

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**24 May 2024**

### **Former councillor William Walker disqualified for 5 years**

**Former councillor William Walker (Newry, Mourne and Down District Council) has been disqualified from holding the office of councillor for 5 years following an Adjudication Hearing held today (24 May).**

Commissioner for Standards Margaret Kelly ruled that former councillor Walker had breached the Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors by bringing his position as councillor and his council into disrepute. The finding followed a conviction of attempted communication with two persons under 16 years of age for the purpose of obtaining sexual gratification.

In June 2023 the Court imposed a 100 hours Community Service Order, a 3 year Probation Order, a 5 year Sexual Offences Prevention Order, and the former councillor was placed on the Sex Offenders Register for 5 years.

When interviewed as part of an investigation by the Deputy Commissioner, the former councillor acknowledged he had not only let himself down, but also his colleagues within the council.

At the Adjudication Ms Kelly said it was beyond doubt that a member of the public, knowing all of the relevant facts in this case, would reasonably consider that the former councillor's conduct was such that it brought his position as a councillor into disrepute.

She said that although his criminal behaviour was not linked directly to his position as a councillor, she was also satisfied that his actions had brought the Council into disrepute.

Stating that Mr Walker had shown he was not fit for public office, she believed it was appropriate to apply the maximum sanction available to her, which was to disqualify him from holding the position of councillor for 5 years.

#### **Notes:**

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

<https://www.nipso.org.uk/nlgcs/hearings>

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

**ENDS**

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