



16 February 2024

MEDIA RELEASE

WEST LOTHIAN COUNCILLOR CLEARED OF BREACH OF COUNCILLORS' CODE

Following a Hearing held in Livingston on 16 February 2024, West Lothian councillor William Boyle was found by the Standards Commission not to have breached the Councillors' Code of Conduct in relation to his behaviour during a meeting of the Council held online on 28 September 2021.

Anne-Marie O'Hara, Standards Commission Member and Chair of the Hearing Panel, said: "In this case, the Panel found that while Cllr Boyle's conduct towards his fellow councillors during the meeting involved the raising of his voice and him making some unnecessary comments, the Panel did not consider that it amounted to a breach of the respect and courtesy provisions in the Code, in the context of what appeared to be a highly charged council meeting."

Having listened to an audio recording of the meeting and accounts from witnesses in attendance, the Panel noted that the meeting was somewhat heated in nature, with several participants having raised their voices and talked over each other.

The Panel found that while Cllr Boyle raised his voice on several occasions during the meeting, it did not consider that his conduct could objectively be categorised as yelling or shouting. In addition, while it noted that he had made some unnecessary comments, it found that these had not been targeted at one individual only, or that they had been abusive, offensive or particularly personal in nature.

The Panel considered that, in the overall context of the meeting, Cllr Boyle's conduct did not amount to a failure to treat his fellow councillors and the Chair of the meeting with courtesy and respect, as required by the Code.

Ms O'Hara stated:

"The Panel wishes to emphasise, nevertheless, that the requirement for councillors to behave in a respectful and courteous manner towards others, including their political opponents, is a fundamental requirement of the Code. The Panel considers that adherence to this requirement is vital as it helps ensure the Council can function effectively and prevents public confidence in the role of an elected member and the council itself from being undermined."

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