

Labour Party Compliance Unit interview with Helen Marks, Riverside CLP

H: My name is H and it is the 13th November 2016.

BEN WESTERMAN: Right, thank you very much for coming in, thank you for your time, thank you both of you, I appreciate you coming in to speak to us. Just to, as I do with everyone, just talk through the formalities, of why we're here, what we're doing. This is an informal fact finding exercise. It's by no means a formal hearing. It is a chance for me as investigating officer to come and speak to anyone who's been named in any way, about what's been going on, why they think is going on, with a mind to improving things. There has been little disagreement that the CLP needs to be worked on in some way, in terms of making everyone feel a bit happier about how things are being run. So the aim of the investigation is exactly that, to find a way of for everyone to work together, and to unite people so we can get on with the business of being the opposition, which is exactly what we all agree on. The process itself, as I say this is just a fact finding thing, after today, and after I've kind of conducted all the interviews and reviewed all the evidence, and so on and so forth, I will write a report and present it to the NEC's Disputes Panel, at which point it's obviously out of my hands because I'm not a member of the NEC, they will take a vote on recommendations made, and obviously discuss it, and if they ratify any recommendations, if any, that I make, then they'll be implemented as it were, we'll try and kind of work together and that'll be done in conjunction obviously with North-West region so it won't just be a washing of hands exercise, it'll be a concerted effort by all parties to work through this. So I'll start on this. First of all I'm just going to pour myself some water, do any of you want any? (2.25)

H: No, I'm alright thank you.

R: I'm alright thank you.

A: Yeah.

B: It's so hot in here, feels like a desert a little bit. So, on that note, people on all sides of the, kind of, political spectrum really, have said that something's not working in Riverside CLP. Erm, so I just, kind of wondered what you think to that, erm, whether you agree with it, whether you disagree, and if, if you do agree, what you think is going wrong, where you think it's going wrong, why you think it's going wrong. So really, just talk me through how you perceive matters in the CLP.

H: Before I do that, can I be clear what I'm being interviewed over?

B: Ok. So, I'll kind of talk you through it really.

H: Because I'm quite happy to answer that question, but I'd just like to be a bit clear about what the accusations are.

B: The allegations are that the CLP is – we have a few quotes - a toxic combination of unpleasantness and intimidation. People have been reduced to tears by meetings. People have suffered anxiety as a result of meetings. People are feeling fearful to come to meetings. People are feeling that they don't want to come to Labour Party meetings anymore, and when an one member,

of any persuasion, doesn't want to come to Labour Party meetings anymore, there's clearly something...something awry there, I don't think anyone wants that. So it's why that's happening, if you perceive there to be a problem where someone may have felt intimidated...

H: It's just that I understand I was to be interviewed about anti-Semitic ..

B: Yeah, there have been accusations of anti, as you may or may not know, there have been accusations of anti-Semitic remarks being made. They will come up as part of the interview, but in order to understand whether or not an anti-Semitic comment has been made I need to understand the general atmosphere in which remarks may or may not have been received.

H: Ok. So would you like to ask me that question again?

B: So, ok, where you think, and if you think there has there been any uncomradely behaviour in the CLP.

H: I do think that there has been quite a lot of uncomradely behaviour in the sense that...

B: Sorry, just to say, if I'm a bit slow to respond, it's just that I'm scribbling things down...
(4.55)

H: Yes. I mean, if I'm going to just use my own example when I made the comment I did make on the first of April, I was absolutely shocked at the response there was.

B: What was the comment?

H: My comment was, if there has been a rise in anti-Semitism, as, erm, our MP has stated, which she particularly said in the Labour Party, erm, if there has been such a rise, could it be that this is due, erm, due in part to the actions of the, erm, the Israeli government towards the Palestinians. And at that point **NS** jumped to his feet and shouted out, "That's atrocious! That's atrocious! I've never heard anything like it". And I mean I was absolutely shocked at, at that response, and I, I consider that uncomradely. Yep.

