

# **Council administration – status quo will remain**

**The Labour group will remain in control of The City of Edinburgh Council after a failed bid by opposition councillors to oust them from power.**

Labour, who have been in administration for just under a year, and who govern with a minority, were able to continue running the council with the support of Conservative and Liberal Democrat councillors in the vote.

The SNP group, which with 18 councillors is the single biggest political group, claimed there had been a “cataclysmic failure of leadership” in the capital in the last 12 months. They were backed by the Green group in an attempt to dissolve the administration and form a new one next month.

Despite that support – and with backing from the former Labour councillor (now Independent) Ross McKenzie, the move failed to get across the line.

A senior Labour member said the plan to remove the leadership was negligent and would leave a “vacuum,” whilst a Tory councillor dismissed allegations her group was “the tail that was wagging the dog of this council”.

A motion on changes to appointments to committees and boards tabled by the SNP at a full council meeting held on Thursday tried to remove council leader and deputy leader, Cammy Day and Mandy Watt, from their roles “due to systemic failures of

leadership and broken promises”.

It read: “Therefor (sic) agrees to hold these positions vacant until June Council to allow an Administration to be formed which can better deliver residents’ needs and aspirations and prioritise tackling climate change and fighting poverty.”

Proposing to keep the existing political arrangements, Cllr Day thanked his administration for their work over the past year. He said: “It’s not been without its challenges, I accept that.

“There are some huge challenges thrown to us as always every year. I think working cross-party with as many parties as will work with us is the best way forward.”

Cllr Adam McVey, SNP group leader, and the council leader himself until Labour gained power, said: “The last year has been a cataclysmic failure of leadership.

“In poverty reduction we’ve seen no progress, on climate we’ve seen Edinburgh become a back of the pack player in terms of progress when just a year we were world leaders in what we were achieving and pushing forward.

“Right across the board, the politics of our city has changed.”

He accused the administration of “breaking promises” by supporting the Lib Dem budget in February which crossed their red lines on outsourcing and compulsory redundancies, adding their time in power has been “a year of missed opportunity for Edinburgh”. This has been denied by the council leader who explained that agreeing to a budget did not change the agreed policies of the council – which is not to seek compulsory redundancies.

Cllr Alys Mumford said the council found itself in a situation where an “extreme minority” ruling group attempts to

“wrangle disparate parties”. (This despite the fact that the Greens – with 10 councillors – voted tactically at the Budget meeting in February to ensure that Labour’s budget would fall.)

She said: “We are one year in from the election and one of the frustrations has been the difference in the conversations that happen behind closed doors and the conversations that happen here on the floor.”

Addressing the much-repeated claim that the Tories and Lib Dems are a part of the council administration, after they backed Labour taking control and subsequently took up paid committee roles, Conservative councillor Jo Mowat said: “Unfortunately we are not in control, we are in...a new situation that was gifted to us by the voters.

“If we really were the tail that was wagging the dog of this council, we would not be having as many of those votes where we go down in flames.”

And Labour’s Transport Convener Scott Arthur said removing the administration would create a “vacuum” and also put the final phase of the tram project at risk.

“It’s negligent,” he added. “[SNP] want everything to pause for another month or six weeks or so, and I find this absolutely incredible.

“Some people have never got over the fact that they’re no longer leading this council, never got over the fact so much that they had to get dragged out of their office.

“When I speak to people around this city in my capacity as a convener, they see the change in culture.”



The City Chambers ©2023 The Edinburgh Reporter