Confidential

Standing down in Richmond Park: a local party decision?

The role of Green Party leadership, GPEx members, prominent Greens and Party staff in the decision of local parties to stand down in Richmond Park

Authors:

Ryan Coley, Chair of Kingston Green Party

Clare Keogh, member of Kingston Green Party

Kieron Merrett, member of Kingston Green Party

Summary

We do not feel it is possible to say that the decision of the Green Party to stand down in Richmond Park was a local party decision, despite what was briefed to the press.

When Kingston Green Party met on 3rd November and agreed to stand down in the Richmond Park by-election, for the majority of members present this was a result of feeling that they had been backed into a corner and left with no choice. This was a result of:

- unequal involvement of GPEx, leadership and party press staff in the decisions of the two local parties involved;
- pressure applied by the party leadership, GPEx members and other prominent Greens through social media messages, emails and phone calls, as well as the co-leader being present at the local party meeting which made the decision;
- pressure applied via the national press, which caused many local members to believe they had been left with no choice; and
- pressure applied by party staff over a conditional offer of a major donation.

The unilateral and last-minute decision of Richmond and Twickenham Green Party to withdraw from the by-election, contrary to the agreed position of both Local Parties up to that point, was a blow. The different circumstances of the two local parties involved meant that Kingston Green Party was enormously disadvantaged by this decision. We believe any decision to withdraw or stand down in favour of other parties must be backed by all Local Parties involved in order to go ahead.

We decided on 3rd November that we would minimise any public damage to the party from the Richmond Park decision; hence the statement released by the local party at that time. We therefore regret that we have had to respond publicly to comments made in the press by the co-leader on 26th November. However, we felt strongly that we did not want to be associated with the position wrongly ascribed to our party, and that attempts to deal with our complaints internally had been unfruitful.

To date, there has been no endorsement from Green Party members of the strategy of electoral alliances proposed by the party leadership. Given this, there is no mandate for any external pressure from the leadership, GPEx, party staff or other prominent Greens in local party decisions. We therefore believe local party autonomy must be respected in any future decisions over electoral alliances or unilateral withdrawals.

We also believe that the party leadership should not make public comments in favour of a particular strategy until there is a mandate from members for them to do so.

Contents

Timeline

Late 2015	Discussions begin over securing a potential high-profile candidate who may have stood as the Green Party candidate in the Richmond Park by-election.
17th Aug	Campaign kick-off meeting between Richmond and Twickenham Green Party (R&TGP) and Kingston Green Party (KGP) activists and party staff. **Decision reached: to select a candidate**, establish a campaign team, and campaign in the by-election.
9th-10th Oct	Email conversations between R&TGP and KGP confirming that the mooted high-profile candidate is no longer an option. **Decision reached: to start the candidate selection procedure.**
17th-19th Oct	Email conversation between R&TGP, KGP and Judy Maciejowska (GPEx Elections Co-ordinator). KGP committee learned that JM had been involved in decision-making and had been in talks with a select group of R&TGP members about stopping the selection. KGP committee also learned that a meeting was to take place between JM, Caroline Lucas and Mike Shipley (GPRC co-Chair), without local party members present, to discuss the Richmond Park selection. **Decision reached at the end of these email conversations: to press ahead with an accelerated selection**, whilst remaining open to any electoral alliances which might be proposed.
20th Oct	Selection procedure is initiated by R&TGP committee and both R&TGP and KGP members are invited to hustings and selection meeting on 3rd Nov.
22nd Oct	Meeting of R&TGP and KGP activists. Party staff were invited but were unable to attend due to sickness. **Decision reached: to continue with selection**, whilst remaining open to any electoral alliances which might be proposed.
24th Oct	Meeting of KGP, in which members unanimously endorse the decision to select a candidate for Richmond Park.
26th Oct	Three Labour Party MPs make a public call for a Progressive Alliance in Richmond Park. KGP members come under pressure from prominent Greens via social media to agree to this, despite actually having been open to this all along. Meeting takes place between R&TGP and KGP activists, Judy M, Caroline Lucas and CL's staff. **Decision reached: to continue with selection**, whilst remaining open to any electoral alliances which might be proposed.
31st Oct	Nominations for selection close.
1st Nov	Andree Frieze, the sole nominee, announces her decision to withdraw from the selection to R&TGP members on Slack, and says that she has been informed by party press staff that the Guardian had been informed that she would be standing down, and

has therefore drafted a statement in conjunction with Caroline Lucas' office. Select KGP members are informed in the evening.

