

For immediate release

Former East Dunbartonshire Councillor found to have breached the Councillor’s Code of Conduct

The Standards Commission for Scotland, at a Hearing held in Kirkintilloch on 22 August 2017, censured former Councillor Eric Gotts for a breach of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct.

The Hearing Panel found that former Councillor Gotts had engaged in an inappropriate course of conduct towards a relatively junior officer of the Council which included trying to develop a personal friendship with her. This was despite being aware of the distinction between the officer’s role and his own perceived position of power and influence as Convener of Education with budgetary oversight over the Service in which she was employed. The Hearing Panel also found that the Respondent had disclosed confidential information about the officer to a third party.

As the Respondent was no longer a councillor, the only sanctions available to the Hearing Panel were either censure or disqualification. The Hearing Panel noted that it would have imposed a suspension had the Respondent still been a councillor.

The Hearing Panel Chair, Professor Kevin Dunion, said:

“The Hearing Panel considers that councillors have a duty under the Code to treat officers with courtesy and respect and to refrain from disclosing confidential information. In this case, Mr Gotts’ behaviour went well beyond that which is acceptable and had the potential to erode the relationship of mutual trust and respect between councillors and officers. It could also have discredited the Council.”

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

22 August 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 3.3, 3.5, 3.14 and 3.15 of the Councillors’ Code of Conduct as alleged.

(3) The Hearing Panel comprised of three members of the Standards Commission, being the Chair, Prof. Kevin Dunion, OBE, who is Convener of the Standards Commission for Scotland, Mrs Lindsey Gallanders and Mrs Julie Ward.