

VERITA

IMPROVEMENT THROUGH INVESTIGATION

Independent investigation into the Green Party's actions following the allegations and charges brought against David Challenor

A report for
The Green Party of England & Wales

January 2019

Authors:
Kieran Seale
David Scott
Lucy Scott-Moncrieff

© Verita 2019

Verita is an independent consultancy that specialises in conducting and managing investigations, reviews and inquiries for regulated organisations.

This report has been written for The Green Party of England & Wales and may not be used, published or reproduced in any way without their express written permission.

Verita
338 City Road
London EC1V 2PY

Telephone 020 7494 5670

E-mail enquiries@verita.net

Website www.verita.net

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Terms of reference	5
3. Executive summary and recommendations	7
4. Approach and structure	23
5. Chronology	25
6. Notifying the Green Party of the charges	26
7. Knowledge and response of the national party	54
8. Knowledge and response of people in Coventry	66
9. Conclusions and policy and procedural issues arising	71

Appendices

Appendix A Team biographies	74
Appendix B Terms of reference	76
Appendix C List of documents	79
Appendix D List of interviewees	80

1. Introduction

1.1 In late August 2018, the Green Party of England and Wales (GPEW or “the party”) learned that one of its members, David Challenor, had been convicted of multiple sexual offences. David Challenor, a member of the party in Coventry, had acted as election agent for his daughter (Aimee Challenor) in the general election in May 2017, and for his daughter and his wife (Tina Challenor) in local elections in May 2018. Aimee Challenor was the party’s national spokesperson on LGBTIQ+ issues, a member of the executive of the national party and was standing for election as deputy leader of the party¹. The party had recently learned that Aimee Challenor notified two senior party members about David Challenor’s arrest in November 2016, but that this disclosure was not widely known in the rest of the party.

1.2 Nick Martin, the chief executive of the party asked Verita to conduct an independent investigation in September 2018. He asked Verita to investigate if members of the party acted in accordance with party policy and procedures, and if they took appropriate actions once they learned of his conviction. The terms of reference were divided into two stages, stage one which focusses on fact finding and stage two which looks at future actions. This report covers stage one.

1.3 Verita is a consultancy specialising in the management and conduct of investigations, reviews and inquiries. Kieran Seale and David Scott carried out the investigation, with specialist advice from Lucy Scott-Moncrieff, who also participated in the interviews with Aimee Challenor. Nicola Salmon supported the investigation and Ed Marsden peer reviewed it. Verita team biographies are in Appendix A.

¹ For simplicity, in this report we refer to the Green Party of England and Wales as ‘the national party’, and the Coventry branch of the party as ‘the local party’. We acknowledge that these terms do not always reflect the language that the party uses to describe itself.

2. Terms of reference

2.1 The following are the main elements of the terms of reference for the investigation. The full terms of reference are in Appendix B:

This investigation has been commissioned by the Acting Chair of the Green Party Executive (GPEx), the co-chairs of the Green Party Regional Council (GPRC), and the leadership team of the Green Party of England and Wales (GPEW).

Purpose of the investigation

David Challenor was charged by Police with serious sexual offences in November 2016. He was convicted in August 2018. In May 2017 and in May 2018 he acted as election agent for his daughter Aimee Challenor.

The purpose of the investigation is to examine the party's response to the allegations and charges brought against David Challenor. The investigation will be completed in two stages. The aims of the inquiry are to:

Stage one

- 1. Establish a chronology of events from November 2016*
- 2. Establish what actions, if any, were taken by members of the party or staff to ensure that David Challenor's appointment as election agent was made in accordance with party policy and procedures*
- 3. Establish what actions, if any, were taken by members of the party or staff to make colleagues aware of the substance of the allegations and/or charges against David Challenor*
- 4. Establish which members of the party or staff, if any, were made aware of these allegations and/or charges*
- 5. Establish what actions, if any, were taken by members of the party- voluntary officers or staff- after they became aware of this information*

6. *Establish to what extent action, if any, was taken to ensure appropriate safeguarding was maintained in the light of this information*
7. *Report on any other issues that arise that are relevant to the terms of reference*

Stage two

8. *Consider whether any form of disciplinary action should be considered against any member of the party or staff*
9. *Consider whether any changes should be made to party policies and procedures to strengthen them in the light of these events, and make any relevant recommendations*
10. *Consider whether any new policies or procedures need to be developed and implemented by the party, and make any relevant recommendations*
11. *Summary report*

3. Executive summary and recommendations

Introduction

3.1 In late August 2018, the Green Party of England and Wales learned that one of its members, David Challenor, had been convicted of multiple serious sexual offences. David Challenor, a member of the party in Coventry, had acted as election agent for his daughter (Aimee Challenor) in the general election in May 2017, and for his daughter and his wife (Tina Challenor) in local elections in May 2018. Aimee Challenor was the party's national spokesperson on LGBTIQ+ issues, a member of the executive of the national party and was standing for election as deputy leader of the party.

3.2 Verita was asked to investigate if members of the party acted in accordance with party policy and procedures, and if they took appropriate actions once they learned of David Challenor's conviction.

3.3 The investigation was undertaken in private. It comprised formal interviews and an examination of documents the Green Party and others supplied. We have made comments and recommendations based on our interviews and the information available to us to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Chronology

3.4 David Challenor was charged with 22 serious criminal offences including taking indecent photographs, false imprisonment, rape and sexual assault of a child, assault by penetration, and assault causing actual bodily harm on, 5 November 2016. On the same day, Aimee Challenor sent a message to the Green Party's external communications co-ordinator about the charges. She also informed Coventry Pride. David Challenor appeared in court on 7 November 2016 and reporting restrictions were imposed.

3.5 In April 2017, Aimee Challenor was selected as a general election candidate for the Green Party in Coventry South. She appointed David Challenor as her election agent. In September 2017, Aimee was elected to the national executive of the Green Party.

3.6 In May 2018 Aimee Challenor, and her mother stood as candidates for Coventry City Council. They both appointed David Challenor as their election agent.

3.7 In June/July 2018 Aimee Challenor stood as a candidate for deputy leader of the Green Party.

3.8 David Challenor was convicted and sentenced to 22 years in prison in August 2018. The Green Party expelled him from the party shortly afterwards.

The charges

3.9 After he was charged, David Challenor was released on bail. We have seen no evidence that the media reported the charges. The case only received substantial local and national publicity after David Challenor's conviction in August 2018.

3.10 The nature of the charges against David Challenor raises the issue of whether other children or vulnerable adults were at risk from the time of the charges through to his conviction and imprisonment. This type of concern is generally referred to as 'safeguarding'. Although legislation and policies relating to safeguarding can be complex, in this context it amounts to a simple question: "*is any vulnerable person at risk*" ? In this report, we use the term safeguarding to mean the general responsibility of every citizen to protect vulnerable people.

3.11 We found no evidence that the West Midlands police told anyone in the Green Party about the charges against David Challenor. Activity in political parties, particularly at the time of a general election, provides the opportunity to interact with a large number of people in an unstructured environment. This is likely to include young and/or vulnerable people. In general, if the police have information that a person involved in political activities has been charged with these types of offences, they should consider if safeguarding issues arise and take action, if needed.

Awareness of the charges

David Challenor

3.12 David Challenor joined the Green Party on 17 December 2015. Over the subsequent two and a half years, he gradually became more active in the party. As a party member, the first person who had a responsibility for drawing the charges to the Green Party's attention was David Challenor himself. We found no evidence that he did so. He should have done.

Tina Challenor

3.13 Tina Challenor became a party member on 1 May 2016. She was not active in the Coventry Green Party. She told us she did not tell anyone in the Green Party about the charges because of the reporting restrictions. Tina Challenor had the opportunity to inform the party of the charges against her husband, but she did not do so. However, we note that her involvement in the party was minimal.

Aimee Challenor

3.14 Aimee Challenor joined the Green Party on 11 December 2014. The following year she became chair of the national LGBTIQ+ Greens. She became membership secretary of Coventry Green Party in April 2017 and subsequently stood as the general election and local election candidate. She was elected to the Green Party's national executive committee in September 2017 and ran for deputy leader of the national party in June 2018.

3.15 Aimee told us that she found out about the charges from her family. She did not ask for details as it was a time of major stress for her and her family. Discussion of the decisions Aimee took must be seen in the context that this was a very difficult and stressful time for her personally.

3.16 Aimee told us that the fact David Challenor had been released on bail was a significant factor in how she perceived the seriousness of the charges as she took it to mean that he was not a threat to society.

Informing the party

3.17 On 5 November 2016 Aimee Challenor sent Matt Hawkins a Facebook message with Clare Lorraine Phipps copied in. At the time, Matt Hawkins was a member of the national executive of the Green Party and one of three external communications co-ordinators for the party. Clare Lorraine Phipps was the chair of the national executive committee.

3.18 The message Aimee Challenor sent referred to her father being charged with 22 offences. It said: *“it is my understanding that the majority of them were sexual offences”*.

3.19 Matt Hawkins, replied:

“I’m so sorry Aimee. How are you doing? Is there anything we can do as friends (as opposed to colleagues!)?”

3.20 We note a number of things about the exchange:

- it was informal;
- it makes no mention of David Challenor having any connection with the Green Party;
- Aimee Challenor did not say why she sent the message or ask for Matt or Clare to take action;
- Matt Hawkins’ response raises the question of the capacity in which the message was sent to him - whether it was as a friend or as a colleague and how this affected his response;
- There appears to have been no discussion about the implications of the message or agreement on next steps; and
- Although Clare Lorraine Phipps was copied in to the message, Aimee Challenor does not appear to have expected her to take action in response to it.

3.21 Aimee Challenor told us that as a party spokesperson she saw the external communications co-ordinator of the party as the person she reported to in the national party. We do not believe that she told anyone else in the party.

3.22 It is to Aimee’s credit that she made this disclosure. However, the brevity, informality and ambiguity of this exchange are problematic. While it allowed Aimee to say afterwards that she had “*told the party*”, it also created the risk that the recipients would not absorb the message and communicate it to the people with relevant responsibilities.

Other occasions when charges might have been raised

3.23 The Green Party code of conduct says that members should disclose anything in their personal history that could potentially bring the party into disrepute before they stand for election to any office within the party or for selection as a candidate to represent the Green Party. Aimee Challenor might therefore have notified the party under the code when she stood as a general election candidate (June 2017), when she ran for the executive committee of the national party (Summer 2017), when she and her mother stood as local election candidates (May 2018) or when she stood as a candidate for deputy leader of the party (June 2018). She completed a ‘Nomination Statement Form’ when standing in the 2017 general election but did not declare any issues.

3.24 A question here is whether the charges against David Challenor were part of Aimee Challenor’s “*personal history*”. Aimee has told us she believes that the code of conduct does not cover this case because she is not responsible for her father’s actions. We agree that Aimee is not responsible for her father’s actions and the code of conduct could be better worded. However, although there is ambiguity about the wording of the code of conduct, its intention is clear - that the party should be given advance warning of problems that might bring the party into disrepute.

3.25 Aimee apologised for appointing David Challenor as her election agent. Doing so was a clear error of judgement.

Other roles given to David Challenor

3.26 In addition to being her election agent, David Challenor helped Aimee carry out her roles in the party. We were told that David Challenor’s involvement included acting as her representative and as her photographer. Although Aimee disputes some of the details of his involvement, it is clear that David Challenor’s involvement in the party grew over time and

became substantial. Much of his activity was related to supporting Aimee, but he also acted as a member of the party in his own capacity.

Reasons for informing the party

3.27 Many of the people we spoke to during the investigation raised the fear of adverse publicity as a major concern. We asked if Aimee Challenor contacting Matt Hawkins suggested that she saw the issue primarily as one of communications. She replied, “Yes, because I was a spokesperson.”

3.28 We reviewed the party’s safeguarding policy and procedures. We found that the party members we interviewed had a low level of awareness of safeguarding issues and risks.

3.29 Prioritising the safety of children and vulnerable people is an individual responsibility of every member of society. There could hardly be a bigger ‘red flag’ in this respect than someone being charged with 22 sexual offences. Irrespective of where the responsibility lies, one of the effects of the way this case was handled was that someone who had committed serious sexual offences was given roles of responsibility within the Green Party during a period of almost two years after a major safeguarding risk should have been apparent. David Challenor bears some responsibility for this, but Aimee Challenor, as an officer of the party both nationally and locally should have considered safeguarding issues.

