

Council instruct independent inquiry

Councillors in Edinburgh today agreed to appoint Kevin Dunion, the former Scottish Information Commissioner, to conduct an independent inquiry into the council's handling of allegations of misconduct.

The finer details of that appointment and particularly the remit which Mr Dunion will be given, required a half hour recess during the full council meeting for all groups to discuss their proposed positions and agree a consensus.

It was the Council Leader, Cllr Jane Meagher, who moved the appointment at today's meeting. This followed an agreement by all parties in December to instruct such an inquiry, but today the various political parties added their individual positions to the instructions the inquiry would be given.

After a period of discussion the agreed position is to appoint Kevin Dunion to conduct an independent inquiry.

The main remit is to conduct an inquiry into the way that the council responded to allegations of misconduct against former Council Leader, Cllr Cammy Day. Mr Dunion will also be asked to take into consideration any allegations into any other councillor elected since 2003.

Edinburgh Greens suggested that the Inquiry may have to

include evidence from non-councillors and asked that council officers provide assistance where possible. They also recognised that a three month reporting date might have to be exceeded depending on the way the investigation unfolds.

The SNP group recommended that officer support will have to be provided by persons who do not have any conflict of interest. The Conservatives asked that Mr Dunion determines whether any matters relating to Cllr Day came up during the previous Tanner inquiry.

Cllr Jane Meagher, council leader, said: "I would just like to iterate that everyone accepts that Kevin Dunion is perhaps uniquely placed to conduct this inquiry. There was no disagreement about that at all."

She said after the debate: "I welcome today's unanimous decision to appoint Kevin Dunion. With a huge amount of experience in ethical standards in public office, he's very well respected and absolutely the right person to lead this independent review.

"It was extremely important that we reached a collective view today, both in terms of this appointment but also, more widely, in terms of the scope of the review. We will give Mr Dunion our full support and all the resources he needs to carry out this important and sensitive work."

Cllr Susan Rae co-leader of the Green Group agreed that Mr Dunion was "a very good choice".

Conservative councillor Phil Doggart referred to remarks made by Cllr Vicky Nicolson (SNP) who said she thinks the reputation of the council has been damaged. He said: "It does not give any of us any pleasure to be engaging in this debate. When Cllr Nicolson talked about the reputation of the council I would say that the reputation of the council is non-existent. There have been so many issues that have been raised. We have no reputation. It is up to us to start to

respond to what has happened in a proper way.” His colleague Cllr Jo Mowat said the council has to be willing to “shine a light in dark places” to try to make things better.

During the discussion Cllr Simita Kumar SNP Group Leader encouraged the other groups to “do this right and do it right the first time. She also urged that the terms of reference for the inquiry would be flexible enough to interview anyone who wishes to come forward and to allow investigations beyond three months. She wanted to avoid any criticism of the council for not being fair, open, honest and transparent or any accusations that the council was “ marking its own homework”.

Independent councillor Katrina Faccenda urged councillors to adopt a consensus approach. She said: “This is our chance to really show that we are going to move forward and that we’re going to look at things thoroughly.”

Both Cllr Day and former Council Leader Adam Nois-McVey recused themselves from the meeting while this matter was being discussed.

Cllr Day stepped down as Council Leader following allegations of inappropriate behaviour in December 2024. There is a police investigation and also a complaint has been made to The Standards Commission. Cllr Day has been administratively suspended by Scottish Labour.

