



**29 September 2020**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

### **RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILLOR DISQUALIFIED FOR MISCONDUCT**

A Renfrewshire Councillor, Paul Mack, has been disqualified by the Standards Commission for misconduct following a Hearing held at Renfrewshire House, Paisley on 10 September 2020, at which he was found to have behaved repeatedly in an unwarranted and offensive manner towards two other councillors, as well as to the Chief Executive and other officers.

The Panel heard that Councillor Mack had made a number of serious and unfounded allegations about the allocation of a council property to the family member of Councillor Devine. The allocation was the subject of a review by the Council's Chief Auditor and then Audit Scotland, who concluded that the Council property was appropriately let and that there was no influence, or opportunity for influence, over the selection process, by any elected member.

Despite this, and without any evidence to the contrary, Councillor Mack had embarked upon a course of conduct in which he made accusations of corruption and cronyism, and of covering up criminal activity, towards Councillor Devine, the Chief Executive and senior Council staff. Councillor Mack had further demanded the suspension of senior officers, again without any justification.

Professor Kevin Dunion, OBE, Convener of the Standards Commission and Chair of the Hearing Panel, said: "At every turn when confronted with findings which have shown him to be in the wrong, Councillor Mack has compounded his misconduct by making still more offensive and damaging allegations. The requirement for Councillors to behave with courtesy and respect towards fellow Councillors and staff is fundamental to the Code of Conduct. Councillor Mack has shown scant regard for his obligations, not just in these cases, but previously when he was suspended for breaches of the Code for disrespect. He has provided no justification, no apology, and no undertaking to avoid similar conduct in the future. Imposing a sanction of disqualification is not one we have come to lightly but is warranted and necessary to reflect his repeated wilful misconduct."

The Standards Commission Panel accepted that Councillor Mack was entitled to raise concerns about the allocation of council housing, particularly if he was doing so on behalf of a constituent. However having heard evidence, reviewed emails sent to other councillors, senior officers and a journalist over a period of some seven months in 2019, and watched a video recording of comments made in public at a Council meeting on 27 June 2019, the Panel was satisfied that Councillor Mack had sought repeatedly to allege serious wrongdoing by a widening number of individuals. This was despite no evidence of wrongdoing being found during any investigation (including the independent inquiry). The

Panel noted that Councillor Mack had not produced any evidence to support his claims at any stage.

The Panel was satisfied that Councillor Mack's accusations amounted to offensive and abusive personal attacks and were persistent and unwarranted. The Panel also considered that, in copying in all elected members to some of the emails, in sending one to a newspaper and in making comments at full Council meetings, Councillor Mack had sought to inflict reputational harm.

The Panel was further satisfied that Councillor Mack had made a number of gratuitous and unwarranted personal comments to a second councillor, Councillor Alistair Mackay in an email of 24 April 2020. In addition, the Panel found that Councillor Mack had made threatening and intimidating remarks in that email when he made reference to someone going round to the other councillor's house and inflicting personal harm on him.

The Panel found that Councillor Mack's actions contravened the Councillors' Code of Conduct, which states that elected members must treat officers and their colleagues with respect, that they must avoid any conduct that amounts to bullying and harassment; and that they should refrain from raising matters relating to the conduct or capability of officers in public.

The finding and sanction take into account that the Standards Commission had previously suspended Councillor Mack for breaches of the respect provisions in the Code at Hearings on 17 October 2016 and 23 October 2017, with the latter suspension being for a period of seven months. Despite this, the Panel did not consider there was any evidence that he had made any attempt to moderate his behaviour or consider how it could impact others.

The Panel determined that Councillor Mack's behaviour was deliberate and serious in nature. The Hearing Panel considered that the manner in which Councillor Mack had raised his concerns was unacceptable and that it amounted to personal attacks on officers and fellow councillors. The Panel considered that, as such, it was likely that Councillor Mack's behaviour would have seriously undermined public confidence in local government and have a significant detrimental impact on working relationships within the Council. The Panel did not consider, therefore, that a more lenient sanction was appropriate in the circumstances.

A full written decision in respect of the Hearing will be issued and published on the Standards Commission's website within 14 days. The disqualification will remain in place until 28 February 2022.

The Standards Commission for Scotland works independently of Government and political parties. It promotes and enforces Codes of Conduct for councillors, as well as for individuals appointed to a wide range of national and regional public bodies across Scotland such as the Accounts Commission, the Scottish Qualification Authority, SportScotland, Scottish Water and the Scottish Police Authority and many other organisations, including NHS Boards and further education colleges.

Further information on the work of the SCS can be found at  
[www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk](http://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk).

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