



12 July 2023

MEDIA RELEASE

FORMER FIFE COUNCILLOR CENSURED FOR BREACH OF COUNCILLORS' CODE

Following a Hearing held in Glenrothes on 11 July 2023, former Fife Councillor Linda Holt was found by the Standards Commission to have breached the Councillors' Code of Conduct for behaving disrespectfully towards the secretary of a community council at a community council meeting held in August 2021. Former Cllr Holt was censured by the Standards Commission.

Anne-Marie O'Hara, Standards Commission Member and Chair of the Hearing Panel, said: "In this case, the Panel found that former Cllr Holt's conduct towards the secretary, at a public meeting of the community council, was entirely inappropriate and unacceptable."

The Panel heard that former Cllr Holt had attended the community council meeting in her capacity as an elected member of Fife Council. Having noted the largely consistent accounts provided by several witnesses to the Ethical Standards Commissioner during his investigation, the Panel concluded that former Cllr Holt had shouted at the secretary and behaved in an aggressive, disparaging and dismissive manner towards him at the meeting on 16 August 2021. As such, the Panel found that former Cllr Holt had failed to treat the secretary with courtesy and respect, as required by the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

Ms O'Hara continued: "While the Panel understood that former Cllr Holt had concerns about the alleged treatment of a member of the public, by the secretary in an email, the Panel nevertheless considered there was no reason why those concerns could not have been raised in a respectful and courteous manner, without resorting to aggression and shouting. The Panel would emphasise the importance of the requirement for councillors to behave respectfully, at all times, in order to ensure that public confidence in the role of an elected member and the council itself is not undermined".

The Panel was concerned that former Cllr Holt had not demonstrated any insight into the effect of her behaviour on others. The Panel was also concerned that she had failed to show any understanding that, as an elected politician, she was in a role with inherent influence and was in a position of power over community councillors, who were acting in an unpaid and voluntary capacity.

The Panel noted that former Cllr Holt had not expressed any remorse over her behaviour nor any recognition that it might not be appropriate for a councillor to publicly and repeatedly comment on a member of the public's conduct. The Panel noted, in this regard,

that former Cllr Holt could have brought up any concerns she had about the Secretary's email at an earlier stage and in private.

In reaching their decision on the appropriate sanction, the Panel noted that former Cllr Holt was no longer a councillor and, as such, the option to suspend her was not available. As the Panel was of the view that former Cllr Holt's conduct did not come close to warranting a disqualification, it agreed that a censure, being a formal record of the Panel's disapproval, was a suitable outcome.

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.