



16 November 2020

MEDIA RELEASE

EAST RENFREWSHIRE COUNCILLOR SUSPENDED FOR DISRESPECTFUL BEHAVIOUR

An East Renfrewshire Councillor, Jim Swift, was suspended by the Standards Commission at a Hearing held online on 13 November 2020, from attending full Council meetings for one month. The Hearing Panel of the Standards Commission found that Councillor Swift had called a fellow councillor a “wee fat ugly liar”, during an exchange at the Council offices on 28 February 2020 and in doing so, had been discourteous and disrespectful towards her. The Panel further found the Respondent had shouted at the complainer during the exchange and that his demeanour, tone and body language were aggressive and intimidating. The Panel was satisfied that the Respondent’s conduct was unwelcome and would have left the complainer feeling humiliated and intimidated. The Panel concluded, therefore, that the Respondent’s behaviour also amounted to harassment.

Mrs Tricia Stewart, Chair of the Hearing Panel, said: “the requirement for councillors to behave in a respectful manner towards colleagues is an important part of the Code, as a failure to do so can undermine working relationships as well as public confidence in the role of a councillor and in the Council itself.

The Standards Commission considers that councillors should be able to challenge their colleagues in a constructive, respectful and, courteous manner without resorting to personal attacks or being offensive or intimidating.

In this case, the Respondent had failed to conduct himself in an appropriate manner.”

While the Panel considered that the Respondent should have acted with restraint and considered how his conduct could have affected the complainer, it did not consider that the Respondent’s conduct warranted a more serious sanction. This was because the Panel accepted that it was a one-off incident and that he had acted out of frustration, following a Council budget meeting the previous day, when the complainer had falsely implied that he supported eugenics and had stated that he had a vested interest in matters being discussed.

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

Notes:

The Councillors’ Code of Conduct is based on nine key principles, which include integrity, honesty and transparency.

The Standards Commission works independently of Government and political parties. It promotes and enforces Codes of Conduct for councillors, as well as individuals appointed to a wide range of national and regional public bodies across Scotland such as the Accounts Commission, the Scottish Qualification Authority, Sport Scotland, 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 <http://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/>

ENDS

Issued by the Standards Commission for Scotland. For further information please contact the Standards Commission on 07790 389999 or enquiries@standardscommission.org.uk