



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt. Hon. Sir Keir Starmer QC MP
Leader of the Labour Party

Sent via email

30 July 2020

Dear Sir Keir,

I am grateful to your office for letting me know that you will be visiting my Peterborough constituency tomorrow.

Your visit is a welcome opportunity to keep your promise “to tear out anti-Semitism by its roots” within the Labour Party. Sadly, these roots have grown deeply in Peterborough within your two local CLPs and your City Council group. Labour’s candidates for council and general elections have included a Holocaust denier, an MP who actively opposed the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism (and whose excuses for anti-Semitic social media use were condemned by the Board of Deputies as stretching “the limits of credulity”) and a senior councillor with a history of problematic behaviour.

According to a leaked internal Labour report, **Peterborough CLP** elected Alan Bull as its chair in 2017. Shortly afterwards, formal complaints began to be made, including that Bull had described the Holocaust as a “hoax”, shared anti-Semitic posts online, defended Adolf Hitler and made other anti-Semitic comments at a birthday party. The Peterborough Telegraph has reported on the leaked document, which describes how he was selected and kept on as council candidate despite this extreme anti-Semitism. BuzzFeedNews had already reported the **Local Campaign Forum** panel minutes from November 2017, revealing that “Alan Bull was proposed by the local Labour leader Ed Murphy despite the fact that he and the other committee members had been shown the offensive material by a Labour party regional organiser.” Bull was only suspended by the Labour Party when pictures emerged of him protesting outside the Holocaust museum in Washington DC.

The Labour Group on Peterborough City Council chose to investigate two of its members for “bullying and intimidating behaviour” after they created a ‘Labour Councillors Against Antisemitism’ Twitter account and drew attention to Alan Bull’s posts. Richard Ferris and Matthew Mahabadi eventually resigned from the council in protest in November 2018. In a joint statement, they said they were told “to shut up, pipe down, keep schtum about the problem of antisemitism in the Peterborough Labour Party” and had “at times worried for the safety” of their families.

Cllr Heather Skibsted (Orton Longueville) was a member of the Local Campaign Forum panel. She is described in the Peterborough Telegraph article as Alan Bull’s partner and as having endorsed him “to stand as a council election candidate despite knowing he had been accused of claiming the Holocaust was a ‘hoax’ on social media”.

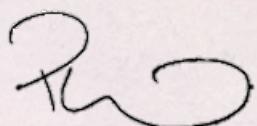
Lisa Forbes, who was a Labour MP until December 2019 and is still involved in local politics, signed an open letter to Labour's NEC opposing the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. The letter defended claims that "the State of Israel is a racist endeavour" and described it as an "apartheid state". She also liked a Facebook post that said Theresa May had a "Zionist Slave Masters agenda" and commented on how she "enjoyed reading [a] thread so much" which claimed that Isis was created "by the CIA and Mossad". The Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Jewish Leadership Council and the Community Security Trust issued a statement that concluded: "Unless Labour disowns Lisa Forbes as a candidate, it will only confirm the Party's shameful descent into the racist mess for which they are now being investigated by the EHRC." No action has been taken.

Cllr Ed Murphy (Ravensthorpe) was Group Leader when the Labour group investigated whistle-blowers Richard Ferris and Matthew Mahabadi for "bullying and intimidating behaviour" in 2018. According to BuzzFeedNews, he nominated Alan Bull and then voted for him at the Local Campaign Forum panel, despite being shown his anti-Semitic posts. Although these facts were public, Cllr Murphy was nominated as Labour's General Election candidate for North West Cambridgeshire in 2019. He was then replaced with a day to spare, after the Daily Mail revealed he used the hashtag "#MilitaryStatePirates" to repeatedly share an image of an Israeli flag on which the Star of David was replaced with a skull and crossbones. One of his tweets commented: "Israel a terrorist state? And Israeli military (secretly backed by the Cons on Pboro Council) are international pirates." No further action has been taken.

Given your promises and plea to the Jewish community to "look at the steps" you are taking on anti-Semitism, you should take a stance on the Peterborough Labour Party tomorrow. This local problem cannot go unmentioned.

I hope you will announce specific action to address it for good.

Yours sincerely,



Paul Bristow MP
Member of Parliament for Peterborough