

Interim Suspension Renewal – Decision of the Standards Commission for Scotland

GENERAL

Section 21 of the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000 (the Act) provides the Standards Commission with the power to impose an interim suspension on a councillor or member of a devolved public body on receipt of an interim report from the Ethical Standards Commissioner (ESC) on an ongoing investigation.

The Standards Commission's Interim Suspension Pending Completion of Investigation Policy ([available here](#)) outlines how the Standards Commission makes any decision under Section 21 of the Act, and the procedures it will follow in doing so. The Panel comprising of three members of the Standards Commission tasked with the initial review of the interim report, and any subsequent renewal, as provided by the Policy, is:

- Malcolm Bell;
- Morag Ferguson; and
- Suzanne Vestri

It should be noted that the imposition or renewal of an interim suspension by a Panel should be seen neither as a finding on the validity of any allegations against the councillor or member concerned, nor a disciplinary measure.

INTERIM REPORT

Councillor Ian Carruthers

Following receipt of an interim report from the ESC, dated 28 July 2025, the Panel determined, on 7 August 2025, to impose an interim suspension on Councillor Carruthers for a period of three months.

Having received an update from the ESC on 27 October 2025, the Panel then determined, on 7 November 2026, to renew the interim suspension for a period of three months commencing on 11 November 2025.

REPORT ON PROGRESS OF ESC'S INVESTIGATION

Following a request from the Standards Commission, the ESC confirmed, on 23 January 2026, that:

- his investigation was ongoing, and
- he did not expect to be in a position to refer his investigation in terms of Section 16 of the Act until 31 March 2026, at the earliest.

The ESC further confirmed he remained of the opinion both that the alleged breaches of the Code and potential impact and consequences of them were serious in nature.

DECISION

In accordance with its Interim Suspension Pending Completion of Investigation Policy, the Panel considered whether it was in the public interest and proportionate to renew the interim suspension.

In assessing the possible consequences of not renewing the interim suspension, the Panel remained of the view that there was:

- the potential for behaviour that could amount to a breach of the Code to continue during the course of the investigation;
- a clear possibility of ongoing harm, stress and anxiety to the Complainer and other officers; and
- a risk that allowing Councillor Carruthers to continue to act in the meantime could further damage his relations with officers which, in turn, could adversely affect their performance and that of the Council as an entity or result in financial loss.

The Panel determined, therefore, that it was in the public interest and proportionate to renew the interim suspension to mitigate against these risks, in order to protect others and enable the Council to function effectively.

Having noted that the ESC had advised that it was unlikely that the investigation would be completed before 31 March 2026, the Panel determined that the renewal of the suspension should be for a period of up to three months, commencing on 11 February 2026.

Advice on the extent of the activities in which a councillor can engage while they are subject to a period of full suspension (either on the finding of a breach of the Code at a Hearing or as an interim measure while an investigation about their conduct is ongoing) can be found in the Standards Commission's Suspension Guidance. A copy of the Guidance is on the Standards Commission's website at:

<https://www.standardscommissionscotland.org.uk/cases/details-of-alleged-breach>

REVIEW

If the investigation does not conclude within the period of the interim suspension, the Standards Commission will consider further renewing it, in terms of Section 21(10) of the Act. In making a decision about whether to further renew the interim suspension, the Standards Commission will again consider the factors as outlined under Section 3 of its Interim Suspension Pending Completion of Investigation Policy.

Date: 6 February 2026



**Edward Fellows
Case Manager**