

## **PRESS RELEASE : 26th November 2021**

**Cllr. Dave Putson**

*The Labour Right plumbed new depths after discarding a motion expressing a community's support and solidarity with the family and friends of a murdered man to prevent mention of a socialist councillor who organised a vigil in his memory.*

*Just under a week earlier on November 19, I received a 'Notice of Termination of Membership of the Labour Party' on the grounds that I signed into a Labour Against the Witchhunt Zoom meeting in February – some five months before LAW and other groups were proscribed, and nearly eight months before the Labour Party Conference rule changes.*

*In May 2018, I was elected as a Belvedere ward councillor in the London Borough of Bexley, and was suspended in July 2020 for spurious reasons that have never been fully set out.*

*My real crime has been to be far too much of a vigorous campaigner and voice for progressive and socialist politics for the comfort and liking of the right-wing Bexley Labour group.*

*The motion not being considered at the Erith and Thamesmead Constituency Labour Party general council meeting on Thursday (25/11), shows the Right won't even let an innocent man's death get in the way of a factional witch hunt.*

*The meeting was told that I am no longer a member of the party and so whether or not the motion was proposed and seconded was neither here nor there. And that was that.*

*Is it mere coincidence that my membership was suddenly terminated at this precise time? Unlikely in my view. More like a desperate attempt to prevent other councillors being exposed for failing to organise or mobilise in their community after a man's murder – added to my robust challenge to the*

*right-dominated Bexley LCF's decision to reject my bid to stand as a councillor in next year's council elections.*

*The Right were happy to leave me in the limbo of being suspended indefinitely until they felt it was absolutely necessary to throw me out of the party completely. Did the apparatchiks at CLP, regional and national level suddenly come across my pre-proscription attendance at a LAW meeting?*

*This is a Labour group that has become so craven to right-wing orthodoxy, that it even backed a 2020 Conservative motion attacking Mayor of London Sadiq Khan on law and order, albeit after their amendment was rejected.*

*On Saturday, October 2, I organised the vigil for Vitalii Skrypniak, a Ukrainian lorry driver, outside Belvedere train station where he suffered a single stab wound two weeks earlier. He parked his vehicle close to the station overnight, and went to get something to eat nearby when he was attacked.*

*The event for the 45-year-old family man, who is survived by his wife and their young child in Ukraine, was attended by dozens of residents, some of whom laid floral tributes, along with Bexley Police's borough commander, Trevor Lawry, and Erith and Thamesmead MP, Abena Oppong-Asare and a Ukrainian embassy third secretary.*

*Vitalii had been in the UK for three days prior to his death, and was transporting goods for a logistics company in the midst of HGV driver shortages.*

*At a meeting of the CLP's executive committee on October 21, the secretary announced that he had sought advice from Region concerning the motion, written by ward members about the vigil, because I was mentioned in it.*

*The argument was made that I was not a Labour member and it would be inappropriate to consider motions praising or referencing people who are not in the party.*

*The first point concerning membership was factually incorrect at the time, and I'm not aware of any current or past protocol validating the second. It was also argued that if the motion was allowed to proceed to October's general council meeting, it could lead to a debate that is not in order, and the environment of CLP meetings must be taken into account. I have not been able to sit in ward or general council meetings since my suspension. So, the motion was withheld. At the following month's executive meeting on November 18, members were informed that in the absence of a response from Region, the leader of Bexley Labour explained that I still sat with, and was whipped by, the group.*

*On that basis, the motion was due to go through and be discussed at November's general council meeting on Thursday (25/11). The minutes of some of these meetings have been circulated to all CLP members, including me.*

*And then, almost out of nowhere, came my notice of termination of membership.*

*So, the Keir Starmer and David Evans Labour Party fail the broad church criteria, clearly; and fail on the provision of natural justice, fairness or even a modicum of honesty.*