B: Have there been any other incidents, whether, whether related to you yourself or just generally within CLP meetings or CLP activity that you feel are unpleasant in any way.

H: Yes, I think it's extremely uncomradely after a what is supposed to be considered a private Labour Party meeting, that was on April 1st, for **Councillor NS** to tweet...

B: Was this after the meeting?

H: After the meeting. You have a copy of all of these things in a document that we sent you.

BW: Yes.

H: I think that's incredibly uncomradely. And another Councillor did the same. **PH** also tweeted. And then following on from that - which I was only made aware of from a friend of mine - there appears an article in *The Jewish Chronicle* where NS has given an interview. **(7.10)**

BW: When was this, I'm not in receipt of that?

H: The sixth of April.

BW: So immediately, or a few days after.

H: You will have all of this in the documents that we sent you.

BW: You're right, I have seen them.

H: So you have got the articles, you've got the quotes?

BW: Yes, yes.

H: In that article not only does he misquote me, and others, erm, it's the tone in which he talks about us and members of the Labour Party that I found really difficult to er...

BW: Us being...

H: Well people... he talked about a small group of hard left people within the constituency.

BW: Did he name anyone particularly?

H: No, and I think they've made a big point of the fact that they didn't name anybody, as though that made things ok. I didn't think it did make things ok because the quotes were so easily attributable locally, and anyone who was there would know immediately who was being referred to. But I think for **NS** to go *The Jewish Chronicle*, he didn't pick any media, he went to *The Jewish Chronicle*, carefully selected, said that these people who were anti-Semitic, entryists, infiltrators. I don't think those are terms that are very comradely. If he was referring to me as being an entryist or an infiltrator, I think I'm not unusual in being one of many hundreds, thousands who've joined since JC was elected. I'm 70 years old and I could have joined a party, and the Labour Party, a long time ago, however I've voted. This is the first time that I've felt motivated to join a party, and I was really excited at the prospect and thinking that by joining the party I'd be able to contribute to policy, discussion and so on, and to be confronted by a totally different atmosphere as though, you know, we're not welcome in the Party.

BW: Is that how you feel in kind of a normal CLP meeting?

H: Yes, I felt, er initially, I think it's improved a little bit, er more recently, but I think the language used. And I wanted the chance to defend myself.

BW: Of course.

H: There were other things he said in the article which I think were reprehensible, which is that people are waging a personal campaign against the MP because she is Jewish. Now I come from a Jewish family, and I can tell you that I wouldn't be waging a personal campaign against my MP for the fact that she is Jewish. The reason I might be wanting to engage in a conversation with my MP is because we disagree over the issue of Israel and Palestine. And I think as a member of a party, that's what you'd expect, you'd expect discussion over political issues. **(11.00)**

BW: How, erm, how do you feel about, you know, the prospect of going to a CLP meeting? Do you have any reaction to that at all? If you don't that's absolutely fine, I'm not expecting one. I'm trying to get an idea of the atmosphere.

H: The atmosphere sometimes is tense, but we've just had a meeting on Friday...

BW: Were you there on Friday?

H: I was. Yes. I think people tried very hard to be constructive,..

BW: On Friday?

H: Yes. I think if you asked most of the members there now, we're all really keen to get on with the job of fighting, you know, and being a proper opposition to the Conservatives, and to spend so much time talking about, erm, to have this infighting, to know that the party is spending so much time trying to do down the leader of the party, erm, I think the Labour Party has become a laughing stock and I think we are all really keen to stop this in-fighting and to move on and talk about the real issues to do with the NHS, to do with education, to do with all those things.

BW: On Friday then, on that note, what happened with the minutes?

H: The minutes?

BW: Yeah.

H: There was a vote taken. And I think it was very appropriate because I think, erm, the Chair, H, actually misrepresented the mood of the minutes of the meeting that she was describing. You know, I was there at that meeting, the July the first meeting, and one can't say it was all done with consent, she used the word consent, and when it came to the vote there were many people who agreed there had not been consent, it was actually quite an even split there was something like thirty people voted in favour of the minutes, about thirty... no it was very even, a similar number of people...

