

28 March 2025

PRESS RELEASE

Councillor suspended for 2 months

Councillor Cathal King (Newry, Mourne & Down District Council) has been suspended from his position as councillor for two months following an Adjudication Hearing held today (28 March).

The sanction related to Councillor King's arrest in Newry city centre in the early hours of 6 July 2024 for being in charge of a vehicle with excess alcohol.

Councillor King pleaded guilty to the offence and was ordered to pay a fine of £200. He also received 10 penalty points on his licence.

Commissioner Margaret Kelly found that the offence, which was reported in the media, was likely to have diminished the trust and confidence that the public places in him as a councillor.

However, she found that his conduct and subsequent conviction had not brought his Council into disrepute.

She was satisfied that he had breached paragraph 4.2 of the Local Government Code of Conduct for Councillors, which states:

'You must not conduct yourself in a manner which could reasonably be regarded as bringing your position as a councillor, or your Council, into disrepute.'

In considering what sanction to apply, Ms Kelly noted the mitigating factors in the case, which included Councillor King referring himself to the Commissioner's office prior to his conviction, his co-operation with the investigation and adjudication process, and the fact that he had shown remorse for his actions.

Due to the Councillor's co-operation, the Commissioner's office was able to complete the investigation and adjudication process within 8 months of the Councillor's self-referral.

However, although the Councillor was not charged or convicted of an offence of driving with excess alcohol, he pleaded guilty to and was convicted of being in charge of a motor vehicle while over the legal limit for alcohol consumption. This remains a serious rather than a minor criminal offence.

Having considered the sanctions available and taking account of the need to uphold confidence in the standards regime, the Commissioner believed that suspension for

a period of 2 months, to end on 31 May 2025, was a necessary and proportionate sanction.

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/nilgcs/hearings-and-adjudication-decisions/>

ENDS

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