David Burton-Sampson
Member of Parliament for Southend West and Leigh
House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA
Tel: 020 7219 7745

Councillors Stuart Allen, Anita Forde, Richard Longstaff and Kay Mitchell,
Green Party Group – Southend City Council.
By email

18th October 2026

Dear Southend Green Party Councillors,

I am writing to express my concern regarding the motion entitled 'Zionism is Racism' passed at the Green Party's national conference recently. I was also disappointed to see your leader Zack Polanski refused to distance himself from the motion on the Laura Kuenssberg show on BBC One this morning.

The motion raises serious questions about how the Green Party understands Zionism, antisemitism and the right of Jewish people to national self-determination. I am concerned that the motion risks conflating Zionism, which encompasses a range of beliefs about Jewish self-determination and the existence of a Jewish homeland, with racism as a whole. It is important that legitimate criticism of the Israeli government and its policies is clearly distinguished from generalisations about Jewish people or the denial of rights afforded to other national groups.

Antisemitism remains a serious and persistent problem in our society. Jewish communities including those here in Southend and Leigh must be able to participate fully in public life without fear that their identity, beliefs or connection to Israel will be used to question their legitimacy or belonging. Political parties have a particular responsibility to ensure that their language and policies do not contribute to hostility towards Jewish people or undermine their sense of security.

There is, of course, ample room for robust debate about the actions of the Israeli government, the rights of Palestinians and the future of the region. Supporting Palestinian rights and opposing discrimination are entirely compatible with recognising the diversity of Jewish opinion and respecting the right of Jewish people to self-determination.

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I believe that Southend and Leigh offer a diverse, multicultural and cohesive community and I will always work to ensure that acceptance continues. I also believe that we as local community leaders have worked well together in the past.

However, in light of these concerns, I would welcome a clear statement from Southend Green Party on your position or if this position is not united then a clear statement on your individual stance.

Do you agree with the 'Zionism Is Racism' motion passed at your national conference, and do you stand by its wording and implications? Alternatively, do you believe the motion was misguided or expressed in a way that risks conflating Zionism with racism, and wish to distance yourselves from it?

I would be grateful if you could clarify whether this motion reflects the position of the Southend Green Party and how you intend to address the concerns it has raised, particularly among members of the Jewish community and those who are rightly concerned about the rise of antisemitism.

I believe that political parties should be willing to engage openly and constructively with these questions. A clear response would help demonstrate your commitment to tackling antisemitism, defending equal rights and fostering an inclusive political environment for all communities.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

David Burton-Sampson
Member of Parliament for Southend West and Leigh

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SOUTHEND-ON-SEA CITY COUNCIL
GREEN GROUP

David Burton-Sampson
Member of Parliament for Southend West and Leigh by Email

20 October 2026

Dear David,

Thank you for your letter.

The Green Party is a grassroots movement that welcomes people of all faiths and none. We are proud to be the only major UK political party led by a Jewish leader, Zack Polanski, and remain committed to creating a society rooted in compassion, equality and respect for human rights.

At the heart of the motion passed at our recent conference is a commitment to human rights, equality, justice and self-determination. These are principles that have long guided the Green Party, and which we believe must underpin any lasting peace for Israelis and Palestinians.

While there are differing opinions on the final wording of the motion, it was passed democratically by party members and reflects a wider debate about how best to uphold international law and respond to the suffering of Palestinians. We believe it is important to have open and honest conversations about these issues, recognising that criticism of the Israeli Government and its policies is not antisemitism. Equally, we recognise that discussions about Zionism can carry different meanings and deeply personal significance and should be approached with care and sensitivity. As with other party policies, the motion remains subject to the party's democratic processes, including opportunities for future review and amendment in 2028.

Green Party City Councillors
c/o Southend City Council, PO Box 6, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, SS2 6ER

We recognise that the motion has prompted concern among some local residents, we take those concerns incredibly seriously and encourage them to get in touch with us. Jewish residents, like everyone in Southend, must feel safe, respected and able to participate fully in community life. We stand unequivocally against antisemitism, Islamophobia and all forms of racism and discrimination.

As Southend Green Councillors, we support a peaceful, long-term solution, shaped by the people affected, that guarantees Israelis and Palestinians equal rights, security and self-determination. We recognise the profound challenges to achieving this, including continued occupation, settlement expansion, displacement and violations of international law. Lasting peace requires accountability, meaningful dialogue and a commitment to protecting the rights and dignity of all people.

As local Councillors, our responsibility is to represent and support everyone in our community. We stand alongside Southend's Jewish, Christian and Muslim communities, and all those affected by the fear, grief and distress arising from events in the Middle East. We believe that people should be able to express their views, challenge injustice and engage in difficult conversations without fear of hatred, intimidation or discrimination.

We call on the Labour Government to use its influence to help bring an end to the violence, protect civilians, uphold international law and support a just and lasting peace in which Israelis and Palestinians can live safely, freely and with their fundamental rights protected.

Above all, our commitment is to a future built on peace, equality and human dignity; both internationally and here in Southend.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Kay Mitchell, Spokesperson, Chalkwell Ward Councillor
Cllr Richard Longstaff, Deputy Spokesperson, Leigh Ward Councillor
Cllr Anita Forde, Leigh Ward Councillor
Cllr Stuart Allen, Leigh Ward Councillor