



25 June 2026

MEDIA RELEASE

ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCILLOR CENSURED FOR BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT

At a Hearing held in Aberdeen on 24 June 2026, the Standards Commission censured an elected member of Aberdeenshire Council, Councillor Alan Buchan. This was after he was found to have breached the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

Malcolm Bell, Standards Commission Member and Chair of the Hearing Panel, said: *"The Panel found Cllr Buchan was disrespectful towards a senior employee of the Peterhead Port Authority following an event at its headquarters in October 2025."*

Having considered carefully the evidence led at the Hearing and provided to the Ethical Standards Commissioner during his investigation, from various witnesses, the Panel concluded, on the balance of probabilities, that during a discussion with the employee, when leaving the event, Cllr Buchan made a number of accusations about the Port Authority and, in doing so, shouted and behaved in an angry, argumentative and antagonistic manner.

The Panel acknowledged that the interaction had been initiated by the employee, who had approached Cllr Buchan about previous public criticisms he had made about the way the Port Authority operated and its governance arrangements. While the Panel recognised that Cllr Buchan's reaction was spontaneous in nature, it considered there was no reason why he could not have responded calmly and courteously.

The Panel was satisfied that, instead, Cllr Buchan shouted and behaved in a manner that was aggressive and entirely inappropriate for a professional context. The Panel was of the view that it would be reasonable for those who were subjected to, or witnessed, his conduct to have perceived it as being antagonistic. The Panel noted, in support of this conclusion, that witnesses to the interaction (being another councillor and other Port Authority employees) confirmed, in evidence, that was the case. While the Panel accepted it may not have been Cllr Buchan's intention, it found he had been disrespectful and discourteous in breach of the Code.

The Panel agreed that, as an experienced councillor who was attending the event as a representative of the Council, Cllr Buchan should have been able to engage with others without being disrespectful or conducting himself in a manner that could be perceived reasonably as being aggressive. The Panel was concerned that while this may not have been Cllr Buchan's intention, he had not demonstrated any insight or understanding, either at the time or at the Hearing, into how his conduct could be perceived and the impact it both could and, indeed, did have on others.

The Panel nevertheless noted, in mitigation, that Cllr Buchan's conduct was limited in duration to the one short interaction and was not personal in nature. It further noted that Cllr Buchan was reacting to being challenged unexpectedly and, as such, was entirely spontaneous (rather than planned or premeditated). In addition, the Panel noted that Cllr Buchan had not been the subject of any previous finding of a contravention of the Code.

In the circumstances and context, the Panel concluded, on balance, that a censure was an appropriate sanction.

Mr Bell stated: *“The requirements for councillors to treat everyone with whom they come into contact in their capacity as elected members with respect is a key provision of the Councillor’s Code. The Panel noted that a failure to comply with the Code’s provisions in this regard can adversely affect the rights and reputations of others. It also has a detrimental effect on how a public body’s business is conducted and decisions are made which, in turn, erodes public confidence in the public body itself.”*

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, <https://www.ethicalstandards.org.uk/>
Tel: 0300 011 0550
2. 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 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.