



**30 July 2025**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

## **NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCILLOR SUSPENDED FOR BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT**

At a Hearing held in Irvine on 30 July 2025, the Standards Commission suspended, for two months, an elected member of North Ayrshire Council, Councillor Donald Reid. This was after he was found to have breached the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

Lezley Stewart, Standards Commission Member and Chair of the Hearing Panel, said:

*"The Panel found that, at an online meeting of the Kilwinning Locality Partnership in February 2024, Cllr Reid was disrespectful towards a member of the public. The Panel further found that Cllr Reid's conduct towards the individual amounted to bullying, even if that had not been his intent."*

The Panel heard that the member of the public was representing Kilwinning Heritage, a local history society, that was, at the time of the events in question, seeking funding from the Council by way of presenting an 'expression of interest' at the meeting.

The Panel was satisfied, from the evidence it heard from witnesses who had attended the meeting, that, Cllr Reid had:

- been rude, aggressive and confrontational in his questioning of the member of the public;
- unnecessarily interrupted and spoke over her on various occasions; and
- belittled, or given the appearance of belittling, her, Kilwinning Heritage and the expression of interest.

The Panel acknowledged that Cllr Reid, as an elected member, had an important role in scrutinising funding applications, in order to ensure that Council funds were distributed fairly and in the public interest. The Panel was satisfied, however, that not only was Cllr Reid's approach in the circumstances disproportionate, but also that the manner in which he had talked to and questioned the member of the public was wholly inappropriate.

The Panel acknowledged Cllr Reid may not have intended to cause any upset. The Panel was of the view, however, that it would be reasonable for those observing the meeting to perceive his conduct as an attack on both Kilwinning Heritage and on the member of the public, as its representative. The Panel noted, in support of this conclusion, that other witness had perceived this to be the case.

The Panel agreed it would be reasonable for members of the public representing local groups making applications for funding to the Council, particularly in a non-paid voluntary capacity, to be given the opportunity to present information in a respectful environment. The Panel considered that while such representatives and volunteers should understand they may have to answer questions, they have a right to expect any will be put to them in a respectful and non-confrontational matter, and that they will be allowed to answer without being interrupted or belittled.

The Panel agreed that by interrupting repeatedly and asking questions in a confrontational, aggressive and inappropriate manner, Cllr Reid was disrespectful and discourteous towards the member of the public, in breach of the Code.

The Panel accepted similar conduct might be characterised as being 'robust' and even, in certain circumstances acceptable, had it been directed towards other elected members during a political debate. This was because they are accustomed to working in a political environment and might be expected to have more tolerance. The Panel noted, however, that Cllr Reid, as an elected politician, was in a position of relative power in respect of the member of the public, who was an unpaid volunteer giving up her time for a local heritage society. The Panel considered that as she had been subjected to what the Panel considered was effectively an unwarranted and unexpected public attack, it would be reasonable for the member of the public to have felt upset, bullied and humiliated as a result. The Panel considered that the manner in which Cllr Reid conducted himself towards her was both intimidating and disparaging. Even accepting this may not have been his intention, the Panel further considered that Cllr Reid should have realised his actions would likely have this impact. The Panel therefore agreed, on balance, that he had also breached the bullying provision in the Code.

In determining the sanction to be imposed, the Panel agreed that, as an experienced member, Cllr Reid should have known how to undertake his scrutiny role in respect of the application, without breaching the Code. The Panel nevertheless noted, in mitigation, that the conduct in question was essentially limited to an interaction at one meeting and, as such, was limited in duration. The Panel therefore concluded, on balance, that a two-month suspension was the appropriate sanction.

Dr Stewart stated: *"the requirements for elected members to treat members of the public with respect and to refrain from any conduct that could amount to bullying, are key requirements of the Councillors' Code. The Panel noted that a failure to comply with the Code's provisions in these regards can have a detrimental impact on public confidence in both elected members and local authorities and, in particular, in respect of their expectation that members of the public will be treated appropriately when engaging with them."*

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

ENDS

## NOTES FOR EDITORS

1. Complaints about councillors are made to the Ethical Standards Commissioner (ESC). The Standards Commission and ESC are separate and independent, each with distinct functions. The ESC is responsible for investigating complaints. Following investigation, the ESC will refer its report to the Standards Commission for Scotland for adjudication. Email: [info@ethicalstandards.org.uk](mailto:info@ethicalstandards.org.uk), <https://www.ethicalstandards.org.uk/>  
Tel: 0300 011 0550
2. The [Standards Commission for Scotland](https://www.ethicalstandards.org.uk/) is an independent public body, responsible for encouraging high standards of behaviour by councillors and those appointed to boards of devolved public bodies including in education, environment, health, culture, transport, and justice. The role of the Standards Commission is to encourage high ethical standards in public life; promote and enforce the Codes of Conduct; issue guidance to councils and devolved public bodies and adjudicate on alleged breaches of the Codes of Conduct, applying sanctions where a breach is found.

3. The Codes of Conduct outline the standards of conduct expected of councillors and members of devolved public bodies. In local authorities, there is one [Code of Conduct](#), approved by Scottish Parliament, which applies to all 1227 councillors elected to Scotland's 32 Local Authorities.