

Labour accused of holding rule-breaking party in city chambers

The Labour Group which runs the council in Edinburgh are facing “significant questions” over an alleged rule-breaking party event held in their council offices.

Labour administration members including council leader Cammy Day were pictured at the ‘thank you event’ in one of the group’s rooms in the City Chambers on Thursday evening, when local party activists were invited to meet newly-selected Westminster candidates with refreshments and nibbles served.

A since-deleted post on social media by Chris Murray, who was selected recently as Scottish Labour candidate for Edinburgh East and Musselburgh, sparked accusations they had breached “strict rules against using taxpayer funded council facilities for party political campaigning”.

The council said it had been “made aware of an event held in the City Chambers on Thursday night”.

One councillor called it “another example of incompetence and dishonesty” from the administration.

In response to the get-together where guests were given the chance to “hear and speak to both your candidates,” council boss Andrew Kerr wrote to the Labour Group, and all other parties, “reminding them of the appropriate use of council

premises”.

In his letter chief executive Mr Kerr reminded elected members “of your own responsibilities under the Code of Conduct, with respect to the use of Council Resources”.

He added: “The Code of Conduct is clear that you will only use council resources, including employee assistance, facilities, stationery and IT equipment, for carrying out council duties in accordance with all the council’s relevant policies.”

The Code of Conduct, set by The Scottish Government, states: “I will not use, or in any way enable others to use, council resources: a) imprudently (without thinking about the implications or consequences); b) unlawfully; c) for any party political or campaigning activities or matters relating to these; or d) improperly.”

If thought to have been breached, councillors can be reported to the Standards Commission, an ethics watchdog which upholds standards in public life. If found, breaches can result in members being censured, suspended or even disqualified from sitting. One outstanding matter which will be heard on 9 October is the [Standards Commission hearing discussing former Conservative councillor John McLellan.](#)



Cllr Kevin Lang

Cllr Kevin Lang, Liberal Democrat council group leader, said it was “clear the event which took place needs to be

investigated fully”.

He said: “Labour councillors have significant questions to answer on this.

“There are strict rules against using taxpayer funded council facilities for party political campaigning. It will be a serious matter if the Labour group has broken these rules.

“It is clear the event which took place needs to be investigated fully. If rules have been breached then, at the very least, Labour should pay for the use of the room in the way other commercial groups would have.

“It can’t be one rule for Labour and another for everyone else.”

The Ethical Standards Commissioner said it had not received any complaints regarding the incident.

As well as Ian Murray, Edinburgh North and Leith candidate Tracy Gilbert and administration leader Cammy Day (who The Edinburgh Reporter understands left after ten minutes), planning convener James Dalgleish, Culture and Communities convener Val Walker, Integration Joint Board Chair Cllr Tim Pogson and backbench councillor Katrina Faccenda were pictured alongside around 30 other local members, campaigners and activists.

An invite sent out to guests advertised the event was as being in the Business Centre, the City Chambers’ conference facility – however photographs posted on Twitter showed attendees in the Labour Group offices.

Cllr Day was approached for comment, as well as the other councillors and candidates pictured, but all have yet to respond. Scottish Labour also have not commented.

A council spokesperson said: “We’ve been made aware of an event held in the City Chambers on Thursday night. The Chief Executive has written to the Labour Group, as he will be to all parties, reminding them of the appropriate use of Council premises.”

Independent councillor Ross McKenzie, who resigned from the Labour group in February, said: “This is just another example of incompetence and dishonesty from Edinburgh Labour, who will now need to issue yet another apology.

“All councillors are made fully aware of the strict rules on use of City Chambers, so they knew exactly what they were doing.

“When the issue came to light, the candidate for Edinburgh East chose to try and cover it up by deleting the evidence rather than facing up to what he’d done.

“It’s interesting that it was the Lib Dems who first highlighted this, as they are the ones propping up this disastrous right-wing administration. Maybe they’re finally realising that their association with these chancers will damage them.”

by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter



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