

**THE STANDARDS COMMISSION FOR SCOTLAND  
OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATION AND HEARINGS  
GUIDANCE ON CONDUCT**

**Introduction**

1. High standards in the Chamber or Committee are of fundamental importance to the integrity of Council business and to public perception of local democracy.
2. The Councillors' Code of Conduct sets out Key Principles at Section 5.2 and 3 which include:

**"Respect"**

You must respect all other councillors and all Council employees and the role they place, treating them with courtesy at all times."

**3.1 states:**

"The rules of good conduct in this section must be observed in all situations where you act as a Councillor, including representing the Council on official business".

**3.2 states:**

"You must respect the chair, your colleagues, Council employees and any members of the public present during meeting of the Council or its Committees or Sub-Committees or of any public bodies where you have been appointed by and represent the Council. You must comply with rulings from the chair in the conduct of the business of the Council."

3. The following guidance sets out the Standard's Commission's guidance under the Code of Conduct in relation to conduct in the Chamber or Committee or other meetings and is intended to support Chairs, elected Members and Officers alike by supplementing the requirements of the Code.

**Guidance**

4. The rules of good conduct set out in Section 3 must be observed in all situations where Councillors are acting as Councillors, including representing the Council on official business and the list of meetings to which this provision applies to should be viewed as illustrative, rather than exhaustive. The role of the Chair in any Council meeting, which includes a Committee meeting or a meeting of a Working Group or similar forum, is to ensure that the agenda of business is properly dealt with and clear decisions are reached. To do this the Chair has a responsibility to ensure that the views and opinions of other participants (including the advice of Officers) are allowed to be expressed

and, at the same time, he/she has a responsibility for proper and timely conduct of the meeting and for ensuring that the meeting is conducted in compliance with the Council's Standing Orders. This includes determining the point at which conclusions should be reached. It requires a balanced approach to ensure fairness to participants while at the same time dealing firmly with any attempt to disrupt or unnecessarily delay the meeting. Members present share the responsibility for the proper and expeditious discharge of business and the role of the Chair in reaching such judgements requires to be supported and respected.

5. The Chair's powers and duties should be articulated to the whole Council by the way of Standing Orders which should set out the obligation on the Chair to permit fair and responsible debate and the obligation on the other Members to adhere to appropriate rulings by the Chair. Behaviour disruptive to the meeting should not be tolerated. Appropriate sanctions should be available to deal with Members guilty of such behaviour including exclusion from the meeting if necessary to allow Council business to be completed.
6. Where disruptive behaviour, individual or otherwise, reaches the stage of preventing Council business from properly and timeously taking place, it is recommended that such issues, wherever possible, be referred in the first instance to an informal meeting of Senior Elected Members (such as Political Group Leaders), together with appropriate Senior Officers in order to seek a resolution to such issues. Reference should, however, be made to the Standards Commission where it is believed that such a reference to a group of Senior Elected Members would serve no useful purpose or would otherwise be inappropriate. It should be recognised that disruptive behaviour will reflect on the reputation of the Council as well as that of individual Elected Members.
7. Councillors are accountable for their own individual conduct in the Chamber or Committee at all times in terms of the Councillors' Code of Conduct irrespective of the conduct of others. Abusive or offensive language should not be tolerated and it is a matter for the Chair to rule on the acceptability of language used during the course of a meeting and to take appropriate action as necessary, including requiring withdrawal of a remark, requiring an apology, or any other action required to allow the meeting to properly proceed.
8. The conduct of the Chair in the process of conducting a meeting can play a major role in ensuring a successful meeting. For that reason, Councillors who are regularly expected to Chair meetings should ensure that they are familiar with the Council's Standing Orders relating to the conduct of debate.