



23 June 2023

MEDIA RELEASE

STIRLING COUNCILLOR SUSPENDED FOR BREACH OF COUNCILLORS' CODE

Following a Hearing held in Stirling on 21 June 2023, Stirling Councillor Danny Gibson was found by the Standards Commission to have breached the Councillors' Code of Conduct for behaving disrespectfully towards council officers, and for having bullied a senior council officer. Cllr Gibson was suspended for a period of five months.

Ashleigh Dunn, Standards Commission Member and Chair of the Hearing Panel, said: "In this case, the Panel found that Cllr Gibson's conduct, towards council officers and others, was entirely inappropriate and unacceptable.

"The Panel considered that councillors should be aware of the inherent influence their role brings and should note that as elected politicians, they are in a position of power over council employees. The Panel therefore emphasised the importance of the requirement for councillors to behave respectfully towards council officers, in order for officers to be able to undertake their tasks without being belittled, or subjected to bullying, unwarranted pressure or interference."

Cllr Gibson was also found to have acted disrespectfully towards an applicant's representative at a Licensing Board meeting. At that meeting, Cllr Gibson was further found to have breached the provisions in the Code that require councillors to:

- act fairly and being seen to act fairly;
- take into account only relevant and material considerations;

when making decisions on quasi-judicial and regulatory matters (which would include licensing applications).

In addition, Cllr Gibson was found by the Panel to have become inappropriately involved in operational matters by attempting to pressure officers to take certain courses of action, in respect of issues relating to a development site and regarding the future of a community hall.

Ms Dunn stated: "The Standards Commission considers that such serious breaches of the Code have the potential to interfere with the effective operation of the council, to undermine the important relationship between council officers and elected members, and to bring the council into disrepute (as well as potentially exposing it to successful legal challenge). As such, the Panel concluded that a five-month suspension was the appropriate sanction in the circumstances."

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