Reasons for not disclosing the charges more widely within the party

3.30 Aimee Challenor told us that at the time of the events discussed in this report, she was trying to build her relationship with her father and that this explains the actions she took to involve him in the party. It is clearly the case that Aimee is not responsible for her father’s actions. However, in the roles that she undertook she had significant responsibilities to the party as a member, spokesperson and member of both national and local executives.

3.31 Aimee Challenor also told us she took no further action about additional disclosure of the charges because she had already told the party and had therefore discharged her responsibilities. Although she did tell two people in the party who held senior positions, it

is important to note that she said that they were also friends of hers, she told them through an informal channel, the information she provided was minimal and she did not check that they had done anything with the information. Crucially, she did not tell Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps that her father was a member of the party.

3.32 Furthermore, she did not follow the issue up over the subsequent 20 months, during which time she appointed her father as her election agent twice. We were unable to identify anyone in the national party who was aware that David Challenor was a member of the party at the time of Aimee's first disclosure in November 2016. When Clare Lorraine Phipps and Matt Hawkins learned about the charges against him they did not check to see if he was a member. Aimee does not appear to have considered that it was odd that no-one in the party had come back to her to ask her further details - she simply assumed that no response meant everything was okay.

3.33 Reporting restrictions were imposed on 7 November 2016, two days after Aimee Challenor had told Matt Hawkins and Coventry Pride about the charges. Aimee told us that this prevented her from telling more people about the charges. Reporting restrictions are intended to protect the victims of crime rather than the alleged perpetrators. It would be undesirable if restrictions were to discourage someone from identifying an alleged perpetrator in a way that might lead to people being placed at risk. In addition, telling people in the party about charges is not the same as reporting something in the media. All Aimee needed to tell the party was:

- a) that criminal charges had been made against her father, which she did; and
- b) that he was active in the party, which she did not.

Post-conviction

3.34 On the night the conviction was handed down, Aimee Challenor called the Green party's on-call press team to tell them. On 22 August 2018 she emailed three people: the head of communications at the party; the party's social media officer; and the party's press email address with the details of the conviction. At this stage, Aimee provided full disclosure about her father's convictions. This is to be commended.

Knowledge and response of the national party

Matt Hawkins

3.35 Matt Hawkins was elected to the executive of the party in 2014 and re-elected in 2016 in a job share as external communications co-ordinator. He stepped down from this role in early 2017. When he received the message from Aimee Challenor on 5 November 2016 he emailed three members of the communication team to tell them that *“a very close relative of one of our spokespeople has been arrested. I can’t really share with you the full details... but in case anyone does get in touch about it we do know about it and just raise it with me”*.

3.36 Given the contents of the message Matt Hawkins sent to them, we do not believe that any criticism can be made of the recipients that they took no further action.

3.37 Matt Hawkins told us he regrets not asking Aimee Challenor for more details of the charges, and not asking if David Challenor was a member of the party. He told us his first instinct was to look after Aimee and to give her re-assurance that he would handle issues that arose.

Clare Lorraine Phipps

3.38 Clare Lorraine Phipps was chair of the national Green Party executive committee from September 2016 until November 2017. We do not believe that Clare responded directly to the Facebook Messenger message, but on the day Aimee Challenor sent it, Matt Hawkins told Clare he had managed the communications issue with the press office. Clare’s response was therefore to contact Aimee and focus on supporting her personally. Clare told us she did not speak to the chief executive of the party (Nick Martin, whom she line managed) about the charges because she saw it as a communications issue. She believed that the communications team would have told him if they judged it necessary. Nick Martin told us that if he had been informed the party would have taken action in accordance with its safeguarding policies.

Evaluation

3.39 We have made the following evaluation of the decisions taken by people involved.

David and Tina Challenor

3.40 David Challenor should have told the party about the charges as soon as he was charged. Subsequently he should not have accepted the role of election agent. When he did, should have informed the party of the charges he faced. That was his responsibility as a party member and it was wrong of him not to do so.

3.41 Similarly, Tina Challenor could have informed the party, although her involvement in the party was minimal. She should not have appointed David Challenor as her election agent.

Aimee Challenor

3.42 Evaluating Aimee Challenor's actions is more complex because she had a national role in the party. In carrying out that evaluation, there are several factors that weigh in Aimee's favour, including the difficult circumstances she was in, that she raised the issue promptly and that she did not know many details of the case. In addition, party policies were unclear and she was not provided with appropriate training.

3.43 However, there are also a number of factors that we weigh negatively. The message that Aimee sent to Matt Hawkins was via an informal medium, she did not say why she was sending it or ask for it to be acted on or follow it up. Crucially, she did not mention that David Challenor had a connection to the Green Party.

3.44 We have considered what might be expected of a person in these circumstances and what standards we should apply. Whether, for example, we should evaluate the decisions that Aimee made as those of a person who had been a party member (at that time) for just two years, or whether we should evaluate her actions as a Parliamentary candidate and someone with national responsibilities to speak on behalf of the party.

3.45 The roles Aimee held in the party are not ‘normal’ jobs. Many roles in political parties are not remunerated (such as this one) and we are therefore cautious about applying overly strict criteria to judge the competence and performance of people in them.

3.46 The appropriate place to start in evaluating someone’s actions is to look at what would normally be expected in the role that they are undertaking. The community at large or a political party can expect anyone who undertakes a particular role to do it to a certain standard, irrespective of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (e.g. age, disability, and gender-reassignment) or any vulnerabilities arising from inexperience or difficult life experiences, etc. When this evaluation has been carried out, therefore, it is appropriate to consider whether a person’s performance could have been affected by such factors and what support and training they may need to be offered as a result.

3.47 Aimee Challenor had a number of roles, both locally and nationally, each of which carried important responsibilities. In not ensuring that the right people in the party were told what they needed to know, Aimee failed to fulfil her roles adequately. This is even clearer in her encouragement of her father to become more involved in the party by, for example, appointing him as her election agent in 2017 after she knew of the charges against him. This was a serious error of judgement, which she repeated when she appointed him as her election agent in 2018.

3.48 We also recognise that although Aimee failed in a number of respects, she was operating in difficult circumstances. These include the challenging personal situation she was in, and her autism.

3.49 It is a legitimate aim of the party to encourage young, diverse and potentially inexperienced people to participate in the democratic process. This means that people who then take on these responsibilities may need extra support and training to make the approach work well. The evidence we have seen in this case suggests that the party is not strong in these areas and did not provide sufficient training to Aimee Challenor.

Overall comment on Aimee Challenor’s explanation of her actions

3.50 We find it hard to understand some of Aimee Challenor’s actions and explanations:

- we do not understand how she could not have been aware that, in giving her father official roles in the party, she was putting her own reputation at risk;
- we do not understand how she could have had the good judgement to inform officials in the party about the charges that her father faced, but the poor judgement not to make sure that all relevant information was included. It would have done her no harm to have told the officials that her father was a party member. If she had done so, it seems highly likely that Aimee would have been guided away from using him as her election agent; and
- we accept that Aimee chose not to seek further information about the charges her father faced, but we do not understand why she did not recognise that this was a mistake. Once again, sheer self-preservation would suggest that she should know as much as possible about these matters, so that she could make well-informed decisions about her own actions.

3.51 Aimee Challenor told us about the pressure she was under during this period and about her autism, and we accept that these could have affected her judgement and thinking, but we are not qualified to come to any definite conclusion on such matters.

Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps

3.52 It is important to consider what action Matt Hawkins took given the small amount of information he had at the time. On what he knew, he did not think this was likely to turn into a ‘big issue’ and only with hindsight can we see that it did. It would have been helpful if Matt Hawkins had been more curious and asked more questions. He accepts this. In the context of the situation he was in, however, it is not surprising that he handled the issue in the way he did.

3.53 For Clare Lorraine Phipps it is also important to bear in mind that she was not aware that David Challenor was involved in the party. Nevertheless, she was chair of the national executive of the party when Aimee Challenor told her about the charges. She knew that Aimee held a high-profile spokesperson role in the party. She was also the chief executive’s line manager. She could have been more curious about the charges - either at the time, or in the following 18 months - and should have told the chief executive herself about the potential risk to the party. Clare was experienced and familiar with the party’s safeguarding

policy and it is our view that she could have been more alive to the possibility of the charges against Aimee's father being a safeguarding issue.

3.54 We have weighed a number of pros and cons for both Matt and Clare, including the lack of information that they had and their seniority in the party. Overall it is clear that Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps closed the matter off too quickly and should have followed up more. It is hard to believe that they did not raise the issue again with Aimee, or with other people in the party in subsequent months. They did not give any thought to the wider safeguarding implications nor did they consider informing the local party. That was remiss of them and may have led Aimee to believe that she did not need to take further action.

Knowledge and response of people in Coventry

3.55 David, Tina and Aimee Challenor were all members of Coventry Green Party and lived in the city. Aimee held offices in the local party.

3.56 The people we spoke to in the Coventry Green Party confirmed that they had no knowledge of the charges against David Challenor until August 2018. Aimee told us that she had not told the Coventry Green Party because she had told the national executive of the party.

3.57 The local party should have been told of the charges against David Challenor. Local party members would have immediately known that David Challenor was involved there and would have been able to take appropriate safeguarding actions.

3.58 It would have been helpful if the West Midlands police had drawn the charges to the attention of the party, particularly when David Challenor was undertaking public roles such as being a general election agent.

3.59 Clearly David Challenor should have told his local party about the charges, but it is also disappointing that Aimee Challenor did not do so. Having spoken to Aimee and to members of the local party we believe that Aimee saw herself as someone who worked more at a national level than a local level - hence her telling the national rather than the local party about the charges. Aimee's failure to tell the local party was a serious omission.

Coventry Pride

3.60 Aimee Challenor was a trustee of Coventry Pride. She told us that she informed them on the same day or the following day that she had messaged Matt Hawkins. In response to being told about the charges, Coventry Pride took immediate safeguarding actions, such as preventing David Challenor from volunteering for the charity.

3.61 The contrast between the actions Coventry Pride took and the Green Party took is stark. Coventry Pride knew of David Challenor's involvement as a volunteer in their work and acted.

3.62 Members of the Coventry Green Party knew locally of his membership and his involvement in party activities, while people in the national party knew about his arrest and charges. However, party members in Coventry were not informed of the charges against David Challenor and were unable to take action.

Conclusions

Roles and responsibilities within the Green Party

3.63 We found that in several areas, roles and responsibilities within the party are unclear. Several people we spoke to questioned the overlap between the roles of professional and voluntary staff, particularly in the area of communications. The party should review its process for the recruitment, induction and management of volunteers.

3.64 We were also told about issues with the process relating to the appointment and management of spokespeople. These include determining the scope of their portfolios and the management of spokespeople when appointed. We understand that work is underway within the party to clarify these issues.

The code of conduct

3.65 We have identified several areas where the code of conduct for party members should be tightened. The code of conduct needs to make clear what should be reported and how it should be reported.

3.66 When defining what issues need to be reported the party should consider the possible reasons for reporting. Clearly the reputation of the party, and therefore political considerations, are at the forefront of the people's minds. However, issues such as safeguarding also need to be prioritised. A natural part of the handling of any issue of this kind is that the first question asked is "*are there any safeguarding implications?*". The party's current safeguarding policy does not give members a duty to report issues and this needs to be spelt out.

3.67 There should also be greater clarity on the responsibilities of those standing for public elections or holding offices within the party (including election agents) for reporting information that may damage the party.

3.68 The action to be taken when issues arise needs to be spelt out. There should be a clear, easy to use and well-publicised process for raising issues. Members, volunteers and staff also need to know what will happen if they raise a concern and what the consequences might be if important information is not disclosed to the party.

3.69 The chief executive of the party told us that the party are currently reviewing safeguarding policies and looking at an improved training programme. We have also been shown a draft paper about appointing a party safeguarding officer. These moves are welcome if they deliver the required improvements in policy and practice.

Support for diversity

3.70 As we have noted, the party aims to promote diverse participation in the membership in general and in its leadership in particular. This is entirely legitimate. For this to be successful, however, it needs to support more effectively those people coming into positions of responsibility who may lack experience, family or financial support or who have particular needs for adjustments to be made for any health or disability issues. This will require the

party to improve training and support for people taking on leadership roles. Aimee's difficult family background and her transition are all relevant in this case, for example.

