

# Global support for a fallen councillor

Petition supporting politician who rejected cuts to key services has almost 50,000 signatures

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The suspension of a Haringey councillor has gained worldwide attention, with a petition supporting him garnering almost 50,000 signatures.

Cllr Gideon Bull, who has been a Labour councillor for 15 years, lost the party whip on January 21 after speaking out against closures to day centres for vulnerable adults with disabilities and dementia.

"I thought it was the right thing to do because day care is just too precious to give up without a clear alternative," Cllr Bull said.

Now the grassroots petition has attracted signatures from such far-flung places as Australia, Texas, Argentina, France and Mexico, as well as closer to home in the UK.

"Councillor Gideon Bull is passionate about local services, and was acting in good conscience when he spoke up for those with no other voice," the petition says.

"His suspension sends out the message that councillors are expected to follow the party line, rather than fight for the public good."

"If we want councillors who support their communities, they need to be able to speak out against injustices without fear of disproportionate reprisals."



■ Cllr Gideon Bull, centre, celebrates a Labour victory in Haringey.

Cllr Bull was suspended for three months after breaking ranks to speak out against the closures of day centres at a Haringey cabinet meeting on November 10.

It was decided the Birkbeck Road Day Centre in Hornsey, Always Day Centre near Muswell Hill, the Roundway Centre, the Grange Day

Centre and the Haven Day Centre will close.

The *Broadway* previously reported the Tottenham councillor was brought up by his grandparents who heavily relied on day centre care.

The decision to suspend Cllr Bull has sent shockwaves through the Labour party.

The Tottenham branch said the decision made Labour look "callous and dictatorial."

They passed an emergency motion in support of Cllr Bull on January 27.

"The Tottenham CLP expresses its great concern at the decision to remove the whip and considers this

a totally inappropriate response to his intervention at a recent cabinet meeting where we believe he acted fully in accordance with the rule book" the motion said.

Haringey Labour declined a request to comment on the petition.

Cllr Liz McShane, Haringey Labour chief whip said: "As the chief whip, I put forward the recommendation to withdraw the whip for three months from Cllr Bull following his interventions at the public cabinet meeting which I believe demonstrated uncomradely behaviour and a disregard for the principles of collective responsibility which all group members are required to abide by."

"Cllr Bull is an active and engaged member of both the Labour Group and the local Party and it is extremely disappointing that his actions on this occasion have led to this outcome."

"I intend to work closely with Cllr Bull throughout his suspension to ensure that he has a smooth reintegration back into the group and to hopefully avoid situations like this occurring again in future."

Cllr Bull is appealing the decision.

■ To find the petition: [thepetitionsite.com/669/215/547/demand-that-cllr-gideon-bull-is-not-punished-for-standing-up-for-vulnerable-adults/#sign](http://thepetitionsite.com/669/215/547/demand-that-cllr-gideon-bull-is-not-punished-for-standing-up-for-vulnerable-adults/#sign)

Picture: Tony Gay

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## OPINION

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Cllr Gideon Bull

# Corbyn's message is lost on councillors

Brian Bowles of Redston road N8 writes::

I had to pinch myself on reading in your *Broadway* edition that Councillor Gideon Bull was suspended from the Labour Party not because he voted for the closure of day care centres for the elderly and disabled but that he voted against such closures (Suspended for opposing cuts, January 28). He commented on this unfortunate turn of events saying: "There is no point in being in politics if you can't stand up for the people who can't stand up for themselves."

This is a message that other Labour councillors (all of whom voted for the closures) might well reflect on. Prior to and since his election as party leader Jeremy Corbyn has made much of the fact that Labour is the party to protect and support the most vulnerable members of our society. Apart from Cllr Bull this message seems to have been lost on the members of Haringey's Labour Council.

I completed Haringey Council's Budget consultation (for the year 2016/2017) last week. Input was requested from local residents to glean the level of agreement for a two per cent increase in council tax in order to fund local social services. Were this to go ahead the council would still be committed



■ Cllr Gideon Bull

to the closure these much needed centres. The additional income (some £1.7m) would be added to the general social services budget currently running at £62m pa. I said I would be happy to pay the extra if the centres were kept open; otherwise not. I foresaw the additional cash disappearing into a funding black hole to be used who knows where or how.

When it wants to spend money (e.g. £86,000 for the re-branding exercise) the council appears to have no trouble finding it.

According to the council our new logo ' communicates who we are today.' Who we are today appears to be a council which has little concern for the most needy and vulnerable in the borough

Linda Kelly, Conservative Assembly member and candidate for Enfield and Haringey writes:

I was saddened, but not surprised, to see the Haringey Labour Group withdraw the whip from Cllr Gideon Bull.

Before joining the Conservatives from Labour, I spent 12 years on Hackney Council where Labour's control of its councillors was equally authoritarian. The council was run by diktat: any opposition was stifled and the culprit punished.

