



17 December 2020

MEDIA RELEASE

SHETLAND ISLANDS COUNCILLOR CENSURED FOR FAILING TO REGISTER AND DECLARE AN INTEREST

A Shetland Islands Councillor, Ryan Thomson, was censured by the Standards Commission at a Hearing held online on 17 December 2020 for failing to register properly an interest and shareholding in a company, as required by the Councillors' Code of Conduct. The Hearing Panel accepted, however, that Councillor Thomson's failure to comply with the Code was inadvertent and an oversight. It noted that he had apologised unreservedly.

Mr Paul Walker, Standards Commission Member and Chair of the Hearing Panel, said: "The requirement for councillors to register certain interests is a fundamental requirement of the Code. A failure to do so can remove the opportunity for openness and transparency in a councillor's role and can deny members of the public the opportunity to consider whether a councillor's interests may or may not influence their discussion and decision-making. It is a councillor's personal responsibility to ensure they register and declare interests as required by the Code."

"In this case, however, the Panel had no reason to consider the failure to register the interest properly was anything other than an inadvertent breach of the Code. It noted that Councillor Thomson had made no attempt to hide his interest and had apologised to all concerned."

The Panel noted that the Respondent had registered that he was a director of, and received remuneration from, a company called 'Shetland Convenience Stores Limited, trading as Tagon Stores'. The Panel noted that, in May 2018, the company changed its registered name to R & L Thomson (Trading) Shetland Limited. The Panel noted that although the Respondent continued to be a director of the company, he failed to record the change of company name in his Register of Interests. The Panel noted that the Respondent accepted that he had failed to include the company R & L Thomson (Trading) Shetland Limited in his register of interests, despite receiving remuneration from and being a director of the company. The Panel further noted that the Respondent accepted that he failed to register his shareholding in the company, from May 2018.

The Panel determined, however, that Councillor Thomson's conduct did not warrant a more severe sanction than censure. This was because there was no evidence that he had attempted to conceal his interest or that there was any personal gain.

A full written decision of the Hearing will be issued and published on the Standards Commission's website within 5 days.

ENDS

All councillors have a personal responsibility to adhere to the provisions outlined in the Councillors' Code of Conduct, which is based on nine key principles, including, integrity, honesty and respect.

Councillors are required, under the Code, to provide the registered name of any company for which they receive remuneration and hold a directorship. They are also obliged to register any shareholding where the nominal value of the shares held is greater than 1% of the issued share capital of the company.

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/>

The Code.

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