

First woman elected SNP group leader in Edinburgh

The SNP group of councillors in Edinburgh have elected Simita Kumar, who is still in her first term as a councillor, as their new leader at their group's AGM on Tuesday.

Cllr Kumar was elected ahead of the group's deputy leader Lesley Macinnes in an internal vote among the 18 SNP councillors.

Cllr Kumar was first elected to represent the Southside/Newington ward in 2022 and has been serving as the SNP's education spokesperson, having previously held the fair work and economy brief. Cllr Kumar has broad experience working in public health in Scotland prior to entering politics. This is the first time the SNP group on Edinburgh's council has elected a female leader at an AGM. Cllr Kumar is also the first person from a minority ethnic background to lead any council group in Edinburgh.

Cllr Macinnes, the group's finance spokesperson and formerly Convener of Transport and Environment, will continue to act as the SNP's deputy leader. She was first elected in 2017 and represents Liberton/Gilmerton ward and sits as a member of the Scottish Government's Mobility and Access Committee.

The contest was triggered by the decision to stand down of Adam Nols-McVey, who had led SNP councillors for seven years

and served as Council Leader 2017-2022.

The new SNP group leader Cllr Kumar said: "It is an immense privilege and honour to earn the trust and confidence of my SNP colleagues as I assume the leadership of the largest party in the City of Edinburgh Council.

"I'm deeply grateful to have the opportunity to build upon a strong foundation laid by Cllr Nols-McVey and I extend my sincere appreciation for his dedicated service – not only to our group but for all Edinburgh residents. I would also like to pay tribute to Cllr Macinnes who is a friend and valued colleague and I look forward to working with her to take our team from strength to strength.

"I am fully committed to deliver the best possible outcomes for Edinburgh residents against the backdrop of a unionist administration of Labour, Tories and Liberal Democrats. The lack of leadership and strategic vision from Labour councillors is very concerning and the SNP group will hold this administration to account. However, I am also determined to work collegiately across all political parties on issues where our values and policies align.

"Today also marks a significant milestone toward equalities in our city, and I am humbled to be the first woman to lead the SNP group and the first person of colour to lead any group in Edinburgh. I hope to inspire and pave the way for more diverse voices in our political landscape."

Cllr Macinnes commented: "I wholeheartedly congratulate my colleague Cllr Kumar on being elected as leader of our very strong SNP group on the City of Edinburgh Council. Not only is this the first time the group will be led by a woman but also by a woman of colour. That is a significant and very welcome step towards greater diversity in our city's political representation. Simita hit the ground running when she became a councillor and she will continue to bring that energy,

thoughtfulness and leadership as Leader of the SNP council group. She will have the full support of the SNP group and myself in helping to reinforce the SNP's priorities for our city – poverty reduction, attaining net zero and reducing inequality.

“I will continue as Deputy Leader of the group and we will be working closely together to make progress in holding this administration to account and finding the best solutions for all the people we represent and the city we love.”

Outgoing leader Cllr Nols-McVey said: “I'd like to thank my colleagues for their support of the last 7 years and congratulate Cllr Kumar on becoming the new Leader of our group.

“I know Simita has the whole group behind her and has proven herself as an outstanding public servant and has already shown an incredible level of leadership since she joined the Council. She has made history with her election as the first woman to lead the SNP, the city's largest party, and I'm excited to see how she drives us forward. She'll have my steadfast support as she does.”



Cllr Simita Kumar SNP elected in Southside/Newington