Labour councillors were even expected to ask permission from the chief whip to ask a question in the chamber; talk to a journalist or write a letter to local newspapers. We were always expected to put the interests of the party ahead of the interests of the public who elected us.

I hope Cllr Bull continues to speak up for his constituents in one of the most disadvantaged wards in London and remind his so-called "comrades" that nodding dogs are only fit for the back window of a car, not a council chamber.

He should stand up to these bullies, sit as an independent or join MP David Lammy in accepting a Conservative invitation to help root out

## Post office closures

# Sneaky attempt to close our branches or reduce services?

Catherine West, Labour MP for Hornsey and Wood Green writes:

The recent announcement that Muswell Hill and Crouch End Crown post offices are to be 'franchised' has understandably raised lots of fears locally.

I've had people contact me concerned that it's a sneaky attempt to close these busy branches or reduce the service. Local businesses and residents who rely on the service expressed amazement that these popular branches with huge queues could be at risk.

I share these concerns and have called an urgent meeting with Post Office bosses. I will be seeking to find out why these branches have been identified for potential franchising, how these proposals will impact on the quality and range of service and what the impact will be for the staff.

I also want to know what happens if a franchisee can't be

found or if they pull out in the future.

Worryingly, research from Consumer Focus (the statutory watchdog for Post Offices) revealed that franchise branches scored worse for customer service, queue times and accessibility than Crown Post Offices.

They're also bad news for existing staff. In the last round of franchising in 2014-15 fewer than 10 staff out of 500 transferred to the new retailer.

I fear these plans are a short-sighted attempt to save money with little consideration for the long-term effect on services.

If you share my concerns, please support my campaign to protect our post offices at [www.catherinewest.org.uk](http://www.catherinewest.org.uk)

Claire Lewis of Grove Avenue Muswell Hill N10 writes:

The Greens seem to be the only party with their finger on the pulse where post office closures

are concerned: well done to local candidate Ronald Stewart for highlighting this threat last week (*Candidate demands public consultation, January 28*).

Small post offices meeting the needs of a local community are now sadly a thing of the past. Now we learn that even the main post offices in Muswell Hill and Crouch End are to be closed because they don't make enough profit. Little information about the proposed franchising arrangements has reached the public domain.

Apparently they are to be advertised for just 28 days, and then closed if no suitable franchisee is forthcoming. Even if a company is found to take over the service, the existing buildings will still be closed and the post office services crammed into the franchisee's existing premises.

Any regular user of Muswell Hill Post Office knows how busy it is. Shared premises will be positively unsafe.

## VIEW FROM THE STREET

by Sue Hessel,  
community campaigner



# At ease with it all, conductor Ron is truly a master

“It really is a privilege to be in this part of the world... or do we here in north London just take it all a bit for granted that we have so many extraordinary people living and working in our midst?”

To be really honest I really wanted to write a requiem – like the Verdi requiem – and one day no doubt I will... the words of Highgate Choral Society conductor Ronald Corp as he smiles benignly to the camera in a recent short documentary on the forthcoming world premiere of his newest work, *Behold, the Sea* at the Royal Festival Hall, on March 7.

Gosh! I have sung with the great and good of Highgate for several years now and it can sometimes feel... well rather humbling.

In reality of course it is a community choir, which draws from all walks, but the formidable intellects and musicality of more than a few in this choral society make it an interesting place. It certainly has more than its fair share of doctors, lawyers and accountants, who, in another life, could easily have been professional musicians – and I suspect quite a few wish they had.

As well as composing, Ronald Corp (or Ron) has now been leading Highgate Choral Society for the past 30 years; he also runs the New London Children's Choir, the London Chorus, the New London Orchestra – and his work is regularly heard on the radio (2 and 3, and Classic FM).

He is a master, yet very much at ease with it all – astonishingly he always manages to remain calm and entertaining as he rehearses us each week. Well, 99 per cent!

In 1998 Ron had a late vocation and became an Anglican priest. It undoubtedly adds a philosophy. The main piece of March's concert will be Vaughan William's vast, powerful, swirling, *Sea Symphony*. So all aboard the Royal Festival Hall for a heavenly voyage involving all Ronald Corp's three choirs, his orchestra, and opera soloists.

It really is a privilege to be in this part of the world. Or do we here in North London just take it all a bit for granted that we have so many extraordinary people living and working in our midst – many within the catchment area of the *Ham&High*..

Speaking of which, I attended the funeral Mass on Friday of our beloved and saintly Sister Margaret, who lived in the convent of St Gilda's in Crouch End for most of 50 years.

A nun whose serenity shone gently, she slipped away a few days after David Bowie. Sister Margaret worked as a teacher and then a social worker. And then when she retired she went back to teaching – this time helping children to read.

But in reality, she taught us all. Always gently attentive, especially for the tender ones, the children, the learning disabled.

She was particularly kind to my autistic sister: "Anita teaches us patience." I can still hear her wise, gentle words