# Aberdeenshire councillor quits Conservatives over nursery closures amid party unrest



An Aberdeenshire councillor has left the Conservative group in a significant protest related to the closure of local nurseries, a decision that has stirred concern among parents in the region. Robbie Withey, who represents the Huntly, Strathbogie, and Howe of Alford area, announced his resignation in a letter addressed to party leader Gillian Owen and followed it with a message to constituents.

The decision to close several nurseries—including Huntly, Crossroads, and Ballogie—was communicated to families just before the Easter holidays, causing considerable distress among residents. Withey cited the mothballing of Glass nursery in his ward as the tipping point for his resignation, indicating a deep frustration with the current situation.

In his remarks, Withey emphasised the need to transcend the ongoing political blame game between the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Conservatives. “Both are equally responsible,” he stated in an interview with The Press and Journal. He referred to the financial pressures imposed by the Scottish Government that compel councils to make difficult choices, while also criticising the local council for making what he believes are the wrong decisions in this context.

The resignation comes at a challenging time for the Conservative group in Aberdeenshire. Recently, internal tensions have been made public, highlighted by Owen's derogatory remarks about her colleagues, which were revealed in a text message. Additionally, the Reform party, led by Nigel Farage, has been gaining traction and is reportedly eyeing defections from the Conservative group, with existing members on Aberdeenshire Council likely to expand further in the near future.

According to The Press and Journal, the internal conflict and public fallout over these issues has left the Conservative group visibly frustrated, particularly concerning the dynamics introduced through Owen's leadership. Efforts to reach Owen for a comment did not elicit a response as of Tuesday afternoon. In contrast, a spokesperson for the Scottish Conservative party extended their best wishes to Withey following his departure.

The situation continues to unfold, with Withey now committed to exploring alternatives that move beyond partisan blame, as parents and community members in Aberdeenshire seek clarity and solutions regarding the nursery closures.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c3g5y35j9y0o> - This article discusses the mothballing of Tullynessle School and its nursery, highlighting the lack of a set procedure to save the nursery, which aligns with the concerns raised by Robbie Withey regarding the closure of local nurseries.
2. <https://www.change.org/p/stop-aberdeenshire-council-closing-oosc-settings-before-affordable-alternatives-in-place> - A petition initiated by parents opposing the closure of out-of-school care settings in Aberdeenshire, reflecting the community's distress over the council's decisions, similar to the reactions in Robbie Withey's constituency.
3. <https://www.grampianonline.co.uk/news/politics-tackling-child-poverty-has-to-be-a-priority-336358/> - An article highlighting the closure of Potterton Nursery without public consultation, underscoring the broader issue of nursery closures in Aberdeenshire, which Robbie Withey criticized in his resignation letter.
4. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-68169124> - This report covers Aberdeenshire Council's decision to end out-of-school care provision, a move that has caused significant concern among parents, paralleling the issues raised by Robbie Withey regarding nursery closures.
5. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy43g8yzq8xo> - An article detailing Aberdeenshire Council's financial challenges and potential cuts to services, including health and care, which may impact nursery provisions, as highlighted by Robbie Withey in his resignation.
6. <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/news/2024/aug/education-and-childrens-services-committee-round-up-for-august> - A council report discussing the mothballing of Tullynessle School and its nursery, providing official context to the decisions that led to Robbie Withey's resignation.
7. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/politics/6750594/aberdeenshire-tory-quits-nursery-closures/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data