

Labour councillor facing second standards hearing in 18 months

A Midlothian councillor is facing a second hearing over allegations of inappropriate comments in 18 months.

Bryan Pottinger was cleared by the Standards Commission of any wrongdoing after claims he commented on a female councillor's underwear were dismissed over a lack of evidence last summer.

Now it has been revealed a new hearing is to be held into fresh allegations that he made an inappropriate comment to a junior council staff member.

The Standards Commission said the hearing, which has been scheduled for January, would be held to establish whether the alleged comment, if proven, amounted to a breach of the respect or harassment provisions in the Councillors' Code of Conduct.

In August last year a hearing of the Standards Commission heard claims Mr Pottinger had upset an unnamed female colleague during a conversation in which he allegedly made reference to her underwear.

However he was cleared after the only witness to the conversation said they had not heard the offending comment and investigation ruled it was possible the complainant had 'misheard' him.

The panel acknowledged witnesses had testified the complainer was upset after the conversation but said the panel was unable to choose between Cllr Pottinger's and the complainer's versions of events.

The latest allegations is understood to relate to an incident earlier this year in the council headquarters at Buccleuch Street, Dalkeith. Councillor Pottinger has not commented on the allegation.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter