



INTEGRITY IN PUBLIC LIFE

PRESS RELEASE

At a Hearing of the Standards Commission for Scotland, held in Haddington on 13 November 2015, the Hearing Panel concluded that Councillor Paul McLennan had breached the Councillors' Code of Conduct and as a consequence was suspended from attending meetings of East Lothian Council for three months.

A complaint had been received by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland (Commissioner) relating to an alleged failure by Councillor McLennan to observe the provisions of the Code of Conduct in relation to the registration of his interests, and a failure to comply with its rules on payment of expenses.

The Convener, Ian Gordon, in delivering the Panel's decision said:

"The Panel emphasised that the registration of interests, which includes remuneration and non-financial interests, is a fundamental requirement of the Code. A failure to register removes the opportunity for openness and transparency in a councillor's role. It denies any member of the public the opportunity to consider whether a councillor's interests may or may not influence the decision-making process".

The Hearing Panel considered the documents and presentations made during the Hearing by the Commissioner and by the Respondent, Councillor McLennan.

The Panel noted that the Respondent accepted that it was his personal responsibility to comply with the Code and that he should have been more diligent in considering its requirements. There was no evidence of any failure by Councillor McLennan to declare his interests, even those not registered, during relevant meetings.

The Panel concluded that an expense claim submitted by Councillor McLennan on 7 June 2013 did not relate to duties in connection with the functions of the Council. It noted this was one isolated occurrence.

The Panel was concerned that Councillor McLennan had failed to participate in the training provided by both the Council and the Standards Commission. It considered his chronic failure to register his interests demonstrated a lack of understanding of the Councillors' Code of Conduct and its implications for the role of a councillor.

13 November 2015

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(es) of the Councillors' Code. It is for the Standards Commission for Scotland to determine if there has been a breach(es) and if so proven, to issue an appropriate sanction.

The Hearing Panel concluded that the Respondent had breached paragraphs 3.6, 4.1, 4.2, 4.7, 4.8 and 4.22 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.