

For immediate release

Standards Commission found a former member of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service had not breached the Service's Code of Conduct

The Standards Commission for Scotland, at a hearing held in Newbridge on 1 March 2017, determined that Mr Neil Pirie, a former Board Member of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, had not breached the Service's Board Members' Code of Conduct.

The Hearing Panel found that Mr Pirie received information at a private meeting of the Board on Thursday, 30 June 2016 concerning the disposal of the Service's premises at Lauriston Place, Edinburgh which included that of a commercially sensitive nature, such as a report on the valuation of the property and the identity of potential bidders. Board Members were invited, and agreed, to treat discussions on the matter as confidential. The meeting concluded with a decision that the property should be marketed through named selling agents with immediate effect. The property was placed on the market on Monday, 4 July 2016.

The Hearing Panel found that later on 30 June 2016, Mr Pirie had a chance meeting with an acquaintance, who was a developer. When asked when the property was going to be placed on the market, Mr Pirie advised that it would be marketed imminently and provided of the name of the selling agents. The Hearing Panel was satisfied no other information was disclosed and specifically none of the information of a commercially sensitive nature

The Hearing Panel determined that while it had been made clear to Mr Pirie that the information supplied to the Board at the meeting on 30 June 2016 was private and there was an explicit instruction to treat the matters being discussed as confidential, Mr Pirie had not disclosed anything that was intrinsically confidential in nature at the time it was shared. It was already in the public domain that the property was to be sold. There was no evidence or suggestion of Mr Pirie or any third party accruing any personal or commercial gain from the disclosure.

The Panel Chair, Mrs Julie Ward in delivering the Hearing Panel's decision said:

"While members of devolved public bodies have a duty to comply with the requirement to keep private any information which is confidential, in this case the Hearing Panel was satisfied that information that had been disclosed did not fall into this category."

For further information contact the Standards Commission on 0131 348 6666 or by email to enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk .

2 March 2017

Note for editors:

(1) It should be noted that complaints in terms of the Codes of Conduct for Members of Devolved Public Bodies 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 specific Body's 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 not breached paragraph 3.5 of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Code of Conduct as alleged.