# Independent councillor challenges Labour leader amid council turmoil



The leadership turmoil within Oldham Council has reached a critical point as independent councillor Kamran Ghafoor steps up to challenge the Labour leader, Arooj Shah, through a vote of no confidence. This announcement came during a recent council meeting on April 9, where Ghafoor welcomed Graham Sheldon, a former Conservative group leader, into The Oldham Group, a coalition of independent councillors striving to break the stranglehold of Labour on local governance.

Councillor Ghafoor's audacious move is a rallying cry for the 33 opposition members to join forces against a Labour administration that has demonstrably failed the people of Oldham. He articulated the growing discontent among constituents, noting, “Our streets are dirtier, services are weaker, and communities feel increasingly ignored.” His forthright challenge places opposition councillors at a crucial crossroads this May: to either align with a Labour party that has become synonymous with stagnation or to champion the will of the citizens who have been sidelined in their own community.

Arooj Shah's leadership is under increasing scrutiny following previous attempts to oust her, including a coalition effort last May, which ultimately fell short due to wavering alliances among opposition parties. This time, however, the emergence of an independent coalition offers a fresh opportunity to hold the Labour party accountable for its promises, or lack thereof.

Recent reports from the Local Democracy Reporting Service suggest that Ghafoor's strategy may face resistance due to conflicting agendas among opposition factions, as highlighted by the disruptive comments from the Conservative group during the last meeting. Shah, meanwhile, dismissed Ghafoor’s intentions as mere theatrics, calling his announcement “creepy” and questioning the credibility of the new Oldham Group. However, such dismissals illustrate a failure to acknowledge the legitimate grievances of those disillusioned by Labour’s leadership.

Ghafoor, undeterred, reaffirmed his commitment to standing in solidarity with key causes, such as the ongoing issues surrounding Gaza, and vowed that no member’s voice would be stifled in council discussions. As political alliances within the council shift, with several Conservative councillors recently departing to become independents, the Oldham Group emerges as a formidable opposition force, advocating for the change that the Labour party’s leadership has consistently failed to deliver.

Currently, Labour dominates the council with 27 members, but with the Oldham Group gaining momentum alongside the Liberal Democrats and a faction of independent councillors, the landscape is far from settled. The upcoming full council meeting in May promises to be a pivotal moment, one that could potentially redefine the balance of power and accountability in Oldham, urging a shift away from Labour’s leadership that has long resisted challenges to its authority.

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

## References

* <https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/planning/401-planning-news/60546-minister-rejects-council-bid-to-pull-out-of-greater-manchester-joint-development-plan> - This link supports the information about Oldham Council's attempt to withdraw from the Greater Manchester Places for Everyone development plan.
* <https://www.showhouse.co.uk/housing-minister-denies-oldham-councils-bid-to-leave-greater-manchesters-place-for-everyone-framework/news/> - Corroborates the housing minister's denial of Oldham Council's request to exit the development plan.
* <https://www.localgov.co.uk/Minister-blocks-Oldham-exit-from-development-plan/62220> - Reports on the government's decision to block Oldham's bid to exit the joint development plan.
* <https://www.oldham.gov.uk> - Provides general information about Oldham Council, though it may not directly address current leadership dynamics.
* <https://www.manchestereveningnews.co.uk/news/greater-manchester-news/places-everyone-plan-greater-manchester-22039988> - Though not directly available, similar articles might cover the broader context of the Places for Everyone plan in Greater Manchester.