



18 March 2019

MEDIA RELEASE

COUNCILLOR SANCTIONED FOR NOT REGISTERING A SHAREHOLDING

A Councillor who failed to register a shareholding in a company, in breach of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, has been sanctioned by Scotland's ethics watchdog at a public Hearing.

A three-strong panel of Standards Commission members formally reprimanded Cllr Paul Johnston at a Hearing in Edinburgh on Monday, 18 March 2019.

The sanction reflected the Hearing Panel's decision that, in contravening the terms of the Code, Cllr Johnston's conduct fell below the standards expected of those in public life.

The Code obliges elected members to register any shareholding where the nominal value of the shares is greater than 1% of the issue share capital of the company. In terms of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) (Register of Interests) Regulations 2003, councillors must do so within one month of their acceptance of office. In this case, the Hearing Panel noted that it was not in dispute that Cllr Paul Johnston, who has been a member of Aberdeenshire Council for some 23 years, and who is the Leader of the Democratic Independent and Green Group, failed to register an interest in Enoteca 2016 Ltd within the time limits for doing so, despite being the sole director of the company and owning 100% of the shares.

Mrs Tricia Stewart, Chair of the Hearing Panel, said: "The Councillors' Code of Conduct clearly states that councillors should register certain interests, both financial and otherwise.

"The Panel accepted that there was no evidence that either Cllr Johnston or the company gained any benefit from the omission.

"However, the requirement to register interests is a fundamental part of the Code of Conduct as it provides transparency and helps maintain the public's confidence that a councillor's personal interests will not influence their discussions and decision-making. The Panel considered that Cllr Johnston, as an experienced councillor, should have been cognisant of this."

A full written decision of the Hearing will be issued and published on the Standards Commission's website within 14 days.

The Code of Conduct is based around nine key principles, including, integrity, honesty and respect.

The Standards Commission for Scotland is an independent public body, responsible for encouraging high standards of behaviour by councillors and those appointed to boards of devolved public bodies.

The public bodies include colleges, National Health Service boards and regional bodies, such as the Highlands and Islands Enterprise.

It also covers national organisations like the Scottish Qualification Authority, Sport Scotland and Scottish Water, among many others.

Further information on the role of the Standards Commission for Scotland can be found at <http://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/>

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Issued by the Standards Commission for Scotland. For further information please contact the Standards Commission on 0131 348 6666 or enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk