

Cllr Jo Bird



10 February 2020

Disputes Team  
The Labour Party  
Southside  
105 Victoria Street  
London  
SW1E 6QT

Membership number: A6674976

**Case No: CN-4453**

To Governance and Legal Unit

**Re: Notice of administrative suspension from membership of the Labour Party**

Your letter of 6 February 2020 does not indicate at any point in what way the conduct mentioned may be in breach of the Labour Party rules and I would wish to have this clarified before I can definitely respond. However, there are a number of allegations that are factually incorrect and I shall try to expedite the process by the following responses and look forward to receiving this clarification as soon as possible.

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS

1. Yes, this is my facebook account.
2. I shared the Just Jews video in Item 1. I did not share nor post the statements in question in items 2, 3 and 4.
3. I was invited to be featured on a series of short videos with a diverse range of Jewish people talking about their experience and/or opinion of the Labour Party in relation to antisemitism. I saw the Just Jews video as an opportunity to contribute my own lived experience as a Jewish member of the party and to emphasise that not all Jewish people have the same opinion about this issue – or any other.

Allegations of antisemitism against me have been widely shared by sections of the media. Principles of natural justice include the right to defend oneself and this video was an opportunity to share my version of events, further evidence and repeat my apology. As shown in the screen shot, the video had been viewed at least 82,300 times by 2

September 2019, five months ago. The video played no negative role in my reselection as a Labour candidate for Wirral council in early October. The Party has had ample time to raise any concerns with me before the current NEC elections.

4. I would hope the meaning of these partial sentences are self-evident in context. Please find a transcript of what I said in the Just Jews video:

“My name is Jo Bird, I'm the Labour Councillor for Bromborough and New Ferry. I was elected one year ago and it is an honour to represent this ward. I'm Jewish, my great-grandparents fled Eastern Europe because of fascism, the far right of the time and ethnic cleansing and they found safe haven here in England.

I rejoined the Labour Party in 2015 because it's the best chance in my life for socialism, for the values of caring and compassion for everybody. I've been made very, very welcome in the Labour Party; I feel at home here. It's full of people who share my values.

Some people say antisemitism is really widespread in the Labour Party, but that's not an experience I have had. *What's damaging is when there's accusations and witch-hunterly and people making allegations without evidence* [your emphasis], and what we need to address that is a process of natural justice and due process.

I was talking about this and I made a play on words. I said we need what I call a 'Jew process', a process based on fundamental human rights. When I was suspended, *thousands of people in the Labour Party and outside the Labour Party rose up and said it was ridiculous for me as a Jewish person to be suspended* [your emphasis] for making a self-deprecating play on words. That's not about the battle of fighting antisemitism, it does nothing to challenge the far-right.

I gave my apology. I am sorry for any offence caused, it wasn't my intention. I'm glad I was reinstated nine days later. I think the Labour Party and socialism is the best answer to the far-right politics of hate.

We offer hope, and that's why I'm involved with the Labour Party.”

I did not deny “that Labour had an antisemitism problem” nor that all claims “were made without evidence”, contrary to allegations made in a Jewish Chronicle article of 8/2/2020, (<https://www.thejc.com/news/uk-news/jew-process-labour-councillor-suspended-again-amid-bid-for-election-1.496561>).

The letter sent to me by the Legal and Governance Unit does not present any grounds for my statements in the video to be interpreted as hostility, or prejudice based on race religion or belief in any way by a fair minded observer. On the contrary, I make very clear the commitment to fighting prejudice and hate - from myself and the Labour Party. Please could you clarify?

NB. There is no question specifically about Item 2, from 7 months ago. The allegation includes “having previously received a Formal Warning for similar conduct.” This is factually incorrect.

I have not received any information from the party about which conduct – out of several allegations responded to - merited the warning. Nor have I been told why, nor how long the warning lasts, despite repeated formal requests made on 17/4/2019 and 23/1/2020 etc.

The lack of specification could be in breach of Rule 6.I.C, which states: “*Where in the opinion of the NEC there are circumstances which might warrant the use of its powers under sub-clauses (a) and (b), the NEC may individual warnings to any individual member of the Party drawing attention to the conduct [my emphasis] which in the opinion of the NEC is either incompatible with continued membership of the party or may be in, or may lead to, a breach of the constitution, rules or standing orders of the party...*”

5. This allegation is not factually correct in a number of ways.

I did not like “a comment in which the phone number of Jewish Chronicle journalist Lee Harpin was posted”. The phone number is for “General enquiries”, not for Lee Harpin himself, as evidenced by this extract from the Jewish Chronicle website. It is not reasonable to claim harassment of an individual by ‘liking’ a general phone number promoted by an organisation to invite contact by the public.

Please address written correspondence to:

The Jewish Chronicle,  
915 High Rd,  
London,  
N12 8QJ

HELP

General enquiries: +44 (0) 20 7415 1500

The comment has been edited and may have changed since it was ‘liked’.

IPSO has forced the Jewish Chronicle to print apologies for Lee Harpin’s hostile articles against fellow Labour Party members. For example this one on 11/11/ 2019.

<https://www.ipso.co.uk/rulings-and-resolution-statements/ruling/?id=01740-19>

I am formally complaining to relevant authorities regarding Lee Harpin’s conduct. He continues to write and share misleading and hostile tweets and articles against me, as a Jewish person. For example this tweet where he writes “no place for Jo Bird”.