The importance of safeguarding

3.71 Overall, the importance of the party developing a strong safeguarding culture is the key issue that arises from this case.

3.72 It is disappointing that many people we spoke to in the party failed to see the safeguarding issues that arise here. Those in the party who were told about David Challenor's activities saw the issue as primarily a communications one - about protecting the reputation of the party. Awareness of safeguarding issues in the party in general appears to be low.

3.73 The party therefore needs to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding issues, including when and how they should be raised.

3.74 The chief executive of the party acknowledged weaknesses in the party's safeguarding record in the past. However, he told us that these pre-dated the party's growth as an organisation employing significant numbers of professional staff. He told us that the party has made significant improvements to safeguarding procedures and practice in recent years and is fully committed to continuing to improve them in the future.

Wider issues

3.75 This report has focussed on decisions and actions that members of the party took, but safeguarding is a universal concern. We have not been able to establish whether West Midlands police took any safeguarding actions, but it would be desirable for the police who bring charges of this nature to draw them to the attention of appropriate people. We have suggested that the party raise this with them.

Recommendations

R1 The Green Party should discuss with West Midlands police as soon as possible whether it is their policy to draw to the party's attention charges against a party member that could give rise to safeguarding concerns.

R2 The Green Party's code of conduct should, as a matter of urgency, be made clearer about what members should report. In particular it should emphasise the importance of raising issues that give rise to safeguarding concerns.

R3 The Green Party should urgently review its safeguarding policy and procedures to strengthen its approach to raising awareness and improving processes for reporting safeguarding concerns and risks to people outside the party.

4. Approach and structure

Approach

4.1 The investigation was undertaken in private. It comprised formal interviews and an examination of documents the Green Party and others supplied. A list of the documents we considered is in Appendix C. We also received and evaluated several unsolicited contributions from current and former members of the party. We considered all of these, but this report focusses only on matters within our terms of reference. We did not have access to court transcripts.

4.2 Interviews were carried out face-to-face and by phone. We sent each interviewee a letter of invitation, a guide for interviewees and the terms of reference for the investigation. We followed established good practice in conducting the investigation by offering interviewees the opportunity to be accompanied at interviews. We made reasonable adjustments to meet interviewees' needs, where requested. Interviews were recorded, and the recordings were shared with interviewees, so they could comment on them and clarify issues. A list of those interviewed is in Appendix D. We spoke to everyone we felt necessary to complete the investigation, except David Challenor, who is in prison. The absence of his testimony should be borne in mind when reading this report.

4.3 Decisions on who should be named in the report have been taken by the Green Party.

4.4 We have made comments and recommendations based on our interviews and the information available to us to the best of our knowledge and belief.

Structure

4.5 Section one of this report is the introduction and section two provides an overview of the terms of reference. Section three contains the executive summary. The approach and structure for this report is set out in this section (four). Section five contains a chronology. In section six we discuss who could have notified the party about the charges against David Challenor and who did. In section seven we consider what the national party did with the information it had and we evaluate the decisions taken by those involved.

Section eight discusses the knowledge of people in Coventry. Our initial thoughts on moving forward are in section nine.

4.6 The report deals primarily with stage one of the terms of reference, establishing what happened. Although we provide some general comments on issues in stage two (e.g. possible changes to Green Party policies), completion of stage two will depend on the Green Party's response to this report.

4.7 Our findings from interviews and documents are set out in ordinary text. Our comments and opinions are in ***bold italics***.

5. Chronology

5.1 These are the main events examined in this report:

2016

- 5 November David Challenor charged with 22 criminal offences.
- 5 November, 11:39 Aimee Challenor Facebook messaged the Green Party external communications co-ordinator, Matt Hawkins, about the charges. She also informed Coventry Pride around this date.
- 5 November, 12:24 Matt Hawkins emailed colleagues with some of the information about the charges.
- 7 November David Challenor appeared in court (the charges became public, although reporting restrictions were imposed).

2017

- 22 April Aimee Challenor selected as general election candidate for Coventry South. David Challenor acted as her general election agent.
- 8 June General election.
- September Aimee Challenor elected to national Green Party executive.

2018

- May Aimee Challenor and Tina Challenor stand in local elections for Coventry City Council. David Challenor acts as their local election agent.
- June/July Aimee Challenor stands as a candidate for deputy leader of the Green Party.
- 22 August David Challenor sentenced to 22 years in prison after an eleven-day trial. Aimee Challenor warns party about possible news stories about him.
- 28 August David Challenor suspended from Green Party.
- 31 August David Challenor expelled from Green Party.
- 5 September Aimee Challenor resigns from Green Party.

6. Notifying the Green Party of the charges

6.1 The central issue in this investigation is who knew about the charges relating to David Challenor and what they did with that knowledge.

The charges

6.2 On 5 November 2016 David Challenor was charged with 22 criminal offences, including taking indecent photographs, false imprisonment, rape and sexual assault of a child, assault by penetration, and assault causing actual bodily harm.

6.3 We asked West Midlands Police what information about his charges was made public. They told us:

“DC [David Challenor] was charged on 5 November 2016 and appeared before magistrates two days later. At the point of charge we can give the offender’s name to the media and the general public, as when they appear at court this is when it becomes a matter of public record.”

6.4 We found no evidence that the media reported charges either in Coventry, where David Challenor lived, or elsewhere, at this time.

6.5 David Challenor had been active in the local community before he was charged, including involvement in a scout group. He often went by the nickname ‘Baloo Challenor’ because of his role as a Cub Scout leader. We asked West Midlands police if they drew the charges to anyone’s attention, but they were not able to tell us.

6.6 After his appearance in court on 7 November 2016, David Challenor was released on bail. Whilst awaiting trial he undertook public roles, including acting as election agent to Aimee Challenor and Tina Challenor. He was convicted in August 2018.

6.7 The case received substantial local and national publicity after David Challenor’s conviction on 22 August 2018. David Challenor’s crimes will not be discussed in detail in this report, but it is important to understand their severity. For context, the following is an

extract published in the Independent on 22 August 2018 reporting David Challenor's conviction:

"A man who held a 10-year-old girl captive in his "torture den" attic where he electrocuted her while playing out his sadomasochistic fantasies has been jailed for 22 years.

David Challenor, from Coventry, subjected the child to a campaign of abuse which included tying her from a beam, whipping her and giving her electric shocks."

Comment

The nature of the charges against David Challenor raises the issue of whether other children or vulnerable adults were at risk from the time of the charges through to his conviction and imprisonment. This type of concern is generally referred to as 'safeguarding'.

Although legislation and policies relating to safeguarding can be complex, in this context it amounts to a simple question: "is any vulnerable person at risk"? In this report, we use the term the safeguarding to mean the general responsibility of every citizen to protect vulnerable people.

We found no evidence that the police told anyone in the Green Party about the charges against David Challenor.

Activity in political parties, particularly at the time of a general election, provides the opportunity to interact with a large number of people in an unstructured environment. This is likely to include young and/or vulnerable people. Mr Challenor acted twice as an election agent. Whatever the exact role and responsibilities of an election agent, some people may perceive this as a position of trust, and it is well known that sexual offenders can be manipulative and use apparent authority to commit offences. We do not know if those in the police involved in David Challenor's case knew of his political activities, but in general if the police have information that a person involved in political activities has been charged with these types of offences, they should consider if safeguarding issues arise, and take action.

Recommendation

R1 The Green Party should discuss with West Midlands police as soon as possible whether it is their policy to draw to the party's attention charges against a party member that could give rise to safeguarding concerns.

Awareness of the charges

6.8 Given the lack of publicity at the time David Challenor was charged, we believe only three members of the Green Party knew about the charges directly:

- David Challenor himself
- Tina Challenor (David Challenor's wife)
- Aimee Challenor (David Challenor's daughter).

David Challenor

6.9 David Challenor joined the Green Party on 17 December 2015, with a membership gifted by Aimee Challenor. Over the subsequent two and a half years, he gradually became more active in the party. As a party member, the first person who had a responsibility for drawing the charges to the Green Party's attention was David Challenor himself. We found no evidence that he did so.

6.10 The 'Green Party Members Code of Conduct' applies *"to all members of the party, irrespective of any voluntary or professional position they may hold."* The code of conduct says:

"In order to preserve the reputation of the party, members must:

"... uphold the ethical principles of the GPEW [Green Party of England and Wales] and not bring it into disrepute.

“Remember that as elected Green Party representatives their actions in their private lives can affect the reputation of the party both positively and negatively.”

6.11 The code of conduct does not say when or how declarations should be made, other than requiring members who are standing for election to particular roles to make declarations. We discuss the issue further below.

Comment

The primary responsibility for informing the party of the charges was on David Challenor himself. We do not believe that he did so. He should have done.

The Green Party’s code of conduct is unclear about exactly when and how members of the party should declare issues that might bring the party into disrepute.

Recommendation

R2 The Green Party should immediately amend its code of conduct to make clear when and how members should report issues that may bring the party into disrepute.

Tina Challenor

6.12 Tina Challenor became a party member on 1 May 2016. She was not active in the Coventry Green Party, other than standing as a local election ‘paper candidate²’ in Binley & Willenhall Ward in May 2018. She came fifth, receiving 123 votes (4%).

6.13 Tina Challenor told us she was aware of the charges in November 2016. She told us she did not tell anyone in the Green Party about the charges because reporting restrictions had been “*set by a judge*”. She gave the same reason for not telling the party about the charges when she stood as a local election candidate and appointed David Challenor her

² A ‘paper candidate’ is one that a political party puts up in an area where they have no expectation of winning. The candidate is put on the ballot paper to give people an opportunity to vote for the party should they wish to do so. No campaigning is carried out.

election agent. She told us that if she had told other people about the charges, she would have been in contempt of court.

6.14 Tina Challenor told us that, during her time as a member, she had never attended a Green Party meeting. She also told us that she would not have known who to report an issue to in the party.

Comment

Tina Challenor had the opportunity to inform the party of the charges against her husband. She did not do so. We discuss the issue of reporting restrictions in detail below. However, we note that Tina Challenor's involvement in the party was minimal.

Aimee Challenor

6.15 Aimee Challenor joined the Green Party on 11 December 2014, when she was 17. The following year she became chair of the national LGBTIQ+ Greens. Aimee stood in a by-election as the Green Party candidate in Lower Stoke Ward of Coventry City Council on 11 February 2016. She came fourth. She became membership secretary of Coventry Green Party in April 2017 and stood as the general election candidate in Coventry South in June 2017. In May 2018 she stood for election to St Michael's Ward of Coventry City Council, again coming fourth. She was elected to the Green Party's national executive committee in September 2017 and ran for deputy leader of the national party in June 2018.

6.16 Aimee Challenor told us she has autism. We asked her whether that put any limitations on her ability to be an effective member and spokesperson for the Party. She told us:

"Socially it provided a challenge, definitely, but when I was appointed as spokesperson in 2016, it was a massive show of faith in me from the Party. I was really anxious and nervous going into the role, but over the two-and-a-half years I had been involved, thanks to the support of the people who put that faith into me and provided me with media training, and the press team who were always there to answer questions ... and as I experienced it more and more and more, my self-

esteem, my self-confidence grew to a point where it stopped becoming the barrier I got over, to it became a part of me.

“I spoke about my oppositional defiance disorder to [Huffington Post] earlier this year, and actually said how it’s helped me in a way, because I don’t take no for an answer. I will push for that and then speak out, because it feels like a British thing of ‘oh, that’s wrong, we’ll tut quietly and express our disapproval’. Autism goes ‘oh, you’ve got social problems’, that’s why I’m going to have to tell you it’s wrong, which helps a community-based activism political party.”

6.17 Aimee Challenor became aware of the charges against her father on 4 or 5 November 2016. She knew that he had been charged with 22 sexual offences. She told us:

“To give you a bit of the timeline/chronology in regards to that, I first found out in November 2016 that he had been charged with serious sexual offences.”

6.18 We asked Aimee to confirm what she had been told. She told us, *“I found out they were ‘serious sexual charges’.”* She said that she found this out from her family.

6.19 Aimee told us that she did not ask her family for details of the charges:

“I tried mostly to stay out of it, and that is perhaps idealistic of me, naïve of me. For me, though, it was a case of this is a time of major, major stress for me and my family, and I just wanted to provide a sense of relief at the break.”

Comment

Discussion of the decisions Aimee Challenor took must be seen in the context that this was a very difficult and stressful time for her personally.

