# Gillian Owen denies resignation amid escalating Tory leadership crisis in Aberdeenshire



Gillian Owen, the leader of Aberdeenshire Council, finds herself at the heart of a tumultuous political storm within the local Conservative party. Despite persistent reports from multiple sources suggesting her resignation, Owen has firmly stated, “I haven’t resigned. My role has not changed.” This declaration comes amidst escalating tensions and speculation regarding her leadership, following a controversial outburst that has led to unrest among her party colleagues.

Sources close to the Aberdeenshire Conservatives allege that Owen was given an ultimatum ahead of her position being put to a vote at the upcoming annual general meeting, which is intended to reconvene after being abruptly adjourned last Saturday. Insiders report that a lack of confidence in her leadership has been brewing for months, exacerbated by her public vilification of fellow party members in a heated WhatsApp exchange, where she referred to them as “f***ing b***\*\*ds." This incident drew immediate backlash and prompted more serious discussions about her future.

The implications of her potential ousting are significant, not just for Owen personally, but for the administration comprising Tory, Liberal Democrat, and independent representatives. She would continue to serve as leader of the local authority until the end of June if replaced, which raises concerns about continuity and stability at a time when the council is grappling with financial constraints. The council had been tasked with finding considerable savings, with Owen herself noting just earlier this year the daunting challenge of identifying £66 million in cuts.

Owen’s relationship with her party is further complicated by her comments on council tax and reforms proposed by the Scottish Government. In recent months, she has vocally opposed plans to increase council tax by as much as 22.5% for higher tax bands, labelling them as “outrageous” and “unacceptable.” Such statements illustrate the precarious balance she must strike between local governance priorities and party pressures amidst a cost-of-living crisis affecting many constituents.

As she navigates this uncertain landscape, the question of leadership looms larger. Fellow councillors have reportedly expressed concerns regarding John Cox’s role—an independent member affiliated with Reform UK—within the ruling coalition. There is a palpable anxiety about potential electoral challenges, particularly with Reform UK gaining traction nationally following recent local election successes. The dynamic within the party is charged, with some members, like John Crawley, opting to defect to Reform, which signals a growing discontent with Owen’s leadership.

Further complicating matters are suggestions that Owen is attempting to unearth an informant—possibly her invisible leaks—through strategic communications reminiscent of high-profile public controversies. An email might have been sent detailing her resignation but was then mysteriously recalled, adding layers of intrigue to an already fraught situation. This gesture, along with her recent social media conduct, reflects a leader scrambling to maintain authority in the face of internal strife.

As Owen prepares to face her colleagues in the reconvened meeting, the stakes could not be higher. Should she manage to retain her position, it remains to be seen how she will reconcile the numerous factions within her party and address the significant challenges faced by Aberdeenshire Council. With local government involving tough decisions, including cuts to vital services to balance a budget recently approved at £753 million, the coming weeks will be critical for Owen, her party, and the communities they represent.

The current upheaval is reminiscent of past leadership crises within Aberdeenshire, raising questions about the longevity and effectiveness of party leadership amidst ongoing pressures. As detailed discussions and votes loom, the future of Gillian Owen as the Conservative leader hangs in the balance, reflecting broader trends affecting political stability within local councils throughout Scotland.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 7, 9
2. Paragraph 5
3. Paragraph 6
4. Paragraphs 1, 8
5. Paragraphs 4, 5
6. Paragraph 7
7. Paragraphs 6, 8

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/aberdeen-aberdeenshire/6751634/gillian-owen-aberdeenshire-council-conservatives/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-north-east-orkney-shetland-65669759> - In May 2023, Aberdeenshire Council leader Gillian Owen was elected as the head of the local Conservative party group, succeeding Mark Findlater. This leadership change followed a vote at the party's annual general meeting, where Owen was nominated and won the ballot. She emphasized the challenges of finding £66 million in savings and expressed a commitment to continue working collaboratively with the coalition partners.
3. <https://www.grampianonline.co.uk/news/aberdeenshire-council-leader-slams-council-tax-proposals-320253/> - In July 2023, Aberdeenshire Council leader Gillian Owen criticized Scottish Government proposals to increase council tax by up to 22.5% for higher bands. She described the plans as 'outrageous' and 'unacceptable,' arguing that they would unfairly burden homeowners during a cost of living crisis. Owen urged residents to participate in the consultation before it closed on September 20.
4. <https://www.aberdeenshire.gov.uk/news/2023/jun/new-council-leader-takes-the-helm-at-aberdeenshire-council> - In June 2023, Gillian Owen was appointed as the new leader of Aberdeenshire Council. The appointment followed the removal of Mark Findlater as leader after being ousted by fellow Tories at the AGM of the local Conservative party in May. Owen expressed her commitment to working collaboratively with all councillors to deliver the best outcomes for the community.
5. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/people/budget-is-set-by-aberdeenshire-council-4530248> - In October 2023, Aberdeenshire Council approved a budget of £753 million for the year, addressing a £67 million shortfall. The budget included cuts to non-statutory services, such as the removal of school crossing patrollers and reductions in speech and language therapy services. Council leader Gillian Owen stated that these decisions were 'incredibly difficult' but necessary to balance the budget.
6. <https://www.scotsman.com/news/people/aberdeenshire-council-becomes-accredited-as-a-living-wage-employer-4374916> - In October 2023, Aberdeenshire Council was accredited as a Living Wage employer, committing to pay all employees a minimum hourly wage of £10.90, higher than the government minimum. Council leader Gillian Owen expressed pride in the accreditation, emphasizing the council's role as a key employer in the region and its commitment to supporting local businesses and communities.
7. <https://www.agcc.co.uk/news-article/aberdeenshire-council-makes-pledge-to-choose-local> - In August 2023, Aberdeenshire Council, led by Gillian Owen, signed the Scotland Loves Local Pledge, committing to prioritize spending with local businesses. The pledge aims to boost the regional economy by supporting local enterprises and encouraging residents to 'choose local' for their needs. Owen highlighted the importance of sustaining local communities and reducing environmental impact by minimizing travel and food miles.