BW: How long did that discussion take? **(13.32)**

H: I don't know. Ten minutes, something like that.

BW: Did you feel, did you feel, given obviously that as you quite rightly say that you wanna kind of get on with tackling the issues, did you feel frustrated to be spending ten minutes of a meeting discussing the minutes of a previous meeting.

H: No I didn't. I didn't, because the minutes are supposed to be an accurate account of what happened, and I think it's quite right that members should question, I mean that's what presenting the minutes is about isn't it?

BW: Yep. So going back, going back to the first of July, erm, what, can you kind of just talk me through the meeting, as you saw it, it sounds like it was, well it's been presented certainly as a difficult meeting, erm, as a kind of as a person in the room, how was it perceived when the agenda was dropped, what was the kind of reaction from the room at what was happening and the confidence vote, how did you see all that?

H: I... the room for a start was full, there were a lot of members there...

BW: This was at the Eldonian.

H: Yes, in the Eldonian. Which showed the amount of interest, you know, the numbers at every meeting are rising, people are really engaged, you know, with the politics. This was a time when MPs had been resigning. Erm. There was a... it was an emotional time for the Labour Party wasn't it, and prior to that meeting there were several groups that actually wanted to present motions of support for the leadership, and I don't think that's invalid. If you've got members of the Parliament who are having their say and expressing their views I don't think it's unreasonable that people in a Constituency Labour Party want to express their views and I think there were something like four motions, emergency motions...

BW: Was it, was it explained why the agenda was amended, or why the motions were dropped? And if it wasn't what explanation was given.

H: No, no and I think that was the start of a problem in the room, because the Chair just announced that this was going to be a just discussion meeting. She said she wasn't going to take any motions, and she wasn't going to take any votes, and she said it was in her rights to do that if you looked at the rule book. Well actually if you look at the rule book, it says that yes, she could do that but she should be taking into account the mood of the meeting, if you look, you know. I did look back because I was really worried about, you know, what she said. So she'd taken it upon herself and I don't think she did read the mood of the meeting, and it took her quite a time.... **(16.50)**

BW: How would you describe the mood of the meeting?

H: Well, I think it was agitated, I don't think it was aggressive...I don't think it was, it was out of order, I think people were just shocked... because...

BW: Do you re-call, do you re-call any incidents either in that meeting or any other that might have caused claims of intimidation towards anyone or claims of an unpleasant atmosphere?

H: Yeah, there was one incident. There was a woman, I don't know what her name was, shouted something at John Davies "You're always causing trouble," it was something like that, but otherwise I think the mood was a very natural shocked response.

BW: To, to H or to what had happened?

H: Well to her statement, that we weren't going to have a, there was the normal agenda, which there would have been, you know where you get reports and various discussions, without any explanation, we had no explanation for why the agenda had been, erm, dispensed with. So it was a very, and we don't know where that came from that suddenly it was only going to be a discussion about the leadership. So I don't think it's surprising that people were questioning...

BW: So it was you know, if you were heard...

H: And I'll give you another reason why I think we were... particularly me in my position and the people who'd been complained against, prior to that meeting the Executive had met. Now the Executive has hardly ever met. I think it was only the second time that the Executive had met in the

year, which is rather strange because again if you look at the rule book the Executive is supposed to have quite a central role in organising CLP business, well this was only the second that they'd met. And, erm, it was apparently partly to look at two complaints. One complaint, the complaint made by **NS**, and the other was a counter complaint which we'd put in. The result of that...

BW: How did you, I mean what did you, how did you, what happened after that meeting that made you aware?

H: Well again, I would only have been aware of it, I wouldn't have been aware of it if John Davies hadn't been on the Executive.

BW: So, John Davies told you that they'd discussed it?

H: Yes, and considering that we'd not, none of us... he just told us that our counter complaint hadn't been accepted, and that the complaint against us had been, and that there'd been no discussion.

BW: Ok.

H: **(20.20)** Erm, again I think I, I contacted, I contacted the Compliance Unit a few times to find out you know, will we have a chance at any point, will we have a chance at any point to have a discussion, particularly the people who've been complained against, will we have a chance to counter some of these complaints, given that none of us had actually been written to. Until you contacted us, we didn't know officially that we had been complained against, we've had no indication whatsoever either, you know, that we'd been complained against, who'd complained against or what the complaint was. And the response I got, you know, when I asked that question, I was told, well, the next thing that'll happen, is after the Executive meeting, the Executive will have to write minutes and at the next meeting the minutes will be presented and that's your chance to question the minutes. So we were expecting, at least at that July meeting, that there would be a chance that that procedure would be gone through. There was nothing about the complaint on the agenda. So once again there was no chance for us to have a say about what had been happening. But all the while that we're waiting to find out whether we have been complained against, about what's happening, our MP and **NS**, they're going to the media as though it's absolute truth that there is anti-Semitism within Riverside CLP. And we haven't heard, we haven't received any notice about it.

BW: Yes, of course, on, on...

H: So that's another thing, that, you know, when you get to the July meeting and you find that the agenda's been, we realise that this serious complaint, I take that accusation really seriously. I've been extremely offended by this accusation. I come from a Jewish family. **NS** doesn't know anything about the history of my family, and he makes that accusation and I... if you're asking about offensive statements, that is the most offensive. And apparently he said to somebody afterwards, "I don't even believe she's Jewish!" Now I call that offensive.

BW: Do you know who he said that to?

H: No. I don't know who.

BW: Why did you, kind of, who told you that...

H: Somebody he spoke to, no, I should have found out who he said that to...

BW: That's quite alright...

H: Can I add something to that?

BW: Of course.

H: I'm offended because for a start I don't think what I said was anti-Semitic, I think it was a political statement, part of a political discussion. And again, when I read through the rule book, one of the things it emphasises is that there should be plenty of time available within a CLP meeting for discussion and I think what I said was part of a discussion. **(23.40)**

BW: When the statement was made was it in the context of a discussion on the Middle East.

H: It was in the context of our MP making statements in the House of Commons, making statements to a new group that she's formed, but which never comes to the CLP meeting. And I think we're in our rights to question our MP about things that she's saying, when it's about a very serious issue.

BW: Ok. Just before we move on... just before we move, erm, are there any concluding comments on the atmosphere of CLP meetings... just, erm, whether you agree, basically, that the atmosphere's toxic.

H: I wouldn't say it is toxic. I think what's happened though is... it could be a lot better.

BW: Yep.

H: And I think if we didn't... if we weren't faced with situations where meetings have been cancelled, where the October meeting is made into a discussion about housing when we haven't had a meeting, a proper discussion meeting for so many months, and we're faced with that, and members have to register for it, and it feels like an avoidance of true discussion. And there was one person on Friday who made the point it's terrible that we're in a situation where we're being investigated and it's our own MP who's asking for this investigation, when I, and so many other people who've recently joined the Party, have worked really hard for the Labour Party. We've gone leafleting, we've gone door to door through the Remain, you know, Brexit referendum campaign, we've attended meetings. I don't know what more we can do to show that we support the Labour Party.

BW: We'll come back to the, the kind of how we can make it better, at the end...erm...

H: I'd like to, can I add something about my... why I've been so offended.

BW: Absolutely.

H: I made a statement, before I made this comment, about you know, if there has been a rise in anti-Semitism. I prefaced that by saying how I was from a Jewish family. Now in **NS's** complaint he

said that "Jews were offended." I took it to mean that he totally ignored the fact that I was Jewish. It was as if I was the wrong sort of Jew. (27.00)

BW: So, on that. The comment itself...you emailed me, erm, I appreciate that, with what you said, erm, I'm not asking you to recall the wording exactly because it was said in April and to recall sentences which were said in April would be superhuman. But... do you remember any reaction beyond, beyond **NS's** within the room?

HM: Yes.

BW: What was that?

HM: There were a few other people.. . oh... what was his name... Councillor... **SM** got up. He started off by saying, you know, Louise Ellman, you know that I don't always agree with you on Palestine but then he went on to say, but you know, I really think, basically, he was saying he also thought that the comments, the two comments on that occasion, were unreasonable.

BW: Do you, do you feel that his, because obviously you've, you've, you've expressed your frustration with **Councillor S**, do you feel the same frustration towards him, or do you...

HM: No, not really. I mean, alright he said it with a bit of emotion. We should be allowed to discuss these things.

BW: Ok, erm, do you see...

HM: But I also.... remember that Louise Ellman saidcriticism of Israel should not immediately be thought of as anti-Semitic.

BW: Yes.

H: We took that, you know, and I took that comment very seriously, but on the other hand in practice that's what's happening. Anyone who seems to criticises the government of Israel seems to be tarred with the brush of being anti-Semitic, and I would want to know after this, how am I going to be able to discuss, how am I going to be able to raise this issue in future CLPs without being again accused of anti-Semitism?

BW: If, at this point, I'd like to say that if I ask anything that is contrary to what you're saying or me playing Devil's advocate it's just so that I can anticipate this from both sides of the argument...

H: Oh yeah...

BW: ...because I obviously need to consider it from both sides.....in order to come to, come to a reasoned decision about, about what's happened, the whole thing.

H: Yes.

BW: Erm, do recall ringing in to *Any Answers* at the end of April.

H: Yes.

BW: When you said on that programme that you can... it's hardly surprising, I mean to quote, the rise in anti-Semitism because of the actions of the Israeli government.

H: Mmm.

BW: In light of, and obviously the Chakrabarti report came out afterwards so not to apply it retrospectively, but in the light of what she said about...about not falling into the trap of blaming people for the actions of the Israeli government, can you see that someone might take offence to that statement given that it implies that that it's hardly surprising that Jews being blamed for implies some sort of complicity...I'm not saying...

H: I don't think I ever did said Jews. I said the Israeli government.

BW: The quote is "The rise of anti-Semitism is hardly surprising because of the actions of the Israeli government." Can you see how that might be perceived by some as a complicity of, Jewish... Jewish people in the actions of....

H: It **might** be perceived, it **might** be perceived, people, yeah it's quite possible, it might be, but on the other hand it might not be perceived, there might be very many people who would agree with that statement... (35.45)

BW: Indeed...indeed, I'm, not intending to get into a debate on the actions of the Israeli government, we'd be here all year...erm...

H: So I'm not worried about that statement...

BW: But do you, do you...

H: And can I say exactly why?

BW: Yes.

H: Because the Israeli government itself has linked being Jewish with support for Israel. And so if they are going to make, you know, that... that link, you know, it's not surprising that people, you know, ...that it's interpreted in that way, you know, that people are being anti-Jewish, because they have made that link.

BW: In light of, in light of the... in light of the Chakrabarti Report discouraging, erm, discouraging that, kind of idea of Jewish people being responsible for the actions of the Israeli government, would you make that kind of comment again.

H: Yes, because I don't think that's what I did say. I said that I think the behaviour of the Israeli government towards the Palestinians is not helping...

BW: No, but would you...

H: ...people have a good view of Jews... because that's what the Israeli government is doing...

BW: No, but...

H: It's saying all Jews are Zionists, you know, they think most Jews are Zionists. Zionists support the Israeli state and the Israeli government, and so...

BW: Would you make the comment again? I'm just quoting verbatim, "that it's hardly ... the rise in anti-Semitism is hardly surprising given the, given the actions of the Israeli...Israeli government"... in, in the light of Baroness Chakrabarti's...