6.20 Aimee told us that the fact David Challenor had been released on bail was a significant factor in how she perceived the seriousness of the charges:

“... because the police had obviously decided he wasn’t a threat to society because they kept him bailed until the court case”.

Informing the party

6.21 In this section we discuss what the party was told of the charges against David Challenor. In later sections we discuss what the party did with this information and what people in Coventry knew.

6.22 The evidence suggests that Aimee Challenor was the only person who told anyone in the national party about the charges. The following discussion therefore concentrates on the action she took.

Message on 5 November 2016

6.23 At 11.39 on 5 November 2016 Aimee Challenor sent Matt Hawkins a Facebook message with Clare Lorraine Phipps copied in. At the time, Matt Hawkins was a member of the national executive of the Green Party and one of three external communications coordinators for the Party. Clare Lorraine Phipps was the chair of the national executive committee.

6.24 The message Aimee Challenor sent read as follows:

“I only know a few details myself, but at half past nine this morning, West Midlands Police charged my father with 22 offences. Obviously I am not privy to the list of offences, but it is my understanding that the majority of them were sexual offences. The last I heard he was being assessed by a Psych nurse with a view of being detained under the Mental Health Act.

“It should be noted that I do not know the accusations and the police have not asked me to produce a witness statement.

“It is unknown what details will be made public at this time”.

6.25 Matt Hawkins replied:

“I’m so sorry Aimee. How are you doing? Is there anything we can do as friends (as opposed to colleagues!)?”

6.26 Aimee responded:

“I don’t think so. I don’t think there’s anything I can do other than observe and support family”.

6.27 Matt Hawkins then said:

“well do let us know if there is

“sending you love and best wishes x”.

Comment

We note a number of things about this exchange:

- a) Although it was to senior people in the party, the message was sent using an informal, personal medium (Aimee told us that she believes that the use of Facebook Messenger was a common medium for “comms work”). This informality means that the Green Party was not able to create an audit trail of what they had been told.*
- b) The message makes no mention of David Challenor having a connection with the Green Party*
- c) Aimee said that she was not privy to the list of offences, although the charges became a matter of public record when David Challenor went to court on 7 November*
- d) She did not say why she sent the message or ask for Matt or Clare to take action*
- e) Matt Hawkins’ response raises the question of the capacity in which the message was sent to him - whether it was as a friend or as a colleague and how this affected his response*

- f) There appears to have been no discussion about the implications of the message or agreement on next steps*
- g) Although Clare Lorraine Phipps was copied in to the message, Aimee does not appear to have expected her to take action in response to it.*

6.28 We asked Aimee why she chose to raise the issue in this way. We suggested to her that it might have been better not to have approached a friend and to have used a more formal route. She told us that as a party spokesperson she saw the external communications co-ordinator of the party as the person she reported to in the national party. She told us *“I had to tell the external communications coordinator or the Chair of GPEX, both of whom were my friends.”* We asked if she had considered telling someone in the party with responsibility for governance. She told us:

“The governance of the Green Party covers the Green Party Regional Council (GPRC), the Green Party executive, GPEX. Matt Hawkins and Clare Phipps sat on GPEX. On the staff there wouldn’t have been many people unless I was lodging a complaint ... It’s not a complaint.”

6.29 Aimee Challenor told us that *“my understanding was Matt informed other people in the party”*. We discuss Matt Hawkins’ response in section seven. We do not believe that Aimee made further disclosures to anyone in the party about the issue.

Comment

It is to Aimee’s credit that she made this disclosure. However, the brevity, informality and ambiguity of this exchange are problematic. While it allowed Aimee to say afterwards that she had “told the party”, it also created the risk that the recipients would not absorb the message and communicate it to the people with relevant responsibilities, which is what happened.

Other occasions when the charges might have been brought to the party's attention

6.30 Aimee Challenor made this disclosure unprompted. However, we found several other occasions when she could have repeated, reinforced, or followed up the information she gave to the party about the charges.

6.31 The Green Party code of conduct says:

“Members should disclose anything in their personal history that could potentially bring the Party into disrepute before they stand for election to any office within the Party or for selection as a candidate to represent the Green Party externally in any capacity. This includes opinions that are incompatible with Green Party ethics or philosophy. Disclosures should be in confidence and via appropriate procedures.”

6.32 Aimee might therefore have notified the party under the code at any of the following times:

- June 2017 - when she stood as a general election candidate
- Summer 2017 - when she ran for the executive committee of the national party
- May 2018 - when Aimee and Tina Challenor stood as local election candidates
- June 2018 - when Aimee stood as a candidate for deputy leader of the party.

6.33 We asked Aimee whether she had considered informing the party on any of these occasions. She told us:

“I told the previous external communications coordinator on GPEx [i.e. Matt Hawkins]

“Especially in June of this year [2018] when it was then going to court... it was definitely not something I could have re-disclosed. However, I have already said, at the local elections of this year and the general last year, I definitely should have.

“That would be my response, that I previously disclosed it and particularly on two occasions when I appointed him my agent, fair do's, I should have possibly re-disclosed it. I was asked to disclose my personal history. I focused on myself, and

I've already spoken ... about making sure there is better guidance in terms of those questions. Ultimately, I am not my father."

6.34 Aimee Challenor stood as a candidate in the June 2017 general election. Due to the short notice with which the election was called, the selection of candidates happened more quickly than usual. As part of the selection process, Aimee Challenor completed a 'Nomination Statement Form'. The form included the following question:

"Please declare anything in your current or personal history, that you consider is likely to be, or may in law be, prejudicial to your position as a general election candidate or as a MP, or would bring the Party into serious disrepute or result in adverse media coverage.

[This question is a requirement of the national Green Party constitution]."

6.35 Aimee's response was "None".

6.36 The form also asked, "Are there any other matters that you wish to address regarding candidacy?". Aimee's response was "NO".

6.37 We found no equivalent form for Green Party candidates in local elections in Coventry.

Comment

An issue here is whether the charges against David Challenor were part of Aimee's "personal history". Aimee has told us she believes that the code of conduct does not cover this case because she is not responsible for her father's actions.

We agree that Aimee is not responsible for her father's actions. In addition, the code of conduct could be better worded. The words "in their personal history" are ambiguous. A request simply to declare anything that might bring the party into disrepute would be clearer. Some explanation of the types of issues that might fall within this section would also be helpful.

Nevertheless, the press made the connection between Aimee and her father's actions and this brought the party into disrepute.

Furthermore, although there is ambiguity about the wording of the code of conduct, its intention is clear - that the party should be given advance warning of problems that might bring the party into disrepute. The fact that Aimee contacted two members of the national executive committee immediately after she found out about the charges indicates that she did think it was something that the party needed to know.

We will discuss safeguarding more generally below, but it is our view that ambiguity of the wording in the code of conduct does not remove the general responsibility that everyone has to take whatever steps are needed to protect children or vulnerable adults if a significant risk is identified.

Recommendation

R3 The Green Party's code of conduct should, as a matter of urgency, be made clearer about what members should report. In particular it should emphasise the importance of raising issues that give rise to safeguarding concerns.

6.38 The code of conduct refers to disclosures being made "*via appropriate procedures*", although it does not say what those procedures should be. The policy, projects and governance officer of the party since August 2017 told us that members approach him directly about these types of issues or contact the main office number of the party. If they contact the main office number, a caller would speak to the membership team and the information would be passed to the policy, projects and governance officer. He told us that this applied both to complaints, and to other "*troubling incidents*" that may arise. The policy, projects and governance officer told us that he discusses serious issues with the chief executive, Nick Martin. The chief executive told us that it would also be normal for a member of the executive of a local party to raise issues with colleagues in the local party in the first instance.

Appointment as election agent

6.39 Aimee Challenor appointed David Challenor as her election agent on two occasions; for the general election in June 2017 and for the local elections in May 2018. Tina Challenor also appointed David Challenor as her election agent for the local elections in May 2018.

6.40 The role of an election agent varies greatly depending on the size of the election campaign. At a minimum it involves a responsibility for keeping track of election expenses incurred and filing returns. In the 2018 local elections no costs were incurred for either Aimee or Tina Challenor so a 'nil' return was made. Speaking about that campaign, Aimee told us that in these cases the role was not a big one:

“Again, no, because it was a quiet campaign, and, regardless of what this [the guidance for election agents] says, his role was filing for the expenditure at the end. That time we didn’t even print leaflets so he didn’t even have to put his label on it, apart from our website, but that’s because we knew we were going to have to have a website ready for build up for the internal elections, which I already knew I’d wanted to stand in.”

6.41 When we asked about appointing her father, Aimee also told us:

“There was no declared issues from the party, no one took me to one side and said ‘Aimee this might not be a good idea’. It was like, ‘okay’, and ‘it’s fine’.”

6.42 Aimee said that the election agent had access to her office email account, in part because the Council use it for election-related documentation. She said that for the general election in 2017 the campaign received emails about issues such as antiterrorism and queries from the Electoral Commission.

6.43 Aimee apologised for appointing David Challenor as her election agent. She said that *“with the benefit of hindsight I should have re-raised it with Matt [Hawkins]”*. She said that she did not do so as she had already made a disclosure:

“It passed me by because on the basis of I had disclosed to the party, no party action had been taken. The police hadn’t spoken to me, he was on police bail. Especially in 2017, with the fast pace of that campaign because obviously it was the snap

election, I was focusing on getting my signatures in time, getting some leaflets out so that we have some sort of campaign.

“I did not have that discussion with Matt. As I’ve said I was really quite rushed off my feet with the snap campaign and having to do the constituency national role, as well as voluntary roles in other organisations. It was a very short amount of time to go from ‘this is fun, we’ve got next to nothing in Coventry’ to ‘oh ... we’ve got a general election’. Then to have to actually get all the paperwork done, in terms of all of my details, appointing an agent, getting the nominations and trying to find £500 for a general election deposit.”

6.44 Aimee Challenor told us she believes that in future, election agents should be required to make a disclosure about their personal history:

“As a candidate I had to fill out a form about my history and stuff, and make disclosures. That is not requested of agents. That should be because, at the end of the day, in a more targeted campaign especially, there are many more safeguarding concerns in regards to election agents, because there is electoral roll data for example.

“We need to be asking the same questions of agents as we are of candidates because in more high-profile campaigns, more in terms of even the past six months, light has been put on agents. We can’t just be saying that it’s only for a candidate to be checked. The agent needs to be filling out these forms as well.”

Comment

When she appointed David Challenor as her election agent, Aimee knew that he had been charged with sexual offences. Appointing him as her election agent in June 2017 was a clear error of judgement. Appointing him again in May 2018 indicates that she saw nothing wrong in her first decision (it was also an error of judgement on behalf of Tina Challenor to appoint him, and by David Challenor to accept). Aimee’s explanation that “no-one raised anything with me” demonstrates a passivity and lack of curiosity and judgement, which were not appropriate in the circumstances.

Other roles given to David Challenor

6.45 In addition to being her election agent, David Challenor helped Aimee carry out her roles in the party. We were told that David Challenor's involvement included:

- supporting Aimee's work
- acting as her representative
- acting as her photographer.

6.46 The policy, projects and governance officer told us that David Challenor's involvement in the party increased from 2016 onwards and included seconding a motion at the 2018 national spring conference. The chief of staff to Caroline Lucas MP, also told us she was aware of David Challenor's involvement in party policy and in supporting Aimee Challenor in her role, but did not know about the charges against him.

6.47 Members of the Coventry Green Party told us that David Challenor was closely involved in running Aimee's office. Aimee confirmed that he replied to emails that were sent to her election office email addresses (office@aimee2017 and office@aimee2018), but not to her party email account.

6.48 At a time after the charges in November 2016, Aimee was membership secretary of the Coventry Green Party. We asked whether David Challenor would have had access to the membership records. She told us:

"Not the membership records. Membership records are accessed through my Green Party login, not through my office email ... I segregate things with different emails because I need to allocate my time to different roles... Anything that involved the Green Party, on a local or national level, came to aimee.challenor@greenparty.org.uk. Anything that came out from - either Council, Electoral Commission, or from the public about an election, would either go to office@aimee2018.uk, for election either for this year, or 2017 for last year, or it could come to me directly at me at office. So, me @aimee2018. He only had access to 'office'.

