



15 September 2026

MEDIA RELEASE

DUMFRIES AND GALLOWAY COUNCILLOR SUSPENDED FOR BREACH OF CODE OF CONDUCT

At a Hearing held in Dumfries on 15 September 2026, the Standards Commission suspended, for one month, Councillor Andrew Wood, of Dumfries and Galloway Council. This was after he was found to have breached the respect and courtesy provisions of the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

Suzanne Vestri, Standards Commission Convener and Chair of the Hearing Panel, said:

"The Panel found that Cllr Wood was disrespectful and discourteous towards the Council's Chief Executive in a press article published in August 2025. "

The Panel found that in the article, Cllr Wood made several comments about the Chief Executive. These included that she had clearly "highjacked" Council decisions and "abused her powers" in respect of an emergency purchase of buses.

The Panel found Cllr Wood stated the "little confidence" he had in the Chief Executive was "completely eroded", that she was not the "correct" person to take the region forward. The Panel found that Cllr Wood compared the Chief Executive unfavourably to her predecessors, whom he described as "far more professional".

The Panel noted that the Councillors' Code of Conduct, as issued by Scottish Ministers with the approval of the Parliament, requires councillors to act with courtesy and respect and to refrain from publicly criticising the capability, conduct and performance of identifiable officers. The Panel noted that the reasons for the Code's provisions in this regard are because officers have no public right of reply and, further because there are internal procedures for dealing with any issues about their capability, conduct or performance. A failure to follow these could expose the Council to legal challenge. The Panel noted that Cllr Wood accepted he had agreed to abide by the Code's provisions as part of his declaration of acceptance of office.

The Panel considered that the comments, when taken together, suggested clearly that the Chief Executive was failing to perform her role and amounted to public criticism of her performance, conduct and integrity. The Panel was therefore satisfied that, in making those comments, Cllr Wood breached the Code.

The Panel acknowledged that elected members have an important role in scrutinising the use of council funds and, as such, are entitled to raise questions and concerns about decisions made and processes followed. The Panel considered, however, that Cllr Wood's comments went beyond this and were undermining and personal in nature. The Panel further considered that if Cllr Wood had concerns about the conduct or performance of the Chief Executive, there was nothing to prevent him from following the appropriate internal procedures for raising these.

Having taken the above factors into account, the Panel determined, on balance, that Cllr Wood's conduct was sufficiently egregious and excessive as to justify, as proportionate, a restriction on his enhanced rights to freedom of expression. The Panel was satisfied that such a restriction was necessary to protect the rights and reputations of others, good working relationships, and public confidence in the Council and its decision-making processes

In determining the sanction, the Panel was concerned that Cllr Wood 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 did have on others; or of the importance of building and maintaining good relations with officers. The Panel was further concerned that, by his own admission, Cllr Wood appeared to be motivated, in part, by defending his own reputation.

The Panel nevertheless acknowledged, in mitigation, that the conduct in question was limited in duration. It further acknowledged that Cllr Wood had co-operated fully with the investigative and Hearing processes and had not been the subject of any previous finding of a contravention of the Code. The Panel was pleased to note that Cllr Wood had acknowledged he had failed to comply with the Code. In the circumstances and context, the Panel concluded, on balance, that a full suspension of one month was the appropriate sanction.

Ms Vestri stated: *"The requirement for councillors to treat everyone with whom they come into contact in their capacity as elected members with respect, and to refrain from criticising the conduct or performance of an individual officer in public, are key provisions of the Councillors' 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 and can have a detrimental impact on working relationships that enable a Council to function effectively. It can also erode public confidence in the role of a councillor and the local authority itself."*

"The scrutiny of Council decisions and officer actions is a key part of the role of a councillor. However, Councillors can and should still be able to exercise this important function without breaching the respect and courtesy provisions of the Code."

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](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.