Standards Hearing Sub-Committee – 4 March 2021
Decision Notice

Consideration of complaints that Councillor Robert Gough breached the Councillor Code of Conduct on 16 June 2020

The Standards Assessment Sub Committee met on 6 August and 16 September 2020 to consider separate complaints and each committee resolved that the complaint merited further investigation by an independent investigator. A report by the independent investigator (7 February 2021) concluded that there was evidence of a failure to comply with the code of conduct and after consulting with the Independent Person appointed by the council a meeting of the Standards Hearing sub Committee was convened.

The committee convened virtually at 6.00pm on 4 March 2021. Councillor Gough was not in attendance, had not submitted apologies nor was he represented. The committee determined to proceed in his absence and considered the report of the independent investigator. The committee upheld the two complaints and determined that Councillor Gough had breached the following paragraphs of the code of conduct,

2.1 provide leadership to the authority and communities within its area, by personal example;
2.2 respect others and not bully any person;
2.5 not misconduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as likely to bring your office or the authority into disrepute;
2.6 act solely in the public interest and should never use or attempt to use your position improperly to confer an advantage or disadvantage on any person or act to gain financial or other material benefits for yourself, your family, a friend or close associate;
2.15 promote and support high standards of conduct, in particular as characterised by the above requirements, by leadership and example”.

In deciding what action to take if any in respect of the breach the committee noted that Councillor Gough had not submitted any mitigation. The matter was aggravated by the fact that when interviewed by the independent investigator Councillor Gough remained firm in his belief that he was justified in making the statement and in fact he would be prepared to say it again.

Decision

The committee resolved that:
1. Councillor Gough be censured for his conduct at the Council meeting on 16 June 2020;
2. the findings of this sub-committee be published;
3. a report on the findings of the sub-committee be presented, in the form of the minutes of this hearing sub-committee, to the next council meeting.

Councillor Maguire, Chairman of the Standards Hearing Sub-Committee.

Date 10 March 2021