H: I would make that comment again and I would take you back to a quote that I made that was in *The Independent* in 2014. You have all, you have that already, that the Community Security Trust they themselves said that after Gaza, and the bombardment of Gaza, they said that there was a five hundred percent spike in anti-Semitic incidents. So my statement bears out what they said, and supports what I was saying. So I don't retract it. And I, I actually think that's what's actually happened with this whole anti-Semitism campaign, and I do see it as a, as a campaign that's being waged, erm, as part of a way of challenging Corbyn because, because he's known to having been supportive of Palestine. I think it's trivialised. And that doesn't mean that I don't think that people like Louise Ellman, Luciana Berger, other MPs, haven't had anti-Semitic comments and tweets, but in a recent Home Office, the Home Office... (34.05)

BW: Select Committee...

H: Home Affairs Select Committee. They themselves said over ninety percent, think it was, can't remember what the exact figure was, of the tweets came from America. And we've never had...and if Louise Ellman is saying, you know, is having lots of tweets, we've never had... or you know anti-Semitic statements, we haven't seen any of these. And if they're like my statement I just don't consider that anti-Semitic. So I don't know how to take that information. And, erm, I cut out an article about Luciana Berger and a case that went to court. Turns out the person was from North or South Shields. Erm, not a member of the Labour Party. You know, I think we've got to be careful when we make these accusations about anti-Semitism in the Labour Party.

BW: Thankyou. Going back to, going back to, erm, what we said earlier about you think it could be better. How, I've asked this to everyone, erm, and it's not a question I'd expect you to have answers to, it's not an easy question. It's also my job, not yours. But how, what measures do you think could be taken to, to improve things, erm to, to ensure that everyone feels kind of comfortable in the CLP, or they want to go, basically...

H: I think there are a lot of things really...

BW: Yeah...we have this brilliant surge in membership...and our challenge is to use that and to encourage as many of those members as possible to get involved, actively.

H: I would like it if our MP, **NS**, others, would stop, erm, going to the media. Which is actually against, against Party rules again. Because I phoned up the Compliance Unit when we were, we'd arranged a public meeting on anti-Semitism. And I phoned up the Compliance Unit and said am I allowed to mention that complaints have been made against members of the CLP and they said, no, you shouldn't, this is about, erm, private Labour Party matters. And so we've abided by that, and certainly I have and the people who've been complained against, erm, but other people haven't. So I think all this running to the, the press and talking as though if it's absolutely proven that there's anti-Semitism and talking against members of the CLP I think has just got to stop. We do want unity. I

don't think people should be running to the press. I don't think people should be using, quoting unattributable anonymous documents, erm, and I took out the social media policy of the Labour Party, and in it it said quite clearly that anonymous accounts or otherwise hiding one's identity for the purpose of abusing others is never permissible, and, erm, I don't think...

BW: I'd like to clarify that. As I've said to everyone involved, erm, the document you're referring to is not forming the basis of this investigation... erm, it's...

H: It may not be, but it's been in the *The Times*, it's been in *The Echo*, it's been in, you know, *The Guardian*... **(38.15)**

BW: I can't possibly comment on...

H: No, but if you're asking, you know,

BW: No, I...I...I

H: ...what we want as an improvement, I think it's just got to stop....

BW: ...I can understand your frustration...

H: And one of my recommendations would be that this document could be...

BW: I...I...I...

H: ... given to members, so they, they start behaving respectfully to each other.

BW: I understand your frustration... I can only assure you, that that document, I can't, erm, speak to its author because I don't know who its author is, isn't forming the basis of this investigation.

H: Fair enough, but it has been used, [chuckles], whether you wanted it or not, it has been used.

BW: I'm obviously aware of it.

H: I think the whole organisation of the CLP could be improved. I think the Executive could start doing the job it's meant to be doing which would free up people in the CLP to have space to actually discuss. I mean I joined the LP to discuss policy and it doesn't happen because it's taken up with long reports which could be given out to us in advance and we'd have space to discuss policy. I think members could be much more involved in drawing up the agenda.

BW: Ok, thank you.

H: I could think of lots of other things, that er....

