

New council might be any colour but the SNP still want to lead



Since the council elections at the beginning of the month there has been a deal of negotiation among the various political groups.

But even today, with a council meeting looming tomorrow morning, there does not seem to be any firm agreement.

The leader of the largest political group, SNP Councillor Adam McVey, is frustrated at the lack of progress.

He told us : “The SNP is ready to form an administration and we’re disappointed other parties have effectively blocked our attempt.

“Our position has been consistent that the capital needs clear leadership which can get to work addressing issues like housing, social care and transport.

“It’s unfortunate that at this stage any attempt by us to form an administration would be voted down in the chamber by the other parties.

“The SNP group will keep working hard for the communities we represent and will continue to put the best interests of the city first.”

While the SNP group no longer intend to lodge any proposals for conveners’ appointments tomorrow, we understand that three of the other political groups, the Labour, LibDem and Green Groups will lodge a motion to fill the membership of the quasi-judicial committees, although not any of the conveners’

positions.

A council leader will not be appointed, although the Lord Provost was appointed last week well within the required time limit.

So it appears that the members of committees like Planning and Licensing might be appointed, but without any permanent conveners in place. In other words there will be a limited form of council governance by elected members, but only just.

In the last administration the conveners and vice-conveners were evenly chosen from among the SNP and Labour councillors as these two political groups had agreed a coalition a few days after the elections. There is no such agreement this time, and many have told us it is simply a result of the General Election, and the need to reelect MPs for Westminster getting in the way.



Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale MSP

We spoke with Scottish Labour leader Kezia Dugdale earlier this week about the lack of progress. This is what she said:

We asked the Scottish Labour Leader about the proposed council coalition and what was happening with it...
pic.twitter.com/qwhB8buFH7

– Edinburgh Reporter (@EdinReporter) [May 22, 2017](#)

When we spoke to Labour Group leader Councillor Cammy Day today he was perhaps a little frustrated too that his applications to the Scottish Executive Committee of the Scottish Labour Party had so far not been approved.

Councillor Day told us : “We have not yet got an agreed coalition in place or committee structure or governance

structure that is a streamlined way for the council to go forward.

“We now want to consult with all political groups and council officers to find a way to provide a modern efficient committee and governance model.

“The old committee structure is not fit for the future which takes into account the new locality model adopted by the council.

“We acknowledge the importance of planning and licensing and the impact on local residents and our motion will suggest that membership is appointed and then the members of the committee will appoint a chair from the elected members.”

We asked why there is not yet a deal with the SNP and Councillor Day explained that the Scottish Executive Council have still to give feedback or an in principle direction. He said : “We are urging the SEC to look progressively at our request to form a coalition.”



The Green Group meanwhile have announced on their website that they are behind an interim proposal to break the political logjam and they propose some way to move forward until the General Election is over.

They also say that they would be happy with an SNP-Labour led council with Green backing on a policy by policy basis is the best arrangement for the capital.

Green Councillor Steve Burgess said: “The current logjam in the city is a result of the general election and political manoeuvring by other parties to gain advantage. It has nothing to do with the best interests of the city and the people who need council services.

“As Greens we are as frustrated by that as anyone else but we

also recognise that it is there until 8 June. So we are making a proposal which gives the city the leadership it needs and allows decisions to be made, on a temporary basis, until the main council meeting at the end of June puts more robust arrangements in place.

“Firstly, we want to see the more legally focused committees set up this week: planning, licensing sub-committee and licensing board and the integrated joint board on health and social care. That will allow decisions in those areas to be made.

“Secondly, to plug the leadership gap, we propose an all party leadership group, with one member from each of the 5 parties, to give a steer to senior officers on key decisions until the end of June.

“Thirdly, we propose some modest reforms to the way the council does business in the long term: that committee membership should reflect the diversity of the council as a whole; that the voting decisions of all councillors should be recorded and publicly available; and that the Education Committee should have two parents and one senior pupil sitting on it.

“Greens want Edinburgh to move forward and to do so in a way which strengthens decision-making and leadership.”

When the council election results were made known on 5 May there was no clear majority. The SNP have 19 councillors, the Conservatives 18, Labour 12, Greens 8 and the LibDem group is now 6.

An SNP-Labour coalition would not have an outright majority and it would depend on the Greens and the LibDems to back them on each matter as it came up for decision unless they are also party to any coalition when it is finally agreed.

The 63 councillors will meet at the City Chambers tomorrow and

we will let you know if and when any deals are thrashed out.

Follow us on [Twitter](#) where will be live tweeting from the floor of the Chamber.