

Former councillors face standards hearing

The actions of two former Edinburgh councillors are to be examined following a complaint about their involvement in a vote to shut a heavily congested road near to where they both live.

Former Labour councillors Maureen Child and Karen Doran, who both stepped down at last year's election, will face a standards watchdog hearing over their participation in the move to close Brunstane Road in Portobello.

The vote, held at a meeting of the Transport Committee in November 2021, was later re-run after it emerged the pair had previously declared an interest as local residents, sparking concern among council lawyers the closure could be open to legal challenge.

Ms Child said the issue had become "a storm in a tea cup" and added it was "a complete waste of time and public resources" to hold a hearing.

And she said neither herself nor Ms Doran – both of whom voted in favour of the motion – stood to benefit from halting through traffic along the historically congested road which residents say has given rise to anti-social behaviour and damage to vehicles.

Ms Child added the declaration of interest was only made "in the interests of transparency".

Ms Doran was approached for comment.

The Standards Commission for Scotland (SCS) – which functions to encourage high ethical standards in public office – confirmed the hearing will be live streamed online on 22 February from 9.30 am.

It follows a complaint to the Ethical Standards Commissioner (ESC) claiming Ms Child had “emphasised her support over nearly 30 years for closing Brunstane Road” and Ms Doran “indicated to officers her support for closure,” it was reported at the time.

Local groups set to address the committee back in 2021 were prevented from doing so due to the ‘quasi-judicial’ nature of the process which is used to shut roads.

Councillors agreed not to allow deputations to speak based on legal advice given to them – which it is understood also stated any members who had previously expressed an opinion about the issue should not participate in the debate.

The matter returned to the Transport Committee last month when members voted to make the closure permanent – despite being told the “vast majority” of Portobello residents wanted it re-opened, and traffic problems had only been displaced to nearby streets.

Those living on Brunstane Road however backed the move, saying reduced levels of traffic and congestion had made the street “a pleasant place to walk and live in” with residents there finally free from “abuse, gridlock and stress”.

by Donald Turvill

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