

Cllr Barry Rawlings
Leader, Barnet Council Labour Group
Barnet Labour Group Office
Hendon Town Hall
Hendon
NW4 4BG

Via Email

Dear Barry,

RE: Your letter of July 5th via email at 23:34.

6th July 2026

Like many others, I was deeply concerned to understand the circumstances surrounding Joshua Bonehill-Paine's selection and the debate that followed. As a member of the Jewish community and a Councillor for Golders Green, I understand the concerns that many have expressed. Equally, I think it is important to recognise that opinion within the community and community organisations is far from unanimous and to make it seem as such would be incredibly irresponsible. Whilst many have been upset by the decision, others understand the principle articulated by Kemi Badenoch that individuals who have genuinely changed and demonstrated remorse should not necessarily be denied any opportunity for rehabilitation. There are genuine differences of opinion on this issue, and it would be wrong to suggest otherwise.

None of this diminishes the seriousness of Joshua Bonehill-Paine's past conduct. A decade ago, Golders Green was among the communities targeted by his hateful activities, causing understandable fear and distress. As a councillor representing a ward with a significant Jewish population, and having dealt with very recent major incidents of antisemitism and intimidation affecting local residents, I do not take these matters lightly. The pain caused by antisemitism is real, and those responsible must be held accountable for their actions.

However, it is also true that Joshua Bonehill-Paine served a custodial sentence, has publicly renounced his previous views, and has undertaken work aimed at combating antisemitism and extremism. The Campaign Against Anti-Semitism, who, amongst others, worked to ensure that Mr Bonehill-Paine was convicted of his crimes noted, through a spokesman, that Mr Bonehill-Paine has been consistently open about his crimes, he has worked to educate against antisemitism and regularly speaks out against it.

Such examples are uncommon. Far too often, those who have propagated antisemitic views neither apologise nor seek to make amends. Where genuine contrition is shown, and where efforts are made to educate others about the dangers of hatred, that should be acknowledged.

Indeed, it is rare to gain insight into the mindset of someone who was once consumed by antisemitism and extremist ideology and who has subsequently rejected those beliefs. If Joshua Bonehill-Paine can help others understand how such prejudices develop and can assist in educating the wider public through the Conservative Party about the dangers of antisemitism, then those efforts are welcome. Combating antisemitism requires not only condemnation but also understanding how such hatred takes root so that it can be challenged before it spreads.

Your letter also raises the broader question of redemption in public life. It is notable that under the current Labour leadership, individuals who were the subject of findings by their own party over antisemitic or otherwise deeply problematic remarks have been readmitted and rehabilitated. This happened without them offering meaningful apologies or demonstrating the level of contrition now being demanded in this case. If we believe in the possibility of redemption, then that principle must be applied consistently rather than according to political convenience.

More broadly, I believe it is important to judge political leaders by their record. Kemi Badenoch has consistently been a friend of the Jewish community in Barnet and across the United Kingdom. She has spoken out against antisemitism, supported Jewish communities during difficult times and Golders Green in particular. She has shown moral clarity in confronting extremism. Her record stands in stark contrast to the rotten culture that was permitted to fester within the Labour Party for many years and which severely damaged trust between Labour and Britain's Jewish community.

Reasonable people may disagree about where the line should be drawn in this particular case. What should not be in doubt, however, is our shared determination to combat antisemitism wherever it appears and to support those communities affected by it, that remains a responsibility that transcends party politics.

Yours sincerely,
Cllr Peter Zinkin