

## Purcell privacy breach claim

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Published on 5 Mar 2010

**The UK'S information watchdog has been asked to investigate claims that Scotland's biggest council breached the privacy of its former leader by leaking details about his health.**

Lawyers acting for Steven Purcell referred the matter to the UK's Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) following reports the 37-year-old councillor had a "chemical dependency".

Levy and McRae accused Glasgow City Council of breaching the Data Protection Act, which is designed to protect confidentiality.

Last night the council denied it had provided the information.

A council spokesman said: "The council believes it has complied with the terms of the Data Protection Act and will deal with any complaint on that basis."

The Herald revealed on Tuesday that the council leader was to quit and had agreed to seek medical help.

Reports yesterday said advisers within Glasgow City Council had been preparing a statement saying he had a "chemical dependency" and was seeking treatment.

It is understood they believed that would have been an effective way of dealing with the crisis and bringing a quick end to media coverage. However, their advice was rejected and an alternative strategy was adopted.

That led yesterday to the firm providing media advice to Mr Purcell issuing a statement saying the report was "without foundation and is now in the hands of councillor Steven Purcell's legal advisers".

It said lawyers acting on behalf of Mr Purcell had written to the UK Information Commissioner as a data protection issue because of "information relating to the health of the politician".

It added: "Solicitor Advocate Peter Watson claims that information concerning Mr Purcell's alleged health problems appear to have been provided to the newspaper by one or more persons within Glasgow City Council.

"The information which has been provided is data which falls within the terms of the Data Protection Act 1998. Since release was not authorised by Mr Purcell ex facie there appears to be a breach of the Act and an offence has been committed. Mr Watson has called on the Information Commissioner to investigate this matter and consider initiating proceedings."

The ICO is the UK's independent authority set up to uphold information rights in the public interest, promoting openness by public bodies and data privacy for individuals.