

9 July 2025

# PRESS RELEASE

## Alderman suspended for 3 months

**Alderman Linda Clarke (Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council) has been suspended from her position as councillor for 3 months following an Adjudication Hearing held today (9 July).**

Adjudication Commissioner Ian Gordon found that the Alderman had breached the Code of Conduct for Councillors by being present during a Planning Committee's discussions of two planning applications where representations were made by her husband. Alderman Clarke did not declare an interest in either matter, did not leave the meeting, and participated in the voting.

Her husband, the MLA Trevor Clarke, was acting on behalf of the agent in one application and representing the applicant in the other. The Commissioner ruled that the Alderman therefore had a significant private or personal non-pecuniary interest in the planning matters discussed, both from both her marriage to the MLA and her position as his employee.

The Commissioner noted that despite the Council lawyer providing her with guidance on the relevant provisions of the Code, she chose to remain in the meeting. As paragraph 6.4 of the Code notes, it is the personal responsibility of councillors to determine, having regard to council advice and guidance, whether they have any conflicts of interest.

He said that on any objective analysis, her failure to declare her interest and to withdraw from the meeting, amounted to a breach of paragraphs 6.3 and 6.4.

Adjudication Commissioner Gordon said that providing details of potential conflicts of interest in the Council's Registration of Interests did not mean that Alderman Clarke had complied with the requirements.

He stated that:

*'It would appear that the Councillor did not understand the implication of perception, by a member of the public, of influence and prejudice arising if she failed to declare her interest and leave the Committee room where an application involved representations by her MLA spouse and her employer.'*

Commissioner Gordon also determined that when Alderman Clarke was appointed to the Planning Committee she should have considered whether she needed to take steps to mitigate any conflicts that could arise, given the information to which she had access as an employee of the MLA. He therefore found that she had failed to comply with paragraph 4.3 of the Code.

While he acknowledged that Alderman Clarke had accepted the breaches and had made an apology for them, Commissioner Gordon believed that a suspension was an appropriate

sanction. He noted this was necessary in order to discourage similar conduct by other councillors, and to uphold public confidence in the standards regime.

**Notes:**

The Councillor may appeal to the High Court against this decision in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014.

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**

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