

13 June 2025

PRESS RELEASE

Councillor Wesley Irvine (Ards & North Down Borough Council) has been suspended for three months following an Adjudication Hearing held today (13 June).

The suspension related to the councillor's failure to deal properly with a conflict of interest at two council meetings. An item on the agenda of both meetings was considering funding applications for organisations of which the councillor was a member.

The investigation found that despite two branches of the organisation being ineligible for funding, Councillor Irvine had still proposed that both should receive council money. Although this proposal was not voted on, the councillor proposed a further motion seeking to have both applications scored, despite their ineligibility. This motion was passed and while both organisations were scored by council officers they did not meet the threshold for funding.

Commissioner Margaret Kelly found that Councillor Irvine had breached the following rules of the Code of Conduct for Councillors;

Paragraph 4.16 a councillor must not use their position to confer or secure an advantage or seek preferential treatment for themselves or another person,

Paragraph 4.17 you must avoid any action that would lead members of the public to believe that preferential treatment is sought,

Paragraph 6.4 you must declare any significant non-pecuniary interest as soon it becomes apparent and then withdraw from any council meeting where it is being discussed,

Paragraph 8.1 when participating in meetings or reaching decisions you must do so objectively, on the basis of merit and in the public interest. You must act fairly and be seen to act fairly.

Commissioner Kelly concluded that by staying in the meeting and taking part in discussions, members of the public could reasonably believe that the Councillor was seeking to use his influence to get preferential treatment for the organisation.

In considering the applicable sanction Commissioner Kelly drew attention to the public interest considerations relevant to this case. She took into account the positive references and the mitigating factors, but for these she indicated a sanction of suspension for five months would have been appropriate. However, taking

everything into consideration Commissioner Kelly imposed a sanction of three months suspension.

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 please contact communications@nipso.org.uk