

Former convener maintains B&B claim was 'incorrect'

Former convener signed off media release he later called into question

The Capital's former Housing and Economy Convener did sign off a promise that homeless families would no longer be housed in B&Bs – despite his later claims that the media release was “incorrect”.

Independent Cllr Gavin Barrie, who quit the SNP after being replaced as housing and economy convener in March, condemned media reports via social media that a promise to halt all homeless families being sheltered in B&Bs by June 2018 took place under his watch in January of the same year.

Posting on Twitter at the end of December 2018, Cllr Barrie said: “I have asked one of the writers to reveal the source of the quote that I don't recall making. They can't.”

When Cllr Barrie was told the pledge had been made in an official council press release, he added: “The headline paragraph in the release is incorrect, the June date wasn't agreed as an end to families in B&Bs.”

The press release stated that families would no longer being accommodated in bed and breakfast accommodation by June 2018 – and council minutes show the aim was agreed by the Housing and Economy committee in January 2018.

A freedom of information request has now revealed that, as the then Housing and Economy convener, Cllr Barrie approved the media release, which he stated was inaccurate. He also re-Tweeted the council's posting of the press release.

In an email to a city council press officer, Cllr Barrie said: “Please go ahead as suggested. Personally I think 'the moment'

has been lost.”

Cllr Barrie maintains that the press release that he signed off was inaccurate and has apologised if the inaccuracy “misled” anyone.

He said: “The first line of the release was never discussed or agreed at any meeting or contained in any council paper, apart from the press release, that I considered or agreed. The first line should not have been part of the press release.

“I regret that neither I nor the other two councillors quoted in the final press release spotted this error. Normal practice would see all press releases circulated to all elected members and again, none of them, even those on the homelessness task force, appear to have noticed this error. If this misled anyone, it is a matter I regret.”