6. This undated allegation is factually incorrect. I did not state “he is a capitalist and a supporter of Israel.”



lee harpin

@lmharpin

Liverpool Riverside Lab long-list confirms no place for Jo Bird.

 · 31 Oct 19  
Some very strong local women from Liverpool Riverside on this list. Hope our next MP is one of them. A few stand out @kimlabour1, strong track record in L8 and campaigning on BAME issues, @TheresaMEP who's been an amazin...

19:09 · 31 Oct 19 · Twitter Web App

You'd have to ask the statement maker what they meant. I understood their reference to capitalist was in the context of Rabbi Mirvis damaging intervention in the General Election to urge voters not to support the Labour Party. Many people rightly saw a Labour government as the best chance of challenging the neoliberal capitalist system and redistributing power to the many not the few. The intervention by Rabbi Mirvis placed him in the debate on the side of neoliberal capitalism against democratic socialism. This was a legitimate comment in that context and in no way suggested that Jews as a whole should be seen on one side or the other. I know from lived experience that Jewish people span the entire political and economic spectrum. For example, like many Jewish families, mine has some Jewish socialists, communists and capitalists.

However, it is factually correct that Rabbi Mirvis is a supporter of Israel. For example "As Chief Rabbi of Ireland and before the opening of an Israeli Embassy in Ireland, he represented Israel's interests at government level and in the media."

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephraim\\_Mirvis](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ephraim_Mirvis)

7. I have upheld this rule. I showed no hostility, prejudice or hatred towards another person or group based on a protected characteristic.
8. I am not clear what is being asked. If you are asking did I treat all people with dignity and respect, then yes, I did.
9. I am not clear what is being asked. Please could you clarify? I will then reflect and respond. I am sorry if my statements were not clear enough.

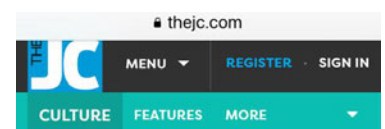
The Just Jews video was posted and shared in September 2019 and viewed over 82,300 times. I was not aware of a single complaint about the video until 6 February 2020, at which point more than 60 CLPs had nominated me as a candidate for the National Executive Committee. If, after understanding the context and meaning, you consider this content to be a breach of the rules - I would like to understand why, and have the opportunity to reflect and apologise further.

The other statements were not posted nor shared by me.

10. Please could you clarify what is meant by this question? I will then reflect and respond.

For example:

- Shall I no longer show appreciation of any plays on words or Jewish jokes? Even if similar content is shared by other people such as Jewish director, Woody Allen and the Jewish Chronicle (as illustrated)?
- Evidence regarding Labour, antisemitism and complaints includes the General Secretary's report of 31/1/20, [https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/13434\\_20-Statistics-Report-No-Place-For-Antisemitism.pdf](https://labour.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/13434_20-Statistics-Report-No-Place-For-Antisemitism.pdf). Should I not post



Jason Solomons  
February 18, 2016 12:24



**Jew know why  
we love Annie  
Hall?**



or share content of this nature?

I will be more nuanced in what I say publicly about my experience as a Jewish person in the Labour Party.

I will more actively refer to evidence of some antisemitic conduct within the Labour Party, and the many ways the Party is addressing that, such as <https://labour.org.uk/no-place-for-antisemitism/>.

I have tended to like almost all comments on my facebook page. I will be less generous in the future.

The video and statements in question are no longer available on my facebook page.

11. and 12.

Please find attached a leaflet regarding my election to the NEC. This is not my candidate statement which will be submitted before the deadline of noon Monday 17 February. I hope Jo Bird will be on the NEC ballot distributed to all members.

At the time of writing, thousands of members and over 80 CLPs have democratically nominated me as a candidate for the current NEC elections. If my suspension is not lifted before NEC ballot papers and statements are sent to members, there is a risk that such decisions will be seen to bring party democracy into disrepute. Many members and CLPs are formally asking for my suspension to be concluded and/or lifted without delay - ie before Friday 14 February - to allow credible member democracy in the current NEC elections – or for the NEC elections to be suspended until my case is resolved.

The effects of administrative suspension includes that “a suspended member shall not be eligible to seek any office in the Party”. But there is not enough evidence here to warrant a suspension rather than say a ‘letter of investigation’. It is problematic to start and continue suspension of the only Jewish and leading left-wing candidate, during the period of NEC elections. It means there are credible grounds for members, third parties and others to find these decisions are a breach of the rules, prejudice against a left-wing Jew, and/or an abuse of the disciplinary process for factional benefit.

There are legal precedents on suspension of Labour members selected as candidates. For example *Jones v McNichol [2016] EWHC 866* at the High Court considered a claim for interim relief to raise the suspension from a member who was seeking election and was up against a deadline for nomination.

In accordance with the Labour Party rules, Wirral Local Campaign Forum and Bromborough branch have approved and democratically re-selected me to be the Labour councillor candidate in May’s local elections. Bromborough is the 4<sup>th</sup> most marginal ward for Wirral Labour to retain. 4 seats were lost by Labour in May 2019. If Bromborough ward was lost, Wirral Council is unlikely to return to Labour control for many years. Continuing suspension

of the candidate undermines Labour's local election campaign. Closing date for local election nominations is around 20 March 2020.

I would like to know who raised these complaints about me? And when?