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# 'Turmoil at the top of WECA' says council leader



Council leader Kevin Guy spoke to BBC Radio Bristol's John Darvall

## Pete Simson

BBC Bristol Political Reporter

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**The leader of Bath and North East Somerset Council (BANES) Kevin Guy says the leadership of the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) is "in turmoil".**

It follows the departure of several high profile senior officers from the organisation, led by the Labour Regional Mayor Dan Norris.

The authority's employment committee is due to meet on Friday behind closed doors, which the BBC understands concerns allegations of procedural irregularities regarding some appointments.

Mr Guy has accused Mayor Norris of being distracted following his **election to Parliament** in the summer. Mr Norris has declined to comment.



| Bath and North East Somerset Council leader Kevin Guy

The West of England Combined Authority membership is made up of Bristol, South Gloucestershire and BANES Councils, led by Mayor Norris, **who was elected in 2021**. In July he was also elected as MP for North East Somerset and Hanham.

WECA deals with regional transport, housing and adult skills, but politically it has been **beset by public rows**. The latest revelations however concern matters that have taken place out of the public eye.

Speaking to BBC Radio Bristol, Councillor Guy said: "I would say because of the instability brought about by the WECA Mayor concentrating on his parliamentary ambitions, he has taken his leadership eye away from WECA, and that has caused significant instability at the heart of the institution."

"I welcome the elections next May, hopefully we will get new leadership. The job of the Mayor is to be a regional leader and work with local Councils," he added.



Dan Norris will step down as West of England Mayor in May after the Labour Party barred its members from holding two elected jobs

Former Bristol City Council chief executive Stephen Peacock was appointed as WECA's new chief executive earlier this year, the third CEO since Mr Norris' election in 2021.

According to Mr Guy: "He's clearly with appearances taking a bit of a broom to senior management. Is that the right or wrong thing to do?"

"There are a number of issues that have been brought to my attention as a member of the WECA board which I can't talk about because we have confidential employment committees to go to.

"There is turmoil at the top of WECA," he added.

A new West of England Mayor will be elected in May, with Dan Norris unable to stand after the Labour Party changed its rules on members holding two elected roles at the same time.

Labour's candidate is due to be announced tomorrow.

A spokesperson for the Mayoral Combined Authority declined to comment.

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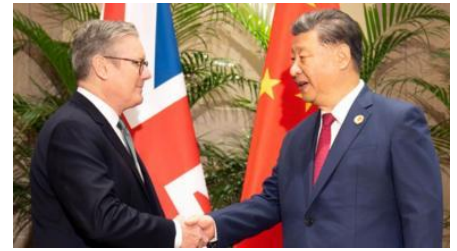
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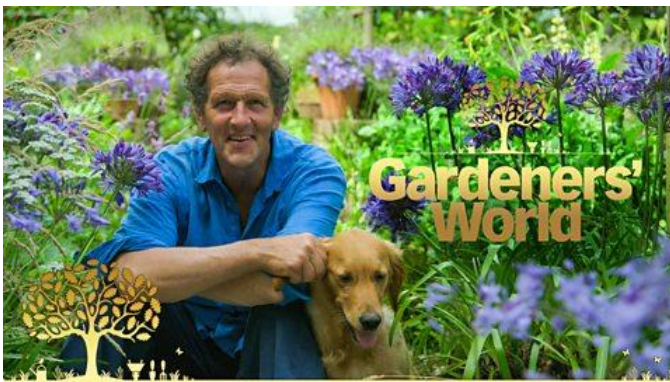
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