6.49 The policy, projects and governance officer told us that Aimee had asked for David Challenor to represent her at a party disciplinary committee meeting. We asked Aimee whether this was true. She told us:

“No, there was one complaints meeting when a complaint was made against me in 2017, and the meeting was held in Birmingham earlier this year [i.e. 2018] and because of my autism I said, ‘can he come with me’ and he did. We attended a disciplinary committee, where I gave a pretty bad statement and answered questions. He was there to support me, but not to represent me and I gave him the power to represent me in case, again, because of my autism, I needed to step out of the meeting, and that power was not used.”

6.50 The policy, projects and governance officer provided us with an email exchange that he had with Aimee on 1 March 2018 about that issue. He had written to Aimee to give her notice of the disciplinary committee meeting due on 10 March 2018 relating to a complaint that had been made against her. She responded:

“Thank you for the confirmation and the report.

“This email is to give yourself and the Disciplinary Committee notice that due to a calendar clash, I shall be unable to attend the Disciplinary Committee meeting in person, and therefore I shall be sending a representative to the meeting to represent me and act on my behalf.

“The authorised representative is Baloo [David] Challenor, a member of Coventry Green Party, and my father. This email should act as permission for him to act in my absence at the meeting of the Green Party Disciplinary Committee in Birmingham on the 10th of March. I request he is copied in to any further emails about this matter at office@aimee2018.uk

*“Yours,
Aimee Challenor”*

6.51 The Green Party also gave us a copy of the minutes of the disciplinary committee meeting that the party held on 10 March 2018. These record Aimee Challenor’s attendance

as “*accompanied by her father*”. Thus, although Aimee intended her father to represent her, it appears that this did not happen.

6.52 We were also told that Aimee brought David Challenor to Gay Pride events, including one in London. He also acted as a photographer for Aimee at events such as Coventry Pride.

6.53 Having reviewed the draft report, Aimee Challenor told us that the descriptions of David Challenor as “*running her office*” and acting as her “*photographer*” should not be taken too literally. She told us, “*I am describing the functions literally without the cultural connotations that come with them.*” Aimee also told us:

“No consideration is given, or questions asked, regarding whether I would (for example) have wanted my father specifically to support me as an election agent had I not also required support in the context of my autism, or had the local party themselves given support as a reasonable adjustment. Again, no question is made as to whether the local party even offered me adjustments, or indeed had any process to collect information regarding disability and required support.”

Comment

David Challenor’s involvement in the party grew over time and became substantial. Much of his activity was related to supporting Aimee, but he also acted as a member of the party in his own capacity.

Reasons for informing the party

6.54 Apart from the responsibilities of members to inform the party about charges such as those in this case, there are other reasons why Aimee might have informed the party, such as concerns about safeguarding or adverse publicity.

Concerns about adverse publicity

6.55 Many of the people we spoke to during the investigation raised the fear of adverse publicity as a major concern.

6.56 We asked Aimee Challenor about her choice of who to tell about the charges. She told us that she saw it as

“letting the external communications coordinator know that there is this issue and the background that may come up. It may not, it may do... It didn’t for quite a while, like a year and a half, and then it did, but I let the executive know.”

6.57 We asked if her contacting Matt Hawkins suggested that she saw the issue primarily as one of communications. She replied, *“Yes, because I was a spokesperson.”*

Concerns about safeguarding

6.58 We reviewed the party’s safeguarding policy and procedures document, which has been in place since June 2016. The policy applies to every member of the party, and to all its constituent bodies at national, regional and local levels. The policy aims to protect children, young people and adults at risk when they attend party meetings and events. It aims to provide members, volunteers and staff with guidance on the party’s approach to safeguarding and sets out processes for notifying the party about concerns. However the policy itself does not give individual members a responsibility to report safeguarding issues (although this is referenced in accompanying document ‘Procedures for delivering the Green Party Safeguarding Policy’).

6.59 We have not critiqued the policy and procedures document in depth. However, we found party members we interviewed had a low level of awareness of safeguarding issues and risks to people outside the party. We understand that the party is currently reviewing its safeguarding policy and procedures, with the aim of improving its performance in this important area.

Recommendation

R4 The Green Party should urgently review its safeguarding policy and procedures to strengthen its approach to raising awareness and improving processes for reporting safeguarding concerns and risks to people outside the party.

6.60 Safeguarding risks are particularly acute in unstructured environments where interactions with vulnerable people are unregulated, unlike environments such as schools where interactions are carefully managed. Political parties and election campaigns are just this sort of unstructured environment.

6.61 We spoke to a number of people in the party about safeguarding. Of those what we spoke to, the chief of staff to Caroline Lucas MP, gave us the clearest explanation of how this case should have been dealt with as a safeguarding issue. She told us that if she had known about the charges she would immediately have seen it as a safeguarding, as well as a media issue. She said she would have told the chief executive and the chair of the party's executive committee. She would have asked if Aimee's involvement in the Young Greens would have given David Challenor access to young people. She said that Aimee's role in the party, which involved working with young people and the risk that arose from that should have been considered.

6.62 We asked Aimee whether she considered there were safeguarding issues arising from her father's involvement with the party. She told us:

"There wouldn't have been safeguarding... he had no personal access to members or members' data."

Comment

As we have noted, prioritising the safety of children and vulnerable people is an individual responsibility of every member of society.

There could hardly be a bigger ‘red flag’ in this respect than someone being charged with 22 sexual offences. As we will discuss below, on being told about the charges, Coventry Pride took immediate safeguarding actions.

Irrespective of where the responsibility lies, one of the effects of the way this case was handled was that someone who had committed serious sexual offences was given roles of responsibility within the Green Party during a period of almost two years after a major safeguarding risk should have been apparent.

David Challenor bears some responsibility for this, but Aimee Challenor, as an officer of the party both nationally and locally, should have made sure that she gave enough information to people in positions of responsibility so that they could act on it. We believe that she did not do so because the primary issue in her mind was the reputation of the party in publicity terms. We do not believe she considered safeguarding issues. That was an error on her part.

From our conversations with her, it is clear that Aimee Challenor did not demonstrate a clear understanding of safeguarding and still does not see the safeguarding issues that this case gave rise to.

Reasons for not disclosing the charges more widely within the party

6.63 Aimee Challenor gave us several reasons for not providing further information to anyone else in the party apart from Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps.

Not being responsible for her father’s actions

6.64 Aimee Challenor also told us that at the time of the events discussed in this report, she was trying to build her relationship with her father and that this explains the actions she took to involve him in the party. Aimee argues that it was not her responsibility to report on the actions of a separate individual (her father).

Comment

It is clearly the case that Aimee Challenor is not responsible for her father's actions. However, in the roles that she undertook she had significant responsibilities to the party as a member, spokesperson and member of both national and local executives. She also took several actions to promote David Challenor's involvement in the party. These were her responsibility alone.

Already having told the party

6.65 Aimee Challenor told us she took no further action about additional disclosure of the charges because she had already told the party and had therefore discharged her responsibilities. However, Aimee was not clear about what, if anything, had happened as a result of the information she gave Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps. We found no evidence she followed these matters up after her initial notification.

6.66 We asked Aimee what the consequences were of her informing Matt Hawkins. She told us:

"I obviously informed Matt, and my understanding was Matt informed other people in the party. As a further consequence, I'm not sure any action was definitely taken. I think it was more a preparation for should someone come to us.

"There were reporting restrictions on the case but we all know that sometimes those restrictions get broken, and if that happened should someone then come to the Green Party and go 'this spokesperson's father's been charged with this?'"

Comment

Aimee Challenor said she had both "told the party" and "told the executive". Although she did tell two people in the party who held senior positions, she said that they were also friends of hers, she told them through an informal channel, the information she provided was minimal and she did not check that they had done anything with the information. Crucially, she did not tell Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps that

her father was a member of the party. Furthermore, she did not follow the issue up over the subsequent 20 months, during which time she appointed her father as her election agent twice.

The two people in the party that Aimee told were members of the executive, but she did not ask them to inform the rest of the executive. Nor did she ensure that the executive as a whole was aware of the full details of her father's situation, or that this information was formally recorded.

We were unable to identify anyone in the national party who was aware that David Challenor was a member of the party at the time of Aimee's first disclosure. When Clare Lorraine Phipps and Matt Hawkins learned about the charges against him they did not check to see if he was a member, and Aimee did not tell them that he was. Aimee does not appear to have considered that it was odd that no-one in the party had come back to her to ask her further details - she simply assumed that no response meant everything was okay.

Reporting restrictions

6.67 Reporting restrictions were imposed on 7 November 2016, two days after Aimee Challenor had told Matt Hawkins and Coventry Pride about the charges. Aimee told us that her family initially told her about the restrictions and her father's solicitor confirmed them to her in a phone call. Aimee told us:

"In November 2016, I was told my dad had been charged with these offences and that reporting restrictions were in place. I don't know if that was done by a judge, I don't believe so because, as I say, it went to court in August. But I'm not involved in the criminal justice system enough to tell you who has the power to apply reporting restrictions."

6.68 Aimee also gave us a statement from David Challenor's solicitor, who told us:

"These orders are simple, nobody is allowed to report on the nature of the case, or to release any details of the case until the order is lifted. In this case that was after the trial."

6.69 We asked Aimee if telling Matt Hawkins would have breached the reporting restrictions had they been in place. She told us it would not:

“Because reporting to Matt Hawkins isn’t reporting it to media, it’s letting my senior, my person I report to [know].”

6.70 Aimee told us she did not know any more details about the charges before August 2018:

“I wasn’t told the full details until I got to court in August 2018.”

“Q. You didn’t look them up?”

“A. I couldn’t look them up. There were reporting restrictions until it got to court.”

“Q. The charges were public?”

“A. Not until they got to court.”

6.71 Warwick Crown Court told us that Coventry Magistrates Court put a reporting restriction in place on 7 November 2016. It was imposed under section 45 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999. They told us that the restriction has no end date and is still in place.

6.72 Subsection 3 of section 45 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act 1999 says:

“The court may direct that no matter relating to any person concerned in the proceedings shall while he is under the age of 18 be included in any publication if it is likely to lead members of the public to identify him as a person concerned in the proceedings.”

6.73 Section 45 continues:

“(7) For the purposes of subsection (3) any reference to a person concerned in the proceedings is to a person—

(a) against or in respect of whom the proceedings are taken, or

(b) who is a witness in the proceedings.”

(8) The matters relating to a person in relation to which the restrictions imposed by a direction under subsection (3) apply (if their inclusion in any publication is likely to have the result mentioned in that subsection) include in particular—

(a) his name,

(b) his address,

(c) the identity of any school or other educational establishment attended by him,

(d) the identity of any place of work, and

(e) any still or moving picture of him.”

6.74 Warwick Crown Court also told us:

“We can confirm that this restriction restricts any publication of any information that is likely to lead members of the public to identify any witness or complainant that was under the age of 18 at the time that an offence, proven or alleged, was committed.”

6.75 We asked whether the reporting restrictions prevented the publication of information about David Challenor:

“There are some instances whereby the disclosure of a defendant’s details is determined to lead to the identification of those involved in a case who are protected by the reporting restrictions, but this is a matter of legal interpretation and we cannot comment about specific circumstances, nor can we provide legal advice on such matters.”

6.76 We found no publicity about the case before the trial in August 2018. There has been extensive reporting about David Challenor’s crimes in the press since his conviction, although the reporting restrictions remain in place.

6.77 David Challenor’s solicitor also told us that once Aimee had been called as a witness in July or August 2018, details of the case could not be divulged to her and she could not speak to the person whose trial it was before giving evidence. He said that the evidence she gave did not relate to the details of the case. Aimee told us that when she gave evidence in August 2018 the judge said to her that she could not talk about the details she learnt about the case until it concluded.

Comment

Reporting restrictions are intended to protect the victims of crime rather than the alleged perpetrators. It would be undesirable if restrictions were to discourage someone from identifying an alleged perpetrator in a way that might lead to people being placed at risk.

Aimee says she was not able to find details about the case, to share what she learnt during the trial or to talk about the evidence she gave. This is clearly correct.

However, Aimee also suggested that the reporting restriction prevented her from telling people about the charges. This is not the case. As Aimee herself recognises, telling people in the Green Party is not the same as reporting something to the media. All Aimee needed to tell the party was:

- a) that criminal charges had been made against her father, which she did; and*
- b) that he was active in the party, which she did not.*

The key piece of information that the national Green Party was not given was David Challenor's involvement in the party. By contrast Coventry Green Party knew of David Challenor's involvement, but not the charges. The importance of knowing both pieces of information is demonstrated by the fact that the trustees of Coventry Pride, who knew both about the charges and of David Challenor's involvement in their activities, were able to take appropriate action immediately.