2nd Nov — Meeting which had been initially planned for a small group of R&TGP and KGP activists to plan the by-election campaign, with Jonathan Bartley present, but which turned out to be a large meeting of R&TGP and KGP members to discuss standing down in the by-election. The meeting was told that the Guardian has already been informed that the party will not be standing. Jonathan Bartley spoke in favour of standing down. KGP members came under pressure from party staff over a large conditional offer of a donation to the party. **Decision of R&TGP: not to stand. Decision of KGP: to take the decision back to a meeting of KGP the following evening.** The decision of R&TGP and the fact that KGP members are taking the decision to the following evening is leaked to the Guardian via Andree Frieze and party staff.

3rd Nov — KGP committee members come under further pressure from prominent Greens via email,social media and phonecalls KGP Chair makes a complaint about this.Meeting of KGP in the evening. Majority of members present feel that at this stage they have been left with no choice but to stand down. Statement is produced with the aim of minimising any public damage to the party.

8th Nov — Deadline for candidates and their agents to be registered with the Returning Officer.

Since 3rd Nov — GPEx holds discussions over the decision to stand down in Richmond Park and the way the local parties were dealt with by GPEx members and others. A number of proposals to rectify this have been suggested; one of these is that local parties should in future be kept in the loop with any contact with the media. Unfortunately due to multiple delays these proposals are yet to be formally adopted.

26th Nov — KGP members become aware via the Guardian that Caroline Lucas and Sarah Olney, the Liberal Democrat candidate, have jointly attended a R&TGP action day, and that Caroline Lucas has given comments to the Guardian saying she is "backing" Olney, despite there being no such decision by R&TGP or KGP. KGP is not informed about this in advance despite the proposal on GPEx that local parties should be kept in the loop over social media. The Guardian publishes Caroline's comments.

28th Nov — A group of KGP members respond to Caroline Lucas' comments in the Guardian.

Background

1. **A by-election in Richmond Park had been anticipated for many months, with planning beginning in August this year. The agreed position of both Richmond and Twickenham Green Party (R&TGP) and Kingston Green Party (KGP), the two parties covering the constituency, was to select a candidate and be ready to fight the by-election, whilst being open to the possibility of a progressive alliance or electoral deal if one were proposed. During October, work began on this campaign in earnest. Nevertheless, this position was reversed at the very last minute on 2nd November, when R&TGP members decided they would unilaterally stand down from the by-election.**

    1.1 Richmond Park is a Parliamentary constituency straddling the London Boroughs of Richmond and Kingston. It is covered by two Local Parties, Richmond and Twickenham Green Party (R&TGP) and Kingston Green Party (KGP).

    1.2 Given that Zac Goldsmith had promised to stand down in the event of a decision to build a new runway at Heathrow Airport, a by-election was widely expected to be imminent once the decision to expand was given the go-ahead. KGP committee members had begun to discuss the prospects of a by-election in Richmond Park and ideas for campaigning many months in advance.

    1.3 Attempts were made to secure a particular individual to stand as a high-profile Green Party candidate in the by-election. Discussions over this began as early as late 2015. However, by 9th October it was recognised that this was not an option, as the individual concerned was only willing to stand as a unity candidate, and not against Zac Goldsmith.

    1.4 KGP and R&TGP Co-ordinators and activists, along with party staff, initially agreed on 17th August that a selection process would be held for Richmond Park. After further conversations on 9th-10th and 17th-19th October and meetings on 22nd and 26th October, and after the GPEx Elections Co-ordinator and national party leadership had become involved, the agreed position still remained that a selection would be held and the local parties would remain ready to fight the by-election, but the local parties would remain open to a progressive alliance or electoral pact if one were proposed.

    1.5 The selection procedure was started by R&TGP's committee on 20th October and the hustings and selection meeting was planned for 3rd November.

    1.6 At a meeting of KGP on 24th October, members voted unanimously that they wanted to select a candidate and fight a by-election campaign in Richmond Park. KGP members remained open to any deal that may be proposed, but were opposed to

unilaterally withdrawing from the race without any obvious benefits to the local or national party. This was because KGP members felt they had a lot to lose in terms of local electoral prospects – much more so than R&TGP.

1.7 During early October, in anticipation of the announcement of the Heathrow decision which was expected to trigger a by-election, KGP produced a leaflet and delivered this to the whole of a target ward. An action day was held on 29th October to get canvassing under way, with organisation for further action days already under way. By late October, KGP was also producing a second leaflet, ready to be released shortly after the selection meeting which was expected on 3rd November. This reflects the level of activity and enthusiasm amongst KGP members, and the real local electoral prospects that exist for the Green Party in Kingston for the 2018 local elections and beyond.

