

**Ethical Standards Commissioner**

**Summary and Recommendations**

The post of Ethical Standards Commissioner, an independent regulator, is currently held by Ian Bruce. Supported by a small team and working to statutory guidelines his role is to investigate complaints of misconduct referred to him whilst complying with any directions given by the Standards Commission for Scotland. The Commissioner has agreed to make a short presentation to Convention on his role and remit.

COSLA Convention is invited to note the presentation and ask any questions and make any comments as appropriate.

**References**

- No previous reports.

**Garrick Smyth**  
**Policy Manager – Corporate**  
[garrick@cosla.gov.uk](mailto:garrick@cosla.gov.uk)  
**0131 474 9285**

**March 2023**

## Ethical Standards Commissioner

### **Background & Introduction**

1. The Ethical Standards Commissioner is an independent regulator appointed by the Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body, approved by MSPs and underpinned by legislation. Created in 2013 this full-time post is currently held by Ian Bruce who was appointed Acting Commissioner in April 2021.
2. The Commissioner is supported by a team of people working within a remit to encourage fairness, good conduct and transparency in public life in Scotland. They investigate complaints about the behaviour of MSPs, local authority councillors, and board members of public bodies and about lobbyists, and look into how people are appointed to the boards of public bodies in Scotland.
3. The office of the Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland (formerly known as the Chief Investigating Officer) was established by the Ethical Standards in Public Life etc. (Scotland) Act 2000. The Commissioner and his team undertake functions set out the Scottish Parliamentary Standards Commissioner Act 2002, the Public Appointments and Public Bodies etc. (Scotland) Act 2003, and the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016.
4. Whilst independent of the Standards Commission for Scotland – the independent body that has the purpose of advancing high ethical standards in public life through the promotion and enforcement of Codes of Conduct for councillors – the Commissioner has a duty to investigate complaints of misconduct referred to him and must comply with any directions given by the Commission. We had also invited the Standards Commission to send a representative to today's meeting to present alongside the Ethical Standards Commissioner. However due to the combination of it being a small organisation and holidays, that has not proved possible. The intention is to have them speak at a future meeting.
5. The office of the Ethical Standards Commissioner is subject to the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act 2002 (FOISA) and, in addition, produces a range of documents and featured publication covering all aspects of their work<sup>1</sup>.
6. The Ethical Standards Commissioner has agreed to make a short presentation to Convention today and will be happy answer any appropriate questions and issues which members may wish to raise.
7. COSLA Convention is invited to note the presentation and ask any questions and make any comments as appropriate.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Ethical Standards Commissioner – Guide to information](#)

**March 2023**