Reporting restrictions are therefore irrelevant to Aimee's key failure - to place the charges against David Challenor in context, i.e. to tell the national party that David Challenor was an active member of the party. Furthermore, if Aimee had doubts about whether the reporting restrictions prevented her from telling people in the party about the charges it would have been appropriate to seek advice, for example from her father's solicitor (although Aimee told us that "one cannot say that a person with autism should have simply act[ed] as someone who does not").

The trial and post-conviction

6.78 With regard to informing the party after she gave evidence in court in August 2018 Aimee told us:

“The judge makes it quite clear to me, when I am finished with [giving evidence], that whilst the case is on-going I cannot disclose it to anyone outside of the case, because until the conclusion of the case there was reporting restrictions, and I was told that if I talk to anyone and it’s brought back to court it would be contempt. So I lived with that on my shoulders for two weeks whilst the court case goes on. The conviction was handed down, the reporting restriction is lifted. As soon as I’m told that, I call the on-call press team at the Green Party head office to make them aware.”

Comment

The restrictions were placed on Aimee after she gave evidence in August 2018. They are therefore only relevant to the decisions she took about who to tell about the charges after this time.

6.79 Aimee Challenor told us that on the night the conviction was handed down, she called the Green party’s on-call press team to tell them. On 22 August 2018 she emailed three people: the head of communications at the party; the party’s social media officer at the time; and the party’s press email address. The email says:

“Last night I called [the press officer] on the phone and messaged [the head of communications] to let the Press team aware of a court matter involving my father. He has been found guilty on a significant number of serious sexual offences ...

He was my election agent for GE17 and LE18, as well as the GDPR Officer for Coventry Green Party³.

³ Coventry Green Party told us that David Challenor was not in fact their GDPR officer.

Obviously I could not comment on the matter over the last fortnight due to contempt laws. Now the case has concluded I'm letting you know.

I was young when the alleged offences happened and was not aware of them happening. This was in my evidence to the court. I can still understand if there are concerns about my position.

The matter has been picked up by one local newspaper who haven't linked him to the party. <https://coventryobserver.co.uk/news/pervert-subjected-girl-10-to-horrific-ordeal-of-abuse-in-torture-den-attic/>

Given the serious nature of the matter I figure it's safer to alert you and not need it, then to not have alerted you, and needed to. As a matter of conscience I will also flag this to Emma Carter in her role of Chair of the party in a separate email.

Obviously I'm fairly shaken by the whole matter..."

Comment

At this stage, Aimee provided a full disclosure about her father's convictions. This is to be commended.

6.80 The head of communications told us that over the following days she spoke to Aimee several times to find out the circumstances of the conviction and prepare a media-handling plan. She told us she took time to establish Aimee's version of events so she could prepare a comprehensive plan. The head of communications told us that Aimee said to her on several occasions that she had not previously told anyone in the party about the charges.

6.81 On 24 August the party issued a press statement saying that the party had not previously been informed about the charges. However, on 25 August 2018 Clare Lorraine Phipps contacted the head of communications to tell her that she and Matt Hawkins had been advised of the charges in November 2016. The head of communications told us she was extremely surprised by this news because Aimee had never told her about it. The party subsequently issued an updated press statement.

6.82 Aimee Challenor told us that after this she was asked to step aside from the deputy leadership election and was ultimately suspended from the party. Aimee believes the party changed its stance from initially being supportive to ultimately suspending her because of pressure on social media, some of which was transphobic. She resigned from the party on 5 September 2018.

6.83 In the next section of the report we will consider those people in the national party who were told about the charges. We will then comment on the decision making of all those who had knowledge of the charges (to a greater or lesser extent).

7. Knowledge and response of the national party

7.1 The Green Party Regional Council (GPRC) and the Green Party executive (GPEx) are the two main governance bodies in the party. The regional council is responsible for the wellbeing of the party, including disciplinary procedures. It comprises two members from each English region and two from Wales. The executive oversees the day-to-day running of the party. Spokespeople (such as Aimee was) are the responsibility of the executive and report to the external communications co-ordinators. The executive is democratically elected by party members and has a high turnover. The chair of the executive is the line manager of the chief executive.

7.2 We spoke to Nick Martin, chief executive of the party. He told us that the party is in a period of transition from having around eight full-time staff a few years ago to around forty now, with more part-time staff. He said that nevertheless the party still relies to a great extent on volunteers⁴.

Matt Hawkins' role

7.3 Matt Hawkins was elected to the executive of the party in 2014 and re-elected in 2016 in a job share as external communications co-ordinator. He initially job-shared with Penny Kemp and Clare Lorraine Phipps. Matt Hawkins and Penny Kemp re-stood at the end of their 2014-16 term, together with Jennifer Nadel and were re-elected (Clare Lorraine Phipps did not re-stand with them, but instead stood for and became chair of the party's executive in 2016).

7.4 Matt Hawkins' role included setting the party's communications strategy, liaising with paid staff and being on-call for media enquiries and staff concerns. He stepped down in early 2017, although he was later asked to help the party out with the snap general election in 2017. After the general election he was appointed senior communications manager of the party on a six-month paid full-time contract. The contract expired in January 2018.

⁴ Verita has previously published advice on managing volunteers, covering areas such as recruitment, training, management and support. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/jimmy-savile-nhs-investigations-lessons-learned>

7.5 As discussed in the previous section, Aimee Challenor told Matt Hawkins of the charges against David Challenor on 5 November 2016 in a Facebook message. Within an hour of receiving the message, Matt Hawkins informed three people by email:

- the press manager for the party at the time
- a press officer reporting to the press manager
- Caroline Lucas' press officer.

7.6 The message that he sent was as follows:

“Subject: Spokesperson alert - in confidence

Hi all,

I hope you're all having a good day.

Sharing this with you in complete confidence but I wanted you to be aware: a very close relative of one of our spokespeople has been arrested. I can't really share with you the full details (only because the person themselves is obviously wanting to keep this as private as possible) but in case anyone does get in touch about it we do know about it and just raise it with me.

Hope that's okay?

Matt

7.7 Matt Hawkins received a reply from Caroline Lucas' press officer saying “*Thanks Matt. Let me know if I can help in any way*”. Matt Hawkins thanked him for this response. We have not seen any evidence to suggest that any member of staff in the party did anything further in response to this message.

Comment

Aimee Challenor's original message did not convey to Matt Hawkins that David Challenor had a connection to the Green Party. Matt's message to press colleagues simplified the information further. Given the contents of the message Matt sent to them, we do not believe that any criticism can be made of the recipients of the email from Matt Hawkins that they took no further action.

7.8 Matt Hawkins told us he regrets not asking Aimee Challenor for more details, and not asking if David Challenor was a member of the party. He told us his first instinct was to look after Aimee and to give her re-assurance that he would handle issues that arose. He did not put more details in the message that he passed on to press staff because he wanted to respect her privacy and because they were friends. He told us that he assumed Aimee would have said that David Challenor was a member if she thought it was relevant. He said he believed her when she said she did not know more details. Matt Hawkins told us he saw the main reputational risk as relating to Aimee, but that he did not prepare a media-handling plan because he thought it was unlikely to be a major story in the media. He did not see it as a safeguarding issue.

7.9 Matt Hawkins told us that he believes that there is some ambiguity between the responsibilities of the elected members of the executive and the roles of the communications staff in the party (who are employees), although the party told us that they believe the job descriptions for these roles are clear.

7.10 After the conviction, a left wing political blog, *'Left Foot Forward'* carried a report headlined, *"Green Party figures knew Equality Spokesperson's father had been charged with sexual offences"*. The report indicated that Matt Hawkins had spoken to the blog. Clare Lorraine Phipps told us that she was also contacted to confirm the accuracy of the blog but that she did not give a detailed comment. The report included the following:

"Then-Green Party External Coordinations [Communications] Coordinator Matt Hawkins and then-party Chair Clare Lorraine Phipps were told by former Equalities Spokesperson Aimee Challenor in November 2016 that her father - a Green activist - had been charged with sexual offences..."

"The messages from Aimee Challenor did not state that her father was active in the party. Speaking to Left Foot Forward, Matt Hawkins says he did not know David Challenor was a member..."

"Both Hawkins and Phipps - who are in a relationship - say the party's press team were informed that charges had been made against a spokesperson's family member, but no action was taken. D. Challenor continued to be active in the party"

and serve as an election agent for both his wife Tina and for daughter Aimee, who both stood in this year's local elections."

Clare Lorraine Phipps' role

7.11 Clare Lorraine Phipps was chair of the national Green Party executive committee (GPEx) from September 2016 until November 2017. She also worked as external communications co-ordinator with Matt Hawkins and Penny Kemp from 2014 to 2016. As part of her role as chair, Clare line managed the chief executive of the party. Clare was also copied in to the Facebook message from Aimee Challenor.

7.12 Clare told us she was copied in to the message because, when she had been external communications co-ordinator, Aimee Challenor had received a lot of negative interest from the public and needed support. Clare provided this support, and after she relinquished the communications role she agreed she would continue to support Aimee in dealing with issues identified as affecting her as a transgender person.

7.13 We do not believe that Clare responded directly to the Facebook Messenger message, but on the day Aimee sent it, Matt Hawkins told Clare he had managed the communication with the press office. Clare's response was therefore to contact Aimee and focus on supporting her personally.

7.14 Aimee Challenor told Clare that she was under an order not to tell anyone about who was involved. Clare told us she had no idea then that David Challenor was a member of the Green Party. If she had known that, she told us that she would have handled the issue differently, including asking the GPRC to suspend him. At the time, however, the main focus was on the reputational risk to the party, and she saw the issue from a communications perspective.

7.15 Clare told us she did not speak to the chief executive of the party (Nick Martin) because she saw it as a communications issue and the communications team would have told him if they judged it necessary. She said she did not think she should have told him, or anybody else because it was a confidential issue. She also told us that she subsequently apologised to Nick Martin directly. Nick Martin believes that Clare should have told him directly. He is surprised she did not and believes it affected his ability to do his job. He

believes her motivation was to protect Aimee, but that not telling him was a significant error. Clare denies that her motivation was to protect Aimee. She told us that she was aware of the importance of safeguarding issues and had done a lot of work on the party's policies in this area.

7.16 After David Challenor's conviction became public, Clare issued a statement on behalf of Green Party Women⁵, which included the following:

"We will be standing by Aimee throughout her no-fault suspension and closely following the investigation to ensure that difficult lessons are indeed learnt by the Party.

It will not make Mr. Challenor's crimes any less horrific, or ameliorate our failure to properly vet his membership or his role as an election agent, by scapegoating his daughter. We want to state now that we will not tolerate any attempts to do so, or to victim-blame young women for the Party's failures.

In its support of Aimee the Party should have made clear that she was in care/supported independent living and therefore not living at home during the period the police have stated the crimes took place. Aimee was similarly not living at home when her father was charged in November 2016.

However, what little information Aimee had about the charges she shared with the Party at that time, as is now fully apparent. We call for any subsequent statements by the Party to publicly acknowledge this. How this information was not retained by the Party will hopefully become clear & lessons learnt in the investigation."

7.17 The chief executive, Nick Martin, told us that it was the party's view that it was "disingenuous" of Clare Lorraine Phipps, Matt Hawkins or Aimee Challenor "to maintain that ... their actions in informing each other on a private messaging channel of very limited information about the charges ... amounted to informing the Party, the executive, or [Aimee's] "manager". He told us that Clare Lorraine Phipps and Matt Hawkins "were very experienced members of the executive in their second term of office. Throughout the first two years they had both been part of a job share and knew very well how accountability

⁵ The Green Party has told us that Green Party Women did not exist as a formal party body at this time

and joint responsibility in a job share works.” He said that if Matt Hawkins had informed his job share, Jennifer Nadel (who was not copied in to his email to party staff), then “it is inconceivable that an experienced broadcast journalist like Jennifer would not have understood the risks and ensured that they were acted on”.

7.18 Nick Martin also told us:

“The members of the executive who knew that David Challoner had been arrested for 22 offences, most of which were of a sexual nature did not inform others in the executive, the chief executive or even convey this information in its fullest to staff [or] the local party Coventry. Had they done this we would have known it was a safeguarding issue and it would have been acted upon in accordance with our safeguarding policies. The issue was that neither the national or local party knew and therefore could not address the issues as a safeguarding one.”

