

Cllr Barry Rawlings
Leader, Barnet Council Labour Group
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By Email

5th July 2026

Dear Peter,

I hope you are well. I am sure that you were as shocked as I to have learned that the Conservative Party selected Joshua Bonehill-Paine as a council candidate in Somerset.

Mr Bonehill-Paine served three years in jail for posting online antisemitic material and repeatedly targeted Baroness Luciana Berger with a sustained racist online campaign. Golders Green was one of his planned targets for a neo-Nazi rally. He even performed a Nazi salute during his trial.

Kemi Badenoch defended his selection saying: "I'm not giving him a national platform, he is standing to be a councillor in Somerset... it is a local platform looking at parking, sorting out bins". We both know that being a councillor means much more than this, we are responsible for community cohesion, safeguarding and making sure our borough is a safe place for all.

That Mr Bonehill-Paine was chosen as a candidate, but Grant Shapps is apparently no longer allowed to stand, speaks volumes about the kind of candidate the Conservative Party appears to be looking for.

The Board of Deputies of British Jews stated: "It beggars belief that any party would select as a candidate a multiply-convicted felon and the founder of a far-right group."

Thankfully, Mr Bonehill-Paine has now stood down as a candidate. But remarkably, he is to be appointed as an advisor to the Conservative Party. This will appear to many as a consolation prize, or a signal that the outcome of the Conservative Party not standing a man convicted of a hate crime was arrived at under duress.

I write this open letter to you as Jewish voters and voters in general for Barnet Labour will rightly expect me to speak out on this issue. But ultimately this is an internal Conservative Party matter, and so all I can do is urge you to act.

Will you publicly urge Kemi Badenoch to ensure that Mr Bonehill-Paine is stood down from any official role within the Conservative Party immediately. Will you also remonstrate with her for saying that it is 'sad' that he is no longer a candidate, that you would not want him as a candidate in Barnet or anywhere in the UK and that he should not have been selected in the first place.

We live in a time of surging extremism on Right and Left, and it is critical that those of us who believe in a tolerant liberal society take a stand. I urge you to do so now.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Barry Rawlings
Leader, Barnet Labour

UKSN Barnet