# Angus provost pay rise sparks council uproar amid budget shortfall



The new Provost of Angus, Craig Fotheringham, has swiftly found himself at the centre of a political controversy over a £5,000 pay rise, igniting tensions following a recent shift in council leadership. Fotheringham, a Conservative from Monifieth, was appointed in a special council meeting as a coalition of Conservative, Independent, and Labour members took over from the previous SNP administration, which faced a no-confidence vote last month.

This transition has not been smooth. The meeting intended to confirm key council posts devolved into a lengthy seven-hour session rife with political disputes and accusations, including claims of "gerrymandering" regarding committee changes. Council procedures had to be suspended to manage the extended debate, highlighting the fractious nature of the council's current political climate.

The focal point of the controversy was the remuneration package for elected officials. The Provost’s salary was set at £32,540, following a national review that saw significant pay increases across various positions. While council staff are facing a proposed 3% pay rise, local government union Unison has described this as "derisory," contrasting sharply with the nearly 20% salary increase for elected members in Angus, including a substantial £50,000 salary for the new council leader, George Meechan.

During the meeting, former Provost Brian Boyd openly challenged Fotheringham, questioning the moral integrity of a pay rise amidst broader fiscal constraints. Boyd pointedly referred to his own tenure, when he opted for a lower salary to better serve the public interest, citing a reduction in his expenses to £858 compared to Fotheringham's reported £17,000. Fotheringham attempted to defend his position, suggesting the salary structure was tied to the salaries of deputy leaders; however, he was later corrected by both officials and former council leaders, acknowledging his misunderstanding.

This dispute unfolds against a backdrop of a significant £51 million budget shortfall projected for Angus Council over the next three years. Local authorities are struggling to balance financial responsibilities with community needs. The increasing salaries for council members, juxtaposed with low offers for staff pay and impending cuts, have sparked concern among residents and employees alike. Some councillors have vehemently opposed the raises, fearing the negative perceptions they may foster amidst ongoing budget cuts.

As this political saga continues, questions about fiscal responsibility within Angus Council remain pertinent. With public services already under strain, the decisions made in the council chambers will likely resonate far beyond the political spectrum, impacting both staff morale and public trust. The session concluded with crucial appointments to key committees, including the planning and housing committees, but the echoes of political dissent linger, signalling a challenging road ahead for the newly formed administration.

Amidst this turmoil, it remains clear that the balance between governance and public sentiment is fragile. The council's decisions on salaries and expenditures will need to reflect a commitment to the community's well-being, rather than merely serving the ambitions of its leaders.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1-3, 5
2. Paragraphs 1, 4
3. Paragraphs 2, 5
4. Paragraph 4
5. Paragraphs 6, 5
6. Paragraph 7

