

9 April 2025

PRESS RELEASE

Councillor suspended for 3 months

Councillor Clement Cuthbertson (Mid Ulster District Council) has been suspended from his position as councillor for three months following an Adjudication Hearing held today (9 April).

The sanction related to comments made on social media by Councillor Cuthbertson about a children's sports tournament organised in Coalisland in 2022 to commemorate a local man.

Adjudication Commissioner Ian Gordon found that the Facebook post contained inaccurate, unacceptable and offensive comments about a deceased man. The post also referenced all elected representatives in the Mid Ulster area and referred to a local business.

When he was informed about the mistake the Councillor took the post down.

However, when he was given the opportunity to express regret about his actions, Adjudication Commissioner Gordon found that Councillor Cuthbertson took no steps to clarify his post or apologise to the man's family or fellow councillors.

Notwithstanding the prompt removal of the post, the Adjudication Commissioner was satisfied that the Councillor was in breach of his obligations under paragraph 4.13(a) of the Code to show respect and consideration for others. He also found that his actions had breached paragraph 4.2 of the Code by bringing his role as councillor into disrepute.

In considering what sanction to apply, he noted the mitigating factors in the case, which included that Councillor Cuthbertson had no previous history of non-compliance with the Code, and his co-operation with the investigation and adjudication process.

However, the aggravating factors included the Councillor's obfuscation instead of clear explanation of his actions, and his lack of subsequent insight into the impact of his comments.

Commissioner Gordon commented that the facts of the adjudication would merit a suspension of 4 months however he gave full credit for the relevant mitigating factors in the case, noting that the purpose of sanction is not to punish a councillor, rather it is to ensure there is no future breach of the Code and to discourage similar conduct

by other councillors. It is also to uphold the public interest in good administration and to help foster public confidence in the ethical standards regime.

The Adjudications Commissioner suspended Councillor Cuthbertson for a period of 3 months from the date of his full written decision, to end on 11 July 2025.

Notes:

The Commissioner's full written decision will be made available shortly on the Commissioner's website at:

<https://nipso.org.uk/nlgcs/hearings-and-adjudication-decisions/>

ENDS

For further information contact Andrew Ruston on 07503640551 or communications@nipso.org.uk