Support for Aimee Challenor

7.19 The party told us that it has a mentoring scheme for young people, entitled “30 under 30”. The party’s website says:

“30 under 30 is a development scheme offering young people in the Green Party one year of expert training and mentoring, increasing engagement and knowledge of the Party and the wider political world. Our aim is for participants to emerge with the rounded base of skills and experience that would allow them to become the next generation of MPs, MEPs, Councillors, Assembly Members and top-level party officials.”

7.20 The party confirmed that Aimee Challenor was not on the scheme and does not appear to have received formal mentoring. Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps, however, gave her some mentoring support. Clare Lorraine Phipps told us that this arrangement was signed off by “*fellow members of the Green Party Women Committee*”.

Comment

Aimee Challenor was a person from a difficult background who was taking on significant national roles. It was important for the party to support her appropriately. However, the support she was given was provided in an ad hoc way. Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps appear to have prioritised supporting her personally, rather than providing constructive challenge or, in this case, asking for more information when it was needed.

Evaluation

David and Tina Challenor

David Challenor should have told the party about the charges as soon as he was charged. Subsequently he should not have accepted the role of election agent, and, when he did, should have informed the party of the charges he faced. That was his responsibility as a party member and it was wrong of him not to do so.

Similarly, Tina Challenor could have informed the party, although her involvement in the party was minimal. She should not have appointed David Challenor as her election agent.

Aimee Challenor

Evaluating Aimee Challenor's actions is more complex because she was a national spokesperson for the party, a Parliamentary candidate, a member of the executive of the party nationally and, ultimately, a candidate for deputy leadership of the party.

In carrying out that evaluation, there are several factors in her favour:

- a) Aimee Challenor was working in difficult circumstances - having a close relative charged with serious offences is clearly a very difficult time for anyone and would have raised emotions and conflicting loyalties*

- b) She raised the issue of the charges on the same day she became aware of them and advised the other trustees of Coventry Pride promptly*
- c) She did not know many details of the case (although she did not ask for more information and what she knew was insufficient for others to take action)*
- d) The party's policies were vague and unclear in places and we found no suitable safeguarding guidelines for her to follow*
- e) Aimee Challenor did not have a formal job with the party and was not remunerated for her work*
- f) The party had not provided Aimee with training on important issues such as safeguarding.*

However, there are also a number of factors that we weigh negatively:

- a) The message that Aimee Challenor sent to Matt Hawkins was via an informal medium*
- b) She did not say why she was sending it or ask for it to be acted on*
- c) She did not follow the message up or ask what action was being taken in response to it*
- d) The message did not say that David Challenor was a member of the Green Party or indicate he had any relationship with the party*
- e) The message was intended to be about media issues. That is how it was interpreted*
- f) Despite the fact Aimee Challenor was taking on important roles within the party, she did not raise the issue again with the party*
- g) She did not tell anyone in the Coventry Green Party*
- h) She did not consider the safeguarding implications of her father's arrest on charges of sexual offences.*

Discussion

We have considered what might be expected of a person in these circumstances and what standards we should apply. Whether, for example, we should evaluate the decisions that Aimee made as those of a person who had been a party member (at that time) for just two years, or whether we should evaluate her actions as a Parliamentary candidate and someone with national responsibilities to speak on behalf of the party.

The roles Aimee held in the party are not 'normal' jobs. Many roles in political parties are not remunerated (such as this one) and we should therefore be cautious before applying overly strict criteria to judge the competence and performance of people in them.

The appropriate place to start in evaluating someone's actions is to look at what would normally be expected in the role that they are undertaking. The community at large or a political party can expect anyone who undertakes a particular role to do it to a certain standard, irrespective of their protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (for instance, age, disability, and gender-reassignment) or any vulnerabilities arising from inexperience or difficult life experiences, etc. When this evaluation has been carried out, it is appropriate to consider whether their performance could have been affected by such factors and what support and training they may need to be offered as a result.

Aimee had a number of roles, both locally and nationally, each of which carried important responsibilities. In not ensuring that the right people in the party were told what they needed to know, Aimee failed to fulfil her roles adequately. This is even clearer in her encouragement of her father to become more involved in the party by, for example, appointing him as her election agent in 2017 after she knew of the charges against him. This was a serious error of judgement, which she repeated when she appointed him again as her election agent in 2018.

We also recognise that although Aimee failed in a number of respects, she was operating in difficult circumstances. These include the challenging personal situation she was in and her autism.

We recognise that it is a legitimate aim of the party to encourage young, diverse and potentially inexperienced people to participate in the democratic process. This means that people who then take on these responsibilities may need extra support and training to make this approach work well. The evidence we have seen in this case suggests that the party is not strong in these areas and did not provide sufficient training to Aimee.

Overall comment on Aimee Challenor's explanation of her actions

We find it hard to understand some of Aimee's actions and explanations as set out above:

- we do not understand how she could not have been aware that, in giving her father official roles in the party, she was putting her own reputation at risk.*
- we do not understand how she could have had the good judgement to inform officials in the party about the charges that her father faced, but the poor judgement not to make sure that all relevant information was included. It would have done her no harm to have told the officials that her father was a party member. If she had done so, it seems highly likely that Aimee would have been guided away from using him as her election agent.*
- we accept that Aimee chose not to seek further information about the charges her father faced, but we do not understand why she did not recognise that this was a mistake. Once again, sheer self-preservation would suggest that she should know as much as possible about these matters, so that she could make well-informed decisions about her own actions.*

Aimee told us about the pressure she was under during this period and about her autism, and we accept that these could have affected her judgement and thinking, but we are not qualified to come to any definite conclusion on such matters.

Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps

It is important to consider what Matt Hawkins did given the small amount of information he had at the time. On what he knew, he did not think this was likely to turn into a 'big issue' and only with hindsight can we see that it did.

People in the party have suggested that Matt Hawkins should have asked Aimee if David Challenor was involved in the party or asked someone to look him up on the database of members. It is likely the party would have handled the issue differently if they had this information. It is likely the party would have told the local party in Coventry. However, because he was not aware that Aimee's father had any political involvement,

it is not obvious to us that it would have been a natural response for Matt to ask this question.

It would have been helpful if Matt Hawkins had been more curious and asked more questions. He accepts this. In the context of the situation he was in, however, it is not surprising that he handled the issue the way he did.

For Clare Lorraine Phipps it is also important to bear in mind that she was not aware either that David Challenor was involved in the party. Nevertheless, she was chair of the national executive of the party when Aimee told her about the charges against David Challenor. She knew that Aimee held a high-profile spokesperson role in the party. She was also the chief executive's line manager. She could have been more curious about the charges - either at the time, or in the following 18 months - and should have told the chief executive herself about the potential risk to the party. Clare was experienced and familiar with the party's safeguarding policy and it is our view that she could have been more alive to the possibility of the charges against Aimee's father being a safeguarding issue

In commenting on the actions of both Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps a similar evaluation to that for Aimee Challenor can be carried out.

On the positive side:

- a) They were only given a small amount of information, which made it difficult to assess the seriousness of the issue*
- b) The information was provided to them via an informal medium which may have encouraged a less formal, more personal response*
- c) Matt Hawkins immediately passed on information to others in the party.*

On the negative side:

- a) Both Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps had senior roles in the party which carried responsibility for looking after the party's interests*
- b) Although information was passed on to others in the party, they were not given the full picture.*

Discussion

It is clear that Matt Hawkins and Clare Lorraine Phipps closed the matter off too quickly and should have followed up more. It is hard to believe that they did not raise the issue again with Aimee, or with other people in the party in subsequent months. However, it is difficult when personal and political issues overlap. Their first instinct was to protect Aimee and their second was to protect the reputation of the party. They did not give any thought to the wider safeguarding implications nor did they consider informing the local party. That was remiss of them and may have led Aimee to believe that she did not need to take further action.

8. Knowledge and response of people in Coventry

8.1 Having considered what members of the party with national responsibilities knew, we have also looked at what Coventry party members and others in Coventry knew about the charges against David Challenor.

Coventry Green Party

8.2 David, Tina and Aimee Challenor were all members of Coventry Green Party (the local party) and lived in the city. Aimee held offices in the local party, at times being responsible for press and membership.

8.3 We visited Coventry and spoke to four senior members of the local party, including the chair, the nominations officer and treasurer. They also gave us a statement that the chair of the local party compiled on behalf of the Coventry Green Party executive. With regards to the charges in November 2016 it said:

“It would appear that Aimee Challenor knew something at the time, but we don’t know specifically what she knew as she did not make anyone in the local party executive aware of the arrest and charges until following her father’s conviction.”

8.4 The people we spoke to in the local party confirmed that they had no knowledge of the charges against David Challenor until August 2018. They said that as a result they were not able to take any steps, such as suspending David Challenor from the party. They told us that if they had known of the charges, they would have taken safeguarding actions. They also expressed concern that the information had not been passed on to them. One interviewee commented:

“There isn’t much we can do if nobody tells us.”

8.5 Members of the local party told us that Aimee Challenor had particular responsibilities with regards to young people and students. They told us that the minutes of their meeting of 12 January 2016 record that it was agreed that Aimee would liaise with Warwick University Young Green Group. They also told us that she had responsibilities for co-ordinating with students during the general election campaign. They told us that the

minutes of the General Election Candidate Selection meeting noted Aimee's role "*Coordinating Warwick & Coventry Young Greens & students*". They also told us that the minutes of their meeting on 15 August 2017 say "*Aimee is liaising with someone who is interested in setting up a Coventry University Green Party Society*".

8.6 We asked Aimee Challenor about these responsibilities. She denied having such a role:

"No, there is no Green group at Cov[entry] Uni at all. There is a Green group at Warwick Uni, which half of their campus, during the 2017 general election, falls in Coventry South constituency. Obviously the whole of Cov Uni campus does but, as I've said, there is no Green group there. I did have some discussions, as a candidate, with Warwick Uni and Young Greens, the chair of their group.

"They said they were focusing on Leamington and Kenilworth constituency. They weren't working with Coventry South anyway. There wasn't really that much. I was asked, as a candidate, to go to a separate Warwick University hustings, and I had a clash because of my national role and so I asked the candidate for Coventry North West, Stephen Gray, to attend in my place.

8.7 The members of the local party that we spoke to were seriously concerned about the implications of not being told about the charges. They told us that David Challenor was involved in running Aimee's office. One pointed out that the local party held events such as a social picnic in July 2018 which children of party members attended. If the local party had known about the charges against David Challenor they would have banned him from attending.

8.8 We asked Aimee Challenor if people in the local party were aware of the charges. The first time we spoke to her, she told us that "*people were aware at a local level*" of the charges against David Challenor. However, in her second interview when we asked if she had told anyone in the local party, she responded:

"No, because I'd informed the Green Party executive." [i.e. the national party]

8.9 The interview continued:

“Q. Okay. You said last time that people in Coventry knew? Coventry Green Party knew?”

A. I don’t recall saying that.

Q. Okay, so you’re not aware that anybody in the Green Party -

A. Let’s just say, because I’d done what I was instructed to do, if you like, I’d informed the Green Party executive so what they do with the information is up to them. I believe you’ve spoken to Matt Hawkins so that’s all I can go on.”

8.10 We asked Aimee if there had been any reaction in the local party to the appointment of her father as election agent in 2017 and 2018. She said that the local party was aware of the appointment because it been discussed with them, but they did not react to the proposal:

“No. Again, it was like I’m just using my dad, nothing major about it. It was like ‘okay, Aimee’s using her dad’.”

8.11 We asked Aimee whether, with the benefit of hindsight she wished that she had told someone in the local party. She told us:

“The only other person to tell locally would have been the chair of the local party. As it’s already been noted I was the membership secretary; I’d flagged it to the [national] executive. I don’t see that I would have necessarily done differently. I’ve already said, with hindsight, I wouldn’t have appointed him my agent but that’s something else entirely. As I say, any possible disciplinary matter, at that level, would go up to the Green Party nationally.”

8.12 Aimee also told us:

“At the end of the day you can’t go about telling every Tom, Dick and Harry about allegations that are under a police investigation at the time.”

Comment

The local party should have been told of the charges against David Challenor.

Those in the national party who knew of the charges should have informed the local party. Local party members would have immediately known that David Challenor was involved there and would have been able to take appropriate safeguarding actions.