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/5240816/angus-provosts-row-over-pay-rise/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/5204060/angus-council-pay-rise-strike-warning/> - Angus Council staff could stage mass walkouts this summer if they decide to take strike action over a 3% pay offer while councillors are in line for a huge wage hike. Local government union Unison says it will quiz members nationally on whether they want to consider a ballot on industrial action around what it has branded a 'derisory' pay deal. It comes after it emerged elected members in Angus are set for an increase of almost 20%. A 17% rise for council leader Bill Duff will take his salary to just over £50,000. In total, the wage bill for all 28 Angus councillors will be £816,513 this year. The increases were set by the Scottish Local Authorities Remuneration Committee (SLARC). A report detailing the rises will be presented to a full meeting of the council on Thursday. But a local union leader says elected members should consider declining the double-digit increase.
3. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/angus-mearns/3954475/angus-council-pay-rise/> - Angus Council’s former leader has been accused of lacking understanding around staff pay deals as the authority faces up to balancing the books. David Fairweather and current SNP finance convener Bill Duff clashed over the issue in a council policy committee on Tuesday. The Arbroath Independent branded the pay rise question a 'nightmare' for the authority. But his comments brought a suggestion he was trying to reduce what Angus staff might have to settle for compared to workers elsewhere. Angus faces a £51 million budget black hole in the next three years. And finance chief Ian Lorimer has warned staff increases are 'unaffordable' without a council tax rise or more government cash. Local authority body Cosla has a £600 million deal on the table. That would be a 7.5% increase and a rise of between 5% and 10% for more than 80% of Scottish council staff. Planned strikes by some council workers were called off after an improved pay offer in September. It would mean a 5% increase for staff earning between £39,000 and £60k and a maximum rise of £3k for higher earners. But schools’ disruption is continuing after teachers rejected their latest settlement offer.
4. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/politics/scottish-politics/5127284/dundee-university-principal-pay-rise-cuts/> - Staff at Dundee University have hit out at a pay bump given to principal Iain Gillespie months before he confirmed job losses due to a £30 million black hole. Records from a meeting of the university’s governing body reveal an uplift for the principal and other bosses was agreed in April at the same meeting where financial challenges were discussed. Professor Iain Gillespie, who is also the vice-chancellor, earns £305,000 a year and also has access to a generous expense account. Senior members of staff at the university include former Scottish Labour leader Wendy Alexander, appointed on a salary of over £170,000. It comes after we revealed a failure to recruit enough fee-paying international students had left Dundee University struggling to balance the books. Staff were told job losses are 'inevitable' as the institution grapples with a massive £30 million budget shortfall. An insider told The Courier the news had been 'hard to swallow' while senior managers pocket big salaries. Professor Gillespie has said there will be a reduction in staffing. Scottish students do not pay tuition fees. The government provides around 85p of public funding for every £1 it costs to teach and support Scottish undergraduates. The Scottish Government is only prepared to fund so many places, meaning there is an effective cap on the number of Scottish students who can be accepted. The funding gap has previously been plugged by recruiting international students – some of whom are charged over £50,000 a year. Despite the external challenges, The Courier understands some staff questioned why jobs are being put at risk before savings are made at the top. One insider told The Courier: 'We’re being told savings have to be made and that the university must live within it means while members of the executive group are taking home huge salaries. It does make it hard to swallow and the principal should re-consider accepting his pay rise. That should have been his first step.' A spokesman for Dundee University said the pay award had been based on performance in the last academic year. He said: 'University executive group salaries are approved by the remuneration Committee in line with our policy principles of fairness, equity, consistency and transparency and are based on national benchmark data. This committee includes lay members of the University Court, as well as staff and student representation.' Opposition politicians blamed government policy for the financial situation facing Dundee and other Scottish universities. Scottish Conservative MSP for the North East, Maurice Golden, said: 'Dundee University is undoubtedly suffering from a major financial headache along with the rest of the sector. It has a world class reputation but this is being put at risk by the SNP’s lack of support. The SNP government’s unofficial cap on places for Scottish students has directly contributed to courses being cut. This has left areas of its operation facing a large deficit. And further tinkering with National Insurance by the Labour government at Westminster will be a big blow to the university’s coffers.'
5. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/angus-mearns/392995/not-the-time-for-angus-chiefs-pay-rise-warn-councillors/> - Cash-strapped Angus Council chiefs were warned that a pay hike for four senior staff 'sends out the wrong message' when it was granted on Thursday. The local authority has trimmed its second tier below the chief executive from three jobs to two, to save £140,000 from its wage bill. But the two remaining strategic directors, Mark Armstrong and Alan McKeown, will share a £9,000 hike to reflect 'increased areas of accountability'. And two heads of service, for human resources and regulatory and protective services, will share £23,000 in line with 'increased areas of responsibility'. A meeting of the full council heard that both Mr Armstrong and Mr McKeown had been approached for jobs elsewhere, and the local authority has a contractual obligation with unions to assess their pay when there is a change in officers. But three councillors warned that employees and residents will view the raises negatively, as job cuts are under way on lower rungs. Carnoustie independent David Cheape said he did not want to face his constituents after backing the move. 'Everyone should be paid for what they’re doing. But it’s not going to go down well with our employees. More for less — it would seem sometimes it’s one rule for one, and one for another.' Montrose independent Mark Salmond said: 'I have great concern about this report, and how the public of Angus will view the wages of senior officers at a time when this council is preparing to make over £50 million of savings over the next three years.' Council leader Iain Gaul said Angus was doing more than Dundee and Perth & Kinross with reduced resources and staff. 'When this council came into being we had six people in these posts, now we’re down to two,' he said. 'I would also point out we pay less than Aberdeenshire which has a lot more people, less than Perth and Kinross who have a lot more people, and also less than Dundee who have a lot more people. I would also point out…Alan McKeown and Mark Armstrong have already been approached by other councils because of their excellent reputation and the amount of work they do.'
6. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/perth-kinross/1760464/completely-unpalatable-angry-scenes-over-plan-to-increase-salaries-of-three-perth-and-kinross-council-executives/> - A furious row has erupted over a review of top brass at Perth and Kinross Council which will see the wages of three senior figures increase by nearly nine per cent. Councillors clashed over proposals to set new pay grades for executives – to be backdated to April this year – as part of an overhaul aimed at 'strengthening leadership'. The top tier review, which will see the vacant post of Depute Chief Executive deleted, follows an independent study by management consultants Korn Ferry and will lead to overall savings. But a rebel Tory councillor said the decision to increase wages of directors on the day that UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced a public sector pay freeze is 'completely unpalatable.' Colin Stewart said: 'Increasing the pay of three executives by nearly £10,000 – or nine per cent – at this time will stick in the craw of those who have either lost income over the past eight months, or worse, lost their jobs.' Under the new structure, the council’s Executive Director of Education and Children’s Services, Executive Director of Communities and the Director of Integrated Health and Care will see their pay rise from £111,265 to £120,901.