

Silenced in St Peter's: The Exclusion of Cllr Kaleel Khan and the Erosion of Local Democracy

Amid ongoing concerns over housing and safeguarding, Tameside faces new scrutiny as an independent councillor is systematically denied a voice, raising urgent questions about the integrity of its local governance.

By Jason Nield

In a borough already grappling with serious issues, a shocking pattern of exclusion has emerged. Independent Councillor Kaleel Khan, representing St Peter's Ward, finds himself at the centre of a storm, systematically barred from local decision-making bodies in direct defiance of established rules, sparking fears that the very foundations of Tameside's democracy are being deliberately undermined.

Tameside, a borough wrestling with the fallout of housing failures and safeguarding breaches, is now confronting a fresh controversy: the	systematic silencing of opposition voices within its local governance structure. At the heart of this dispute is Cllr Kaleel Khan, the	independently elected representative for St Peter's Ward.
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A Seat Denied

Despite explicit provisions in the Ashton Town Board's (now rebranded as the Plan for Neighbourhood Board) own Terms of Reference, which mandate the inclusion of opposition councillors, Cllr Khan has been unequivocally denied a seat. The board's composition raises further alarm, reportedly stacked with Labour councillors and Labour-affiliated volunteers, including individuals with direct ties to Deputy Labour	Leader Angela Rayner, who allegedly backed Khan's exclusion. Phill Brown, the unelected chair of the board and an MBE recipient, enforced this decision, even in the face of Cllr Khan's persistent requests and formal complaints. The timeline of Cllr Khan's struggle for inclusion paints a stark picture: May 2024: Kaleel Khan is elected as an Independent	councillor for St Peter's Ward. April–August 2025: His repeated requests to join the board are systematically denied. August 2025: A formal complaint submitted to the Monitoring Officer is reportedly blocked. September 2025: Cllr Khan launches a public campaign, demanding transparency and accountability.
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Beyond the Council Chamber

The campaign to silence Cllr Khan, however, extends beyond the immediate confines of the Plan for Neighbourhood Board. In March 2025, advocating for his disabled constituents, Khan wrote to Angela Rayner, urging her to oppose welfare cuts. Instead of addressing the substantive concerns, Rayner reportedly filed a complaint against Khan for the administrative offence of using council letterhead. While that complaint was later	dropped, the message it sent was chillingly clear: advocacy, particularly from an independent voice, would be met with swift and disproportionate retaliation. This pattern of suppression takes on an even more critical dimension when viewed against Ms. Rayner's own actions. On 1 July 2025, she notably voted in favour of the controversial Welfare Bill, a legislative act that included significant cuts to disability	benefits and pivotal changes to Personal Independence Payment (PIP). Reports indicate she even led private talks to facilitate the bill's passage, despite a substantial rebellion of 49 Labour MPs who voted against it. This action, following her complaint against Khan for advocating against similar cuts, raises serious questions about consistency and genuine representation for the most vulnerable.
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The Fight for Transparency

In response to these alarming developments, the Tameside Independent is now launching a full-scale investigation. This probe will scrutinise the composition and nomination process of the Plan for Neighbourhood Board, the role of the Monitoring Officer in allegedly blocking complaints, and the disturbing use of	internal complaints as a tool to suppress legitimate opposition. Furthermore, the investigation will delve into the welfare vote and its profound local impact on Tameside residents. This isn't merely about the fate of one councillor; it's a critical examination of whether the	democratic principles underpinning local governance still hold true in Tameside. If you have been affected by these issues or possess evidence to share, we urge you to contact us confidentially. The fight for an independent voice and transparent accountability continues.
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