



BEXLEY LABOUR GROUP PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CLLR. JOHN DAVEY

28th April 2023

Press release: Leader of Bexley Council refuses to condemn “racist” comments by Councillor

Bexley Labour’s comments on the lifting of John Davey suspension regarding racist comments

Bexley Labour Group expresses its deep disappointment that Councillor John Davey has been reinstated as a Conservative Councillor following his suspension, after an investigation into complaints regarding racist and inappropriate comments on social media about Mrs Nazarin Zaghari-Ratcliffe. We are deeply concerned that the only ramification he has faced is to undertake additional training. It is worth noting that Bedonwell School immediately removed Cllr. Davey as a governor on seeing these comments, taking decisive action, unlike Bexley Conservatives who appear not to take racism seriously in their ranks.

Councillor Davey's repeated pattern of racist behaviour, including his latest disgraceful comments regarding Mrs. Zaghari-Ratcliffe, cannot be ignored. He has a long record of making racist, derogatory, and divisive comments on social media over the length of his tenure as a Conservative Councillor on Bexley Council. We are appalled by his comments, and we firmly believe that they have no place in our society, let alone in public office.

Despite the overwhelming evidence against him, Councillor Davey has been allowed to return to his position with very little consequence. This sends a dangerous message that racism and discrimination will be tolerated, and it undermines the efforts to create an inclusive and respectful community in Bexley. The Council recently cemented its Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion strategy, which is a welcome move. However, the decision to reinstate a Councillor who disregards the very premise of Equality and Diversity, undermines it.

Cllr. Mabel Ogundayo, Deputy Leader of Bexley Labour Group said:

‘The Bexley Labour Group calls on Councillor Davey to take responsibility for his actions and resign immediately. We also call on the Conservative party to take appropriate action to demonstrate that they do not condone racism in any form.’

Cllr. Stefano Borella, Leader of Bexley Labour Group said:

‘At yesterday evening's Council meeting, Cllr. Teresa O’Neill was asked to condemn the racist comments of Cllr. John Davey, she refused, sending a clear message that racist behaviour will be tolerated and defended by Bexley Conservatives. As Cllrs we must lead by setting a good example for a more inclusive and tolerant society. The Bexley Conservatives actions yesterday evening, presented anything but leadership in taking a zero-tolerance approach to racism’

Bexley Council must take a strong stand against racism and discrimination, and The Bexley Labour Group will continue to advocate for a council that represents and respects all members of our community.

ENDS-

Notes to editors



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- For further information, please contact Cllr Stefano Borella.
- Screenshots are of comments made last year on social media by Cllr. Davey

Background

Councillor John Davey was suspended from the Conservative Party following backlash for allegedly racist comments surrounding the release of Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe in 2022.

Councillor for West Heath, Cllr Davey was suspended from the Conservative Party for asking on twitter; *“Can we send her back and get our money back?”* in reference to recently released Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe.

Mrs Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian citizen, was wrongfully imprisoned for almost 6 years whilst visiting Iran on holiday for her parents to meet her then 22-month-old daughter in 2016. Her release came earlier this year after the British Government repaid an outstanding debt of £393.8 million to Iran and after years of pressure and political campaigning by her husband Richard Ratcliffe.

His comments immediately provoked backlash with complaints being issued to Conservative Party HQ and Bexley council. The official Free Nazanin campaign group also intervened to correct his claim that the government had issued a warning that British citizens should not visit Iran stating that he was “victim blaming”.

This is not the first-time concerns of Cllr Davey’s views on race have been called into question. In 2020, Deputy Leader of the Labour Group, Cllr Mabel Ogundayo proposed a seven-point action plan to tackle racism in Bexley in the wake of the death of George Floyd, which she believed had “led to an awakening of the real issues of racism and inequality across the globe”. Cllr Davey responded to the plan as “a load of old rubbish” and stated that she “should worry about the Mayor of London’s failure to stop knife crime, much of it black on black”.

The exchange was met with outrage, upon which Cllr Ogundayo asked the then Cabinet Member for Communities, Cllr Alex Sawyer, whether he would recommend “mandatory training on racism” after referring to Cllr Davey’s comments. Cllr Sawyer deemed the comments “regretful” but stated that he’d “like to think that members don’t necessarily need to undertake training”.

At a full council meeting held on 2 November, the Labour Group asked Leader of the Council, Councillor Teresa O’Neill, whether she condemned the comments made by Cllr Davey, to which she refused to comment due to the ongoing investigation.

That didn’t stop former Chief Whip of the Bexley Conservatives, Cllr Felix Di Netimah (who at the present day sits as an independent Cllr on the Council), from commenting, “Cry wolf too many times and people will stop listening”, heavily implying that he himself did not deem Cllr Davey’s comments to be of a racist nature.



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5G



John Davey
35.6K Tw...

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John Davey @CllrJohnDavey · 2h

Can we send her back and get our money back?



sandieshoes 🇬🇧 🇺🇸 @sandie... · 14h

Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe begins her activism, we knew it wouldn't be long. Watch Labour snap her up for a seat in the HoC.

...



John Davey @CllrJo... · 24/05/2022 ...

Can we ask for refund? We can send her back as she's so ungrateful.



Anthea Bailey · 23/05/2022

I see that Nazanin woman is playing politics again. Had so much sympathy for her once now pure contempt. She went to Iran against advice of foreign office. Only peo...



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