

Senior Labour councillor in homophobia row

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A senior Islington Labour councillor has been accused by local Liberal Democrats of supporting a councillor who was kicked out of office for making a false statement about an opponent's personal character and conduct for electoral advantage.

Last November Miranda Grell, a Labour councillor in the London Borough of Waltham Forest was kicked out of office after becoming the first person ever to be found guilty by a court of making false statements under the Representation of the People Act 1983. Miranda Grell was convicted of accusing her gay Liberal Democrat opponent of being a paedophile.

Research by the Liberal Democrats has uncovered that senior councillor and Labour community safety spokesperson Lisa Spall was, several months later, still listed as backing Miranda Grell's campaign to be reinstated to the council, despite the court's sentence and her being banned from office for three years.

Liberal Democrat Councillor Terry Stacy said:

"I can hardly believe that a leading Labour councillor in Islington is backing someone found guilty of homophobia.

"The fact that Labour Leader Catherine West has done nothing about it is even worse. Lisa Spall should not be allowed to continue in her position of responsibility.

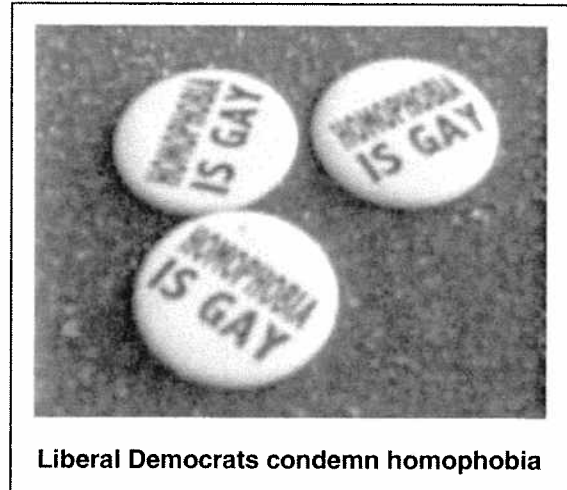
"Islington has one of the biggest gay communities in London. What sort of message does it send when a Labour councillor supports an openly homophobic candidate?"

As of the 2nd of July Islington Labour councillor Lisa Spall's name was listed as a supporter on Miranda Grell's website <http://www.justiceforleytonward.org.uk/supporters/>

Since this complaint over Lisa Spall's support for Grell was made by the Liberal Democrats, her name has been removed from the list of supporters. But you can see our saved copy of that website's contents as of that date at:

<http://islington-libdems.org.uk/pages/grellsupporters.html>

In September 2007 Grell went on trial on charges under the Representation of the People Act 1983 for "making a false statement of fact about a candidate's personal character or conduct for electoral advantage", after branding her gay Liberal Democrat opponent a paedophile during an election campaign. Her Labour running mate even gave evidence against her. On 21st September last year, she was found guilty on two counts and fined. On 24th October 2007, Grell's supporters launched a campaign to finance an appeal against her sentence. Grell's appeal hearing began on 28th November 2007, and on 30th November, Grell's conviction for making false statements about another candidate to gain electoral advantage was upheld. She vacated her seat and was banned from holding public office for three years. The by-election for Leyton ward was won by Liberal Democrat Winnie Smith.



Liberal Democrats condemn homophobia

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