



Northern Ireland

Local Government Commissioner for Standards

15 November 2021

Local Government Act (Northern Ireland) 2014 Councillor McDonough Brown (Belfast City Council)

Determination of the Acting Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards

Following a complaint against Councillor McDonough Brown, the matter was investigated by Michaela Mc Aler, Acting Deputy Commissioner for Local Government Ethical Standards, who then submitted her Investigation Report to me for adjudication.

A pre-adjudication Hearing review was held to determine procedural matters during which the parties requested time to explore an alternative resolution of the complaint.

The outcome was that Councillor McDonough Brown accepted the conclusion of the Investigation Report and he has taken the following action:

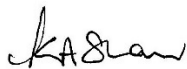
- posted a corrective tweet which included an apology to the complainant who was upset by a tweet which Councillor McDonough Brown posted in late February 2018;
- removed the complained about tweet;
- apologised for the manner in which he responded to the complaint which the complainant raised directly with him and which he had wrongly characterised as harassment; he acknowledged that the complainant's correspondence was nothing less than appropriate and respectful

Councillor McDonough Brown has also confirmed that he has read and familiarised himself with the Commissioner's Guidance for Councillors on Social Media and the Code of Conduct (particularly guidance pages 20-23).

Furthermore, Councillor McDonough Brown apologised for delay he occasioned in bringing this matter to a conclusion, acknowledged that Alternative action avoids the cost of proceeding to adjudication and undertook to engage more expeditiously in any future matters.

The Acting Commissioner was pleased that this long-standing matter had been resolved and noted that it was in the public interest for matters to be resolved by way of "Alternative Action" whenever and as expeditiously as possible. The investigation of this complaint has now ceased in accordance with the provisions of section 55 (6) of the Local Government (NI) Act 2014'.

The Acting Commissioner emphasised the importance of councillors who are complained about engaging with the ethical standards process and the office of the Commissioner for Local Government Standards at an early stage, so that the resources associated with any investigation or adjudication are expended wisely and proportionately in the public interest.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Shaw'.

Katrin Shaw
Acting Northern Ireland Local Government Commissioner for Standards