Decision of the Standards Commission for Scotland

On receipt of a referral from the Ethical Standards Commissioner (ESC), the Standards Commission has three options available, in terms of Section 16 of The Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 (the 2000 Act). These are: (a) to direct the ESC to carry out further investigations; (b) to hold a hearing; or (c) to do neither.

In this case, the Standards Commission determined to **do neither**.

Background

The Standards Commission is a statutory body established under the 2000 Act. The 2000 Act created an ethical standards framework, under which councillors and members of devolved public bodies in Scotland are required to comply with Codes of Conduct. Under the framework, complaints about breaches of these Codes are investigated by the ESC and adjudicated upon by the Standards Commission.

Referral to the Standards Commission

Following his investigation into a complaint received on 10 August 2026 (reference LA/G/4661) concerning an alleged contravention of the Councillors' Code of Conduct (the Code) by an elected member of Glasgow City Council (the Respondent), the ESC referred the matter to the Standards Commission on 26 October 2026.

The complaint alleged that the Respondent failed to register a non-financial interest in the group 'Scots Active'. The Complainer alleged that Scots Active is a group that is closely associated with far-right anti-social behaviour, hate speech against migrants and people of colour, and sexual harassment.

The ESC reported that he had found that Scots Active appeared to be a group that operated on an informal, voluntary basis, without any formally constituted membership or governing documents. The ESC reported that the Respondent advised that Scots Active originally worked with another group that organised night-time patrols of Glasgow to reduce the risk to females. She advised that, having been contacted by the other group, she had attended two of Scots Active's 'patrols' in an observational capacity. The Respondent further advised that, in her capacity as the founder of a charity, she had also been asked by Scots Active if she could explain what they would need to do to become a registered organisation.

The ESC noted that paragraph 4.22 of the Code requires councillors to register certain non-financial interests "such as membership or holding office in public bodies, companies, clubs, societies and organisations" in circumstances where members of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts might reasonably think the councillor's non-financial interest could influence their actions, speeches, votes or decision-making. The ESC advised that, in this case, he did not consider the Respondent's association with Scots Active to be a registrable non-financial interest. This was because it was an informal group of which the Respondent was not a member and with whom she had only limited association and had provided only limited support. The ESC advised he did not consider, therefore, that the Respondent had breached the Code.

Standards Commission's Decision and Reasons

Having considered the terms of his referral, the Standards Commission did not consider that it was necessary or appropriate to direct the ESC to undertake any further investigation into the matter.

In making a decision about whether to hold a Hearing, the Standards Commission took into account both public interest and proportionality considerations, in accordance with its policy on Section 16 of the 2000 Act. A copy of the policy can be found at: https://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/cases.

In assessing the public interest, the Standards Commission noted that a breach of the requirements in the Code to register interests could have the potential to bring the role of a councillor and the Council itself into disrepute.

The Standards Commission further noted that holding a Hearing (with the associated publicity) could promote the provisions of the Code and, therefore, there could be some limited public interest in holding a Hearing. The Standards Commission also noted, however, that the option to take no action had been included in the 2000 Act to ensure that neither the ethical standards framework, nor the Standards Commission, was brought into disrepute by spending public funds on administrative or legal processes in cases that did not, on balance, warrant such action.

In considering proportionality, the Standards Commission noted the ESC had not found any breach of the Code. The Standards Commission found no reason to depart from the ESC's conclusions in that regard.

In the circumstances, the Standards Commission concluded that it was neither proportionate, nor in the public interest, for it to hold a Hearing in respect of the complaint. The Standards Commission determined, therefore, to take no action on the referral.

Date: 29 October 2026