



31 August 2023

MEDIA RELEASE

SOUTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCILLOR CENSURED FOR DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL INFORMATION

Following a Hearing held online on 30 August 2023, South Lanarkshire Councillor Monique McAdams was found by the Standards Commission to have breached the Councillors' Code of Conduct by disclosing confidential information, and was censured.

Suzanne Vestri, Standards Commission Member and Chair of the Hearing Panel, said: "the obligation on councillors to refrain from disclosing confidential information is a key requirement of the Councillors' Code of Conduct. A failure to respect confidentiality can damage the reputation and integrity of a Council, and can also impede discussions and decision-making."

"The Panel agreed that, in this case, it was legitimate for the Council to have decided that the information in question was to be kept confidential until such a time as the proposals discussed had been finalised and officers had sufficient time to prepare and manage external communications. This would ensure the Council's position and response were communicated clearly and fully."

The Panel heard that it was not in dispute that, on 4 May 2021, Cllr McAdams posted information relating to the potential closure of certain leisure facilities in the area on her Facebook page. Having reviewed all the available evidence, the Panel was satisfied that it was clear that not only was the information confidential at the time Cllr McAdams posted it on her Facebook page, but that she should have been aware of this. The Panel noted that the disclosure had been made in the days immediately before the Scottish Parliament election on 6 May 2021, at which Cllr McAdams was standing. The Panel was satisfied that Cllr McAdams posted the information, at least in part, for personal and political gain.

The Panel noted the potential impact of her action on others, particularly council officers, who would have been responsible for dealing with any resulting enquiries from the press and public. The Panel further noted that the disclosure was likely to have resulted in speculation about facilities being closed, before any final decision had been taken, which may have caused undue and unnecessary concern.

The Panel noted, nevertheless, that the breach had been a one-off incident and that Cllr McAdams had been encouraged by her group leader to disclose the information. The Panel further noted that there was no attempt to conceal the disclosure. In the circumstances, the Panel concluded that a censure was an appropriate sanction.

Ms Vestri noted, “The Panel was disappointed to note that Cllr McAdams had disclosed the information, despite the clear confidentiality provisions contained in the Code, which stated that information provided to councillors for use in that role must not be disclosed or in any way used for personal or party-political advantage.”

A full written decision will be published on the Standards Commission’s website within 14 working days.

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.