

Statement from Totnes CLP Executive Committee, 14 April 2020

We share the hurt, anger and distress of Labour Party members everywhere, who yesterday saw evidence that paid officers of our Party conspired against the elected leadership and tried to undermine our 2017 General Election campaign.

Our anger is on behalf of the hundreds of thousands of activists who fought this campaign so hard and with so much hope. Our distress is for the millions of people who have suffered and go on suffering as a result of our failure to unseat the Tories at that election.

We deplore the leaking of details about individual members and their cases. But the details only confirm what we knew already: that the Party's disciplinary processes were not fit for purpose for many years before the change of General Secretary in 2018. The lack of attention, consistency, impartiality and due justice from the Governance and Legal Unit (GLU) under the leadership of Iain McNicol has been exposed. Whatever the extent of anti-semitism within the Labour Party – and none is acceptable – it is clear that complaints about anti-semitism were ignored, lied about and unfairly dealt with, not as part of any special cover-up but as standard practice within the GLU at that time. Complaints of anti-black racism and islamophobia were also dismissed, with BAME MPs such as Dawn Butler and Diane Abbott being horribly denigrated rather than supported.

The abysmal record of the GLU has led members from Jewish and other ethnic minority communities to feel that their complaints were not acted on. Their trust in the party has been damaged deeply. This should never have happened. It strikes at our most valued principles and it undermines our ability to fight back against racism and anti-semitism wherever we meet them.

The language revealed in the leaked report is violent, discriminatory and misogynistic. The behaviour revealed is deeply factional. Both language and behaviour must be condemned by the current leadership. These were not ordinary party members: these were people paid by party members to carry out our policies, and to support our elected leaders and MPs. We are especially appalled by the evidence that party funds – our members' hard-earned contributions – were used to support one small faction of MPs at the expense of more urgent issues and more marginal seats.

We welcome Keir Starmer and Angela Rayner's announcement of an 'urgent independent investigation' into the circumstances surrounding the report, but the priority must be a full assessment of its substance and content. No-one who is found to have engaged in destructive, dishonest and factional behaviour in office should be allowed to remain a party member, let alone a paid official.

In addition, the party's disciplinary processes and structures must be overhauled and made fit for purpose, so that our party can begin to recover its strength and heal the damage that has been done.

Lynn Alderson, Rick Gaehl, Colin Luker, Josh Adams, Lauren Davison, Laurel Ellis and Helen Alipaz (EC)
Helen Beetham (Press and Communications Officer)