BW: Well if anything else comes to mind, you've obviously still got my email so you're, erm, obviously more than, than welcome to email me with anything, anything... and that point, erm, I should say... I've got no further questions, I appreciate your answers, I appreciate that none of this is particularly easy stuff to go over.

H: Could I ask you a question?

BW: Yes, that's my next point, and both, this is the point at which you don't have to be a silent friend, you can just be a normal erm, so if either of you have any questions about the process or anything like that, this is the opportunity to ask...

H: I suppose I was curious to know how this investigation is taking place, and I know I wrote to you but I don't know if you just hadn't noticed the question, but erm, quite a lot of people at, er, at the CLP meeting were very keen to contribute to this investigation... (40.45)

BW: Yes, anyone that, anyone that has, I'm certainly in receipt of anyone that has, that has put that down on paper and has been sent to me.

H: Now, but they didn't know, you see.

BW: In which case they are obviously...erm...

H: How are they are going to know that they can?

BW: They've received an email, the membership has received an email from the regional team about the investigation to which I haven't replied with that...erm...if...

H: So, well one of the members said that she'd written to Anna Hutchinson/

BW: Yes, they've, they've all been, they've, they've all been passed on/

H: /and but they didn't get a reply/

BW: /they've, they've all been passed on to me, and they will get a reply. It's just a question they have to work through these things...

H: Great, lovely...

BW: That's just, that's just a question of worklage... so I would of course get to everyone's...

H: ...and I was quite surprised because I was with **NS** on Saturday.../

BW: Just to, just to, just to assure you that Anna has passed everything on...

H: Yep, great. Er, and I said, are you going to be interviewed, erm, next week, and he said no, I'm not going to be interviewed. And I find that, erm, a bit odd...

BW: Complaints... I've only received complaints about NS in the context of these interviews...

H: Well we put in a complaint very early on...erm, but it was at the local level...

BW: Well I obviously, I obviously can't speak to that because I'm not involved in the...

H: But as an investigation of, erm, the workings of the CLP, I would have thought you would, you would want to interview the people who've ...

BW: As I've said, I've only, I've only, I've only...

H: ...Is it only in the context of a complaint...?

BW: As I've said I've only, I've only received information about, about Councillor S as a result of investigating thus far. Erm, obviously I'm not going to comment about what, what I'm going to do next with that information because that would prejudice the investigation, but, but I can tell you, I can tell you that much, basically. Erm. There's nothing more for me to say on that. **(42.32)**

H: (To R) Ok. R, do you want to...?

R: No, I'm just curious cos I haven't been in the Labour Party for very long and I certainly haven't been to anything like this informal interview before, erm, so I'm just curious, just, like what branch are you in?

BW: I don't think that's relevant.

R: Oh, ok.

BW: I hope that's ok - I'm sorry I just don't think, I don't think where I'm from is at all relevant to the investigation...

R: Yeah, I just, I just misunderstood, I thought the investigation bit about me not being a silent witness was...

BW: No, no it is, you're more than welcome to ask questions, but I reserve the right to not answer them and I feel that's a, that's a question about my personal situation which I don't think is relevant to the situation in Liverpool Riverside.

R: Oh. No, it might not be. Just but, it might be interesting.

BW: I'm, I'm not prepared to discuss my, my address, basically.

R: Mmm.

H: Thank you very much.

BW: Thank you very much for coming in, I appreciate it. Erm, if you have anything else to add or if you have any questions that you have about anything feel free to email me. Erm, I'll make a note about what you said about the SAR and I'll pass it on to the data protection...

H: About the?

BW: The Subject Access Request. SAR. And I'll pass it on. Erm, and I'll just say I'll make sure it was done thoroughly. And yeah, as I say, as I said at the beginning I will, I will, erm, draw up my conclusions and, and pass them on to the NEC Disputes Panel in January, after which we have to get an AGM sorted as quickly as possible, erm, because obviously we're outside of the year now so we need to get that done quickly, and move forward.

H: Good.

ENDS

44 mins 19 secs