cormie of Aberdeen City Council for breaches of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct.

The Hearing Panel found that Councillor Cormie, as a member of the Licensing Committee, made adverse comments to the press which demonstrated that he had pre-judged a House of Multiple Occupation (HMO) licence application, before it had been heard by the Committee in November 2015.

At that meeting he had voted against the license being granted, and then in January 2016 had subsequently voted on whether the Council should defend a legal appeal taken against its decision to refuse the HMO application. This was despite knowing that he had been individually identified in the legal writ, which alleged that he pre judged the application and pre-determined the matter, contrary to natural justice.

The Hearing Panel found that Councillor Cormie had acted improperly by repeatedly misrepresenting the basis of his press comments to Licensing Committee members and to senior staff, including denying that he had spoken to the press on the matter. He had also disregarded advice provided by Council officers that he should not have participated in decision making on the HMO application.

The Panel Chair, Mr. Kevin Dunion, OBE, in delivering the Hearing Panel’s decision said:

“Whilst accepting that Councillor Cormie was motivated by trying to act in the interests of his constituents, this has resulted in a serious breach of the duty on a councillor to act fairly and to be seen to be acting fairly when taking quasi-judicial and regulatory decisions, which is a fundamental requirement of the Code. A failure to do so can result in such decisions being legally challenged and can erode public confidence and trust in local government and the democratic process itself.”

The Hearing Panel suspended Councillor Cormie from all committee and sub-committees of the Council that make decisions on quasi - judicial or regulatory matters (such as planning), for a period of 4 months.

For further information contact the Standards Commission on 0131 348 6666 or by email to [enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk)

25 January 2017

**Note for editors:**

*(1) 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.*

*(2) The Hearing Panel concluded that the Respondent had breached paragraphs 7.1, 7.3 and 7.4 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct.*