It would also have been helpful if the West Midlands police had drawn the charges to the attention of the party, particularly when David Challenor was undertaking public roles such as being a general election agent.

Clearly David Challenor should have told his local party about the charges, but it is also disappointing that Aimee Challenor did not do so. Aimee had several important responsibilities in the local party, such as standing for Parliament and acting as membership secretary. Having spoken to Aimee and to members of the local party we believe that Aimee saw herself as someone who worked more at a national level than a local level - hence her telling the national rather than the local party about the charges.

Aimee's failure to tell the local party was a serious omission.

Coventry Pride

8.13 Aimee Challenor was a trustee of Coventry Pride. She told us that she informed them on the same day or the following day that she had messaged Matt Hawkins i.e. around 5 November 2016. She told us she had a face-to-face meeting with the chair of Coventry Pride to tell them about the charges. We contacted Coventry Pride but they have not replied and we have been unable to confirm what she told them.

8.14 We asked Aimee why she told Coventry Pride. She told us:

“Because I was a trustee of Pride and, at that time, I was managing our external communications and it was important to me to inform the Chair of the Board in case anything came of it.

“Q. A communications issue?

“A. Yes.”

8.15 On 28 August 2018, Coventry Pride issued the following statement:

“We, the trustees of Coventry Pride, were deeply shocked to learn of the actions of Mr David Challenor as concluded by the court. The safety and welfare of children in our society must be paramount. May we offer our heartfelt thoughts and prayers to the child and family.

Mr Challenor volunteered for the Charity in 2015 and 2016 he assisted with event set up and take down, and designing some posters and leaflets. The Trustees were made aware of criminal proceedings being taken against Mr Challenor in November 2016. A directive was issued to those responsible for volunteer recruitment that Mr Challenor was not to be accepted as a volunteer at the Charity’s events and if he attended public events organized by the Charity he was monitored by the trustees. Mr Challenor no longer has any links with the Charity.”

Comment

Aimee Challenor saw the issue as one of communications, but in response to being told about the charges, Coventry Pride took immediate safeguarding actions, such as preventing David Challenor from volunteering for the charity.

The contrast between the actions Coventry Pride took and the Green Party took is stark. Coventry Pride knew of David Challenor’s involvement as a volunteer in their work and acted. Members of the party in Coventry knew locally of his membership and his involvement in party activities, and people in the party nationally knew about his arrest and charges. However party members in Coventry were not informed of the charges against David Challenor and were unable to take action.

9. Conclusions and policy and procedural issues arising

9.1 The issues discussed in this report highlight several policy and procedural issues for the party to consider, and some wider policy issues.

Roles and responsibilities within the Green Party

9.2 We found that in several areas, roles and responsibilities within the party are unclear. Several people we spoke to questioned the overlap between the roles of professional and voluntary staff, particularly in the area of communications. The party should review its process for the recruitment, induction and management of volunteers.

9.3 We were also told about issues with the process relating to the appointment and management of spokespeople. These include determining the scope of their portfolios and the management of spokespeople when appointed. We understand that work is underway within the party to clarify these issues.

The code of conduct

9.4 We have identified several areas where the code of conduct for party members should be tightened. The code of conduct needs to make clear what should be reported and how it should be reported.

9.5 When defining what issues need to be reported the party should consider the possible reasons for reporting. Clearly the reputation of the party, and therefore political considerations, are at the forefront of the people's minds. However, issues such as safeguarding also need to be prioritised. A natural part of the handling of any issue of this kind is that the first question asked is "*are there any safeguarding implications?*". The party's current safeguarding policy does not give members a duty to report issues and this needs to be spelt out.

9.6 There should also be greater clarity on the responsibilities of those standing for public elections or holding offices within the party (including election agents) for reporting information that may damage the party.

9.7 The action to be taken when issues arise needs to be spelt out. There should be a clear, easy to use and well-publicised process for raising issues. Members, volunteers and staff also need to know what will happen if they raise a concern and what the consequences might be if important information is not disclosed to the party.

9.8 The chief executive of the party told us that the party are currently reviewing safeguarding policies and looking at an improved training programme. We have also been shown a draft paper about appointing a party safeguarding officer. These moves are welcome if they deliver the required improvements in policy and practice.

Support for diversity

9.9 As we have noted, the party aims to promote diverse participation in the membership in general and in its leadership in particular. This is entirely legitimate. For this to be successful, however, it needs to support more effectively those people coming into positions of responsibility who may lack experience, family or financial support or who have particular needs for adjustments to be made for any health or disability issues. This will require the party to improve training and support for people taking on leadership roles. Aimee's difficult family background and her transition are all relevant in this case, for example.

The importance of safeguarding

9.10 Overall, the importance of the party developing a strong safeguarding culture is the key issue that arises from this case.

9.11 It is disappointing that many people we spoke to in the party failed to see the safeguarding issues that arise here. Those in the party who were told about David Challenor's activities saw the issue as primarily a communications one - about protecting the reputation of the party. Awareness of safeguarding issues in the party in general appears to be low.

9.12 The party therefore needs to raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding issues, including when and how they should be raised.

9.13 The chief executive of the party acknowledged weaknesses in the party's safeguarding record in the past. However, he told us that these pre-dated the party's growth as an organisation employing significant numbers of professional staff. He told us that the party has made significant improvements to safeguarding procedures and practice in recent years and is fully committed to continuing to improve them in the future.

Wider issues

9.14 This report has focussed on decisions and actions that members of the party took, but safeguarding is a universal concern. We have not been able to establish whether West Midlands police took any safeguarding actions, but it would be desirable for the police who bring charges of this nature to draw them to the attention of appropriate people. We have suggested that the party raise this with them.

Team biographies

Kieran Seale

Kieran Seale joined Verita in 2014. He is an experienced consultant with a passion for improving public services. Following a varied career encompassing local government, government agencies and the private sector, Kieran spent five years working in NHS commissioning. He was involved in the setting up of four central London Clinical Commissioning Groups, advising on areas such as governance, risk management and conflicts of interest. Legally qualified, he has wide experience of delivering solutions to governance issues in the NHS and outside. While at Verita he has led reviews of conflict of interest issues for NHS England, the investigation following the suicide of a nurse at Imperial, and supported GPs setting up a 'super-partnership' as well as leading investigations in the charity and not-for-profit sector. He manages Verita's work supporting the British Council and the Lottery Forum in handling complaints.

David Scott

David Scott is an experienced human resources director, having worked at board/executive level for more than 20 years, including senior positions at British Telecommunications plc, HM Prison Service and United Utilities plc. David has been interim HR director of First Group, the Strategic Rail Authority and was interim Director of Workforce and Strategic HR at Kent and Medway Strategic Health Authority from 2004-2005. David has been a non-executive director of the Whitehall and Industry Group and, until 2016, a trustee of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award, where he also served as interim chief executive in 2005.

Lucy Scott-Moncrieff

Lucy Scott-Moncrieff CBE is the House of Lords commissioner for standards, a mental health and human rights lawyer, a Mental Health Tribunal and Court of Protection judge and a long standing Verita associate. Her previous roles include commissioner at the Mental Health Act Commission, member of the QC Appointments Panel, president of the Law Society of England and Wales and commissioner on the Judicial Appointments Commission.

Lucy has carried out a number of complex and high-profile reviews with Verita including a report into the death of a patient during routine day surgery for the States of Jersey, an investigation into paediatric cardiac surgery in Leeds and a governance review commissioned by Cambridge University Hospitals NHS foundation trust following the conviction of Myles Bradbury. Lucy worked with Verita to produce work for the Secretary of state for Education: a quality assurance review into allegations about Jimmy Savile and a report on risks of sexual abuse and exploitation in schools and children's homes.

More recent work Lucy has completed for Verita includes an investigation, published by NHS Improvement, at the request of the Secretary of State for Health into the handling of whistleblowing allegations at a hospital trust in the West Midlands.

Lucy has written and broadcast regularly on legal issues over the years.

Ed Marsden

Ed Marsden has a clinical background in general and psychiatric nursing and NHS management. He has worked for the National Audit Office, the Department of Health and the West Kent Health Authority where he was director of performance management. He combines his responsibilities as Verita's managing director with an active role in leading complex consultancy. He worked with Kate Lampard on a lessons learnt report for the Secretary of State for Health arising from the publication of the Jimmy Savile investigations. He investigated the concerns raised by BBC Panorama in their programme about the G4S-run immigration removal centre at Gatwick airport.

He is the founder of a new healthcare tech company called Eva (www.evaapplications.com). Ed has advised the Jersey government about the inquiry into historical child abuse. He is an associate of the Prime Minister's Delivery Unit where he has carried out three assignments on immigration.

Terms of reference

Independent investigation into the Green Party's actions following the allegations and charges brought against David Challenor

The client

This investigation has been commissioned by the Acting Chair of the Green Party Executive (GPEX), the co-chairs of the Green Party Regional Council (GPRC), and the leadership team of GPEW.

Purpose of the investigation

David Challenor was charged by Police with serious sexual offences in November 2016. He was convicted in August 2018. In May 2017 and in May 2018 he acted as election agent for his daughter Aimee Challenor.

The purpose of the investigation is to examine the Party's response to the allegations and charges brought against David Challenor. The investigation will be completed in two stages. The aims of the inquiry are to:

Stage one

1. Establish a chronology of events from November 2016
2. Establish what actions, if any, were taken by members of the Party or staff to ensure that David Challenor's appointment as election agent was made in accordance with Party policy and procedures
3. Establish what actions, if any, were taken by members of the Party or staff to make colleagues aware of the substance of the allegations and/or charges against David Challenor

4. Establish which members of the Party or staff, if any, were made aware of these allegations and/or charges
5. Establish what actions, if any, were taken by members of the Party-voluntary officers or staff- after they became aware of this information
6. Establish to what extent action, if any, was taken to ensure appropriate safeguarding was maintained in the light of this information
7. Report on any other issues that arise that are relevant to the terms of reference.

Stage two

8. Consider whether any form of disciplinary action should be considered against any member of the Party or staff
9. Consider whether any changes should be made to Party policies and procedures to strengthen them in the light of these events, and make any relevant recommendations
10. Consider whether any new policies or procedures need to be developed and implemented by the Party, and make any relevant recommendations
11. Summary report

Approach

The investigation will not form part of any disciplinary process that the Party may undertake, but the contents of the report may be used by the Party to inform any such process. The investigation team will carry out its work by reviewing relevant documents and, where the team considers it necessary, interviewing relevant Party staff, members, and voluntary officers in private. All the interviews will remain confidential, and the content of the transcripts will not be available to the client. The team will follow established good practice in the conduct of the work, for example by offering interviewees the opportunity to be accompanied and to comment on and amend the transcript of their interview.

Inquiry team

Lucy Scott-Moncrieff, Kieran Seale and David Scott will carry out the work.

Timetable

The inquiry will get underway immediately. The aim is to deliver the final report by November 2018 and the date will be agreed once the scope and timetabling of the work are clear.

The report

The inquiry team will produce, for the client, a written report on its findings and recommendations for further action.

Publication

It is expected that the recommendations of the report will be published in some form. The client will decide (in consultation with Verita) the precise form of publication.

Nick Martin
Chief Executive Officer
Green Party of England and Wales
1 September 2018

List of documents

Green Party Policies

Employee Handbook

Bullying and Harassment Policy

Green Party Members Code of Conduct

Green Party Executive (GPEX) Standing Order

GPEX Handbook

Green Party Constitution

Safeguarding Policy

Procedures for Delivering the Green Party Safeguarding Policy

Safeguarding home page on members website

Documentation from Green Party

Agent job summary

Coventry Greens minutes

Statement from Coventry Green Party

Aimee Challenor's nomination form

Local policies/statements

Local election nomination and certification guide

Coventry Pride statement

Social Media

Aimee Challenor's Facebook Messenger message

List of interviewees

Aimee Challenor

Policy, projects and governance officer from autumn 2017

Stephen Gray, Coventry Green Party

Matt Hawkins, external communications coordinator - job share in November 2016

The current head of communications for the Green Party

Nick Martin, chief executive

Chief of staff to Caroline Lucas MP

Jennifer Nadel, external communications coordinator (job share) in November 2016

Anne Paterson, co-coordinator of Coventry Green Party

Clare Lorraine Phipps, chair of the executive in November 2016

Scott Redding, Coventry Green Party

Cathy Wattebot, Coventry Green Party