



NEWS IN BRIEF

We held regional roadshows for elected members on the Councillors' Code of Conduct in Inverness on 5 October 2017, Ayr on 9 November 2017, Edinburgh on 20 November 2017 and Glasgow on 15 December 2017. Thanks to everyone who attended and participated.

We are holding a workshop for Standards Officers of Devolved Public Bodies on 26 March 2018 at the COSLA Conference Centre in Edinburgh. For more information and to book your place, contact us at: enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk

The tenure of one of our Members, Mrs Julie Ward, ends on 17 January 2018. We are grateful to Mrs Ward for her hard work, commitment and support during her seven years in office. The Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body is currently in the process of appointing a new Member and hopes to do so by February 2018. We look forward to meeting, and working with, the new Member in due course.

Harassment and Bullying

In light of the high-profile claims of sexual abuse and harassment, particularly in the political and other high profile areas, the Scottish Government is looking to see what more can be done in a local government context to address such issues. This includes considering whether the Councillors' Code of Conduct and Model Code of Conduct should be amended to deal more strongly with harassment and bullying.

The Standards Commission is interested in hearing views on this and also on whether the Guidance on both the Councillors' Code and the Model Code for Members of Devolved Public Bodies could be strengthened to help deter and/or deal with harassment and bullying behaviour by councillors and board members while they are acting in that context and / or whether it would be helpful to produce separate specific advice or guidance on the subject. If you wish to share any views you have, please contact us by telephoning 0131 4348 6666 or by sending an email to: enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk.

Decision-Making at Hearings

In order to be as transparent as possible, the Standards Commission has produced guidance on how its Hearing Panels make decisions (in terms of consensus or majority) on both breach and sanction at Hearings. This guidance can be found at: www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/cases/hearing-rules

Workshops for Members of Health & Social Care Integration Joint Boards and for Members of College Boards

The Standards Commission intends to organise a training workshop in 2018 for all Members of Health & Social Care Integration Joint Boards and also one for Members of Regional College Boards, Assigned College Boards and Regional Strategic College Boards. It is intended that the workshops will include discussions on topics such as identifying conflicts of interests, being clear about the capacity in which individuals appointed to different organisations are acting, and resolving any cultural clashes that arise on Boards comprising of individuals from different organisations. Further details including dates will be circulated and published in due course.

CASES OVERVIEW

Overview: Since the last briefing in September 2017, two cases have been referred to the Standards Commission by the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland. The Standards Commission has scheduled Hearings in both cases, one of which concerns a councillor in Fife and the other concerns a former elected member of Dumfries and Galloway Council. In addition, the Standards Commission held two Hearings in respect of two councillors from the City of Edinburgh and Renfrewshire Councils respectively.

LAR/1946 & 1973: At a Council meeting the Respondent repeatedly talked and shouted over the Chair and failed to comply with her rulings which led to the meeting being adjourned twice. During the same meeting, the Respondent made a number of gratuitous, personal and offensive remarks and a number of serious allegations about other councillors.

The Hearing Panel was satisfied that the Respondent had failed to observe the requirement of the Code to respect the Chair and his colleagues and that his behaviour went well beyond what was acceptable. It was of the view of the Hearing Panel that councillors should be able to undertake a scrutiny role, represent the public and any constituents; or make a political point in a respectful, courteous and appropriate manner without resorting to personal attacks, being offensive, abusive and/or unduly disruptive. The Hearing Panel was disappointed to note that the Respondent had failed to comply with the Code or show any appreciation he was obliged to do so, despite the Standards Commission having previously suspended him for a similar breach. It suspended him from attending all meetings of the Council for a further period of seven months.

LAE/2028: The Respondent failed to include, in his Register of Interests, a large shareholding in a company that owned a hotel in another Council area. While the Respondent accepted he should have registered his shareholding, his position was that he had completed a handwritten document declaring the interest and had placed it in the Council's internal mail system. The Hearing Panel noted, however, that the Council had no record of this and that the Respondent accepted he had not checked to confirm whether his Register of Interests had been updated to record the interest. The Hearing Panel noted it was the Respondent's personal responsibility to be aware of, and comply with, the provisions in Code, which includes ensuring his interests are registered but he had failed to do so in respect of the shareholding.

The Hearing Panel issued the censure as a severe and formal reprimand. It emphasised that the obligation to register a shareholding is an absolute requirement and integral part of the Code. The registration of interests should not be seen by councillors as merely a tick box exercise as it is a fundamental part of the ethical standards framework. It provides the opportunity for openness and transparency and affords members of the public the opportunity to consider whether any interests may influence a councillor's discussion and decision-making.

Further Information

Details of the outcome of cases, included full written decisions and information about scheduled Hearings can be found at: www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/cases/case-list or on Twitter at: [@standardscot](https://twitter.com/standardscot)



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:

0131 348 6666

Room T2.21

Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh

EH99 1SP

enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk

www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk