

Conservative councillor accused of sexism

A Tory councillor has been accused of “casual, lazy, everyday sexism”, after speculating that Cllr Kate Campbell will “finally wield the knife” at council leader Adam McVey and steal his job.

Conservative finance spokesperson, Cllr Graham Hutchison got this response from the council’s Housing, Homelessness and Fair Work convener, over the comments he directed at her.

Cllr Hutchison has hit back, accusing Cllr Campbell of “faux outrage” and has rubbished the “bizarre accusation”.

At the SNP group’s annual general meeting in 2018, Cllr Campbell successfully challenged Cllr Gavin Barrie to become the city’s Economy Convener after winning the vote.

At the same meeting, Cllr Ellie Bird also ousted Cllr Barrie to become the group chair. Cllr Barrie later quit the SNP group in protest.

Cllr Campbell says she has been the subject of continuous negative comments from opposition councillors, due to her sex, since taking on her new role. She also claims that a host of male councillors have secured new jobs and responsibilities by toppling colleagues at City Chambers – but have not been labelled a “backstabber”, as Cllr Campbell has been in commentary and in exchanges.

Last year, Cllr Campbell and Green Cllr Susan Rae accused male councillors of talking over female counterparts at meetings. Insiders have also raised concerns that female officials are often referred to by their first names during official council meetings – while males are regularly treated more formally.

Hitting back at the jibe, Cllr Campbell said: "I wanted to clarify that I have never, nor will I ever, take a knife to a SNP AGM. It's quite sad that I feel that that has to be clarified.

"This is not the first time that there has been suggestions about my possession of knives, raised by male councillors in this chamber. I look across the chamber and I'm not trying to single anyone out."

She added: "Yes I did once challenge a man for a senior role. I'm not the first councillor to do that and I'm absolutely certain that I will not be the last. I've not heard similar comments about knives made about any other councillor in this chamber, other than myself.

"I would take this opportunity to ask colleagues to reflect on what I consider to be casual, lazy, everyday sexism."



Cllr Graham Hutchison

Cllr Hutchison refuted the claims made at him and also accused Cllr Campbell of toppling her party colleague, Mike Bridgman, after he failed to win back his seat in 2017.

He said: "I was most surprised by Cllr Campbell's bizarre accusation. Given her track record, having unceremoniously dispatched a sitting councillor from her own party in the 2017 election, and then Cllr Barrie from the housing and economy brief at their group AGM, the following year, my suggestion that she may have designs on Cllr McVey's position is hardly a revelation.

"Perhaps the citizens of Edinburgh would be better served by Cllr Campbell focusing on the homelessness crisis, which she has entirely failed to tackle during her two years as Convener, rather than deflection and faux outrage which does a real disservice to women who really do suffer from sexism."

But Cllr Campbell has insisted that the attitude is sexist.

She added: "Conservative councillors repeatedly tell me that they aren't being sexist. I'm happy to accept that if they can

show me evidence of a man being treated the same way. But they can't because it just doesn't happen.

"The reality is that they see competence as a positive trait in a man, but are threatened by it in a woman.

"This probably explains why the most competent Conservative councillor, who also happens to be a woman, isn't their leader. And why less than 18% of their group is female."