# New Angus Council accused of gerrymandering in committee reshuffle



# Political Turmoil Hits Angus Council with Allegations of Gerrymandering

The inaugural meeting of the newly coalition-led Angus Council erupted into political discord as former leaders from the SNP accused the new administration of engaging in “gerrymandering” regarding committee structures. The controversy followed the unexpected decision by George Meechan, the new council leader and former second-in-command of the SNP, to reduce the membership of key council committees from 16 to 15. According to the proposal, these committees would comprise seven members from the ruling administration, six from the opposition, and two unaffiliated members.

Meechan described the adjustment as a means to “improve the overall stability” of council decision-making processes. However, his former party colleagues were quick to condemn the move. Bill Duff, the deposed SNP council leader, characterised it as a “blatant gerrymandering of the rules to suit the new insurgent administration,” likening the action to changing the rules of a football match mid-game. He stated that such manoeuvres not only set a concerning precedent but also left a “very bad taste” in the political atmosphere of Angus.

The clash underscored ongoing tensions within the council, particularly in light of recent political shifts that had transformed its governance structure. With the council now under a minority administration, cases of abandoning true democratic processes are a glaring warning to voters seeking accountability and transparency. The desperate need for party negotiations to foster effective governance only highlights the instability that the electorate had hoped to avoid, furthering the narrative of a government that seems more focused on consolidating power than ensuring representation and progress for the people of Angus.

Despite the criticism, Derek Wann, the council’s deputy leader from the Conservative Party, attempted to downplay the allegations of gerrymandering, asserting the changes were aimed at fostering a more coherent council after a period of disarray. His claims, however, ring hollow when one considers the chaos and dysfunction that have plagued the council, particularly in light of the previous Conservative administration's failures that left the governing body fractured and ineffective.

The razor-thin margin during the vote indicated increasing divisiveness, as the decision split the council chamber evenly at 14-14. The new Angus Provost, Craig Fotheringham, was pivotal in breaking the deadlock with his casting vote—further underscoring how tenuous this new coalition’s grasp on power truly is. Such political maneuvers leave many questioning whether the interests of constituents are paramount in this new era of governance or merely a facade for self-serving ambitions.

As the council grapples with internal complexities, these developments raise critical questions about the future direction of governance in Angus. The proposed committee changes, framed as steps toward efficiency, risk allowing hidden agendas to overshadow the proper democratic process. Meechan had previously expressed a desire to move the council “forward,” but these maneuvers reveal a troubling tendency to prioritize political gamesmanship over genuine public service.

The implications of these changes extend beyond mere committee memberships; they signal a potentially volatile political landscape in Angus. As various factions vie for control, it becomes increasingly clear that the need for true, transparent, and effective governance in local politics has never been greater. The electorate deserves a council that prioritizes the needs of its constituents rather than playing political chess.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/5240415/new-angus-council-gerrymandering-row/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/angus-mearns/5088471/angus-council-committee-structure-changes/> - Angus Council is convening a special meeting to address committee structure changes following the resignations of two SNP councillors, Serena Cowdy and Brian Boyd. These departures have shifted the council to a minority administration, necessitating a review of committee memberships to reflect the new political balance. The council leader, Bill Duff, emphasized the importance of negotiations with opposition and non-aligned members to ensure effective governance. The meeting aims to realign committee compositions and elect a new Deputy Provost, with potential financial implications due to changes in councillor roles and responsibilities.
3. <https://www.thenational.scot/news/20131782.angus-council-snp-forms-administration-backing-independents/> - Following the 2022 local elections, the SNP formed a new administration in Angus Council by securing support from independent councillors David Cheape and Brian Boyd. This coalition marked the end of a Conservative-dominated administration, which had faced criticism for its chaotic governance. The SNP's increased vote share and the support from independents enabled them to lead the council, aiming to bring stability and forward-thinking policies to Angus. The collaboration was seen as a move towards more cooperative and mature governance, focusing on the future of the region.
4. <https://www.thecourier.co.uk/fp/news/angus-mearns/2685204/angus-boundary-changes/> - Angus Council is establishing a cross-party group to evaluate proposed Westminster boundary changes that would affect the region. The 2023 review suggests removing Arbroath from the Angus constituency and incorporating areas like Scone and Blairgowrie. This proposal has sparked controversy, with councillors expressing concerns about the impact on local representation and community ties. The council plans to submit its response to the Boundary Commission for Scotland by the December 8 deadline, aiming to influence the final recommendations before the next general election.
5. <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/new-housing-committee-approved-by-angus-council> - Angus Council has approved the establishment of a new Housing Committee, set to commence in January 2025. This committee aims to address the housing emergency in Angus by overseeing the council's housing strategy, policy, and improvement plans. The move reflects the council's commitment to prioritizing housing issues and enhancing tenant engagement. The committee will include three tenant representatives in a non-voting capacity, ensuring that tenant perspectives are integral to housing decisions. The initiative underscores the council's dedication to providing quality housing and responsive services to the community.
6. <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/leader-of-angus-council-to-step-down> - Councillor Beth Whiteside has announced her resignation as leader of Angus Council, citing personal reasons and the desire for new leadership. Her decision follows a period of significant challenges, including the COVID-19 pandemic and severe weather events. Depute leader Councillor George Meechan will continue to serve as depute leader during the transition. Whiteside expressed pride in her tenure and support for her successor, emphasizing the importance of moving forward with fresh leadership to address the council's ongoing challenges and initiatives.
7. <https://www.scottishhousingnews.com/articles/angus-council-elects-new-leader> - Councillor Bill Duff has been elected as the new leader of Angus Council, succeeding Councillor Beth Whiteside, who resigned in August 2024. Duff acknowledged Whiteside's leadership during challenging times and highlighted the council's ongoing projects, including the Monifieth Learning Campus and recovery efforts from severe storms. The election of Duff marks a new chapter for the council, with a focus on continuity and addressing the region's pressing issues under his leadership.