1.8 Until 1st November, both R&TGP and KGP had been in favour of selecting a candidate and being ready to fight the by-election, whilst still being open to any electoral deal that might be proposed. This was reversed suddenly on 1st November, after the deadline for nominations in the selection process, when the only nominee, Andree Frieze, decided to withdraw and R&TGP decided unilaterally to change the subject of the meeting on 2nd November to a discussion about not fielding a candidate in the by-election.

1.9 KGP made its decision on 3rd November to stand down, with local members feeling they had been left with little other choice.

Initial freeze-out from decision-making

2. When GPEx initially became involved in the local parties' decision-making, Kingston Green Party (KGP) was initially frozen out. We also became aware that discussions were ongoing at the highest level within the party about Richmond Park which did not involve members of KGP or Richmond and Twickenham Green Party (R&TGP).

2.1 Judy Maciejowska, GPEx Elections Co-ordinator, a former member of R&TGP herself, contacted select activists within R&TGP some time before 17th October and asked them to halt the selection process, which they did, without consulting the wider membership in either R&TGP or KGP.

2.2 KGP's committee became aware of this only after contacting R&TGP by email on 17th October, asking why the selection process hadn't progressed. KGP committee members were not informed or consulted about the involvement of Judy M or the halting of the selection procedure before this point. *[Appendix 1]*

2.3 When asked about where the instruction to halt the selection process had come from, R&TGP committee members told KGP committee members that the instruction had come from Caroline Lucas. *[Appendix 2]*

2.4 Judy Maciejowska told R&TGP and KGP activists that, on 18th Oct, she was travelling to London for a meeting of herself, Caroline Lucas and Mike Shipley (GPRC co-Chair) to discuss the Richmond Park selection. No members of R&TGP or KGP were involved in this meeting. *[Appendix 3]* Caroline Lucas has since said that this was not a planned meeting.

2.5 Judy Maciejowska has since apologised to KGP for initiating discussions with R&TGP and not involving KGP in those discussions.

2.6 **We believe the Elections Co-ordinator should have consulted with both local parties involved at the same time and in the same manner, and we are grateful for her apology over this.**

2.7 **We believe high-level meetings to discuss our local selection process should not have occurred without the involvement of local party members from the outset.**

2.8 **We believe that the nature of GPEx's initial involvement with one of the Local Parties involved rather than both, as well as the lateness of their involvement**

in the run-up to this long-anticipated by-election, was the root cause of the

difficulties and disagreements over the decision not to field a candidate in Richmond Park.

Use of the national press

3. Leaks to the national press added pressure to local Green Party members and made them feel they had no choice but to stand down.

3.1 In the week beginning 31st October, the only nominee in the Richmond Park selection, Andree Frieze, changed her position and drafted a statement confirming her intention to withdraw from the selection. Andree informed R&TGP members, via Slack, that a result of a conversation with Caroline Lucas' office, she had become aware that the Guardian had been informed of her intention to stand down. *[Appendix 4]*

3.2 Andree's statement was then drafted on the advice of, and with input from, the office of Caroline Lucas. An exclusive story with the Guardian was negotiated on the basis of her statement by staff.

3.3 A meeting had previously been called for Wednesday, 2nd November to plan the by-election campaign, with Jonathan Bartley in attendance. This was timed to fit with Jonathan's diary. However, the evening before this meeting, members were informed that Andree had already decided to stand down and that the meeting would discuss the proposal not to select a candidate.

3.4 During the meeting, Andree informed the meeting that the Guardian had already been informed about her standing down and that she had been working with party staff on this, and that this story would be breaking at midnight that night. *[Appendix 5, section 4]*

3.5 Whilst KGP members attempted to explore alternatives to standing down unilaterally, members present at the meeting felt was that there was no longer any option or alternative available, given the Guardian's involvement. *[Appendix 5, section 6. Note the error in the meeting notes: KGP members did not suggest officially selecting Andree only for her then to stand down; rather, KGP members suggested officially selecting Andree and being ready to fight the election campaign, but remaining open to her standing down in the event of an alliance or pact being negotiated over the next few days.]*

3.6 Jonathan Bartley asked local members not to take any decision which would lead to a lack of credibility for the Green Party by appearing to change our minds, now that the national press was involved and had been told that the party would be standing down. *[Appendix 5, section 6]* He spoke in favour of standing down during this meeting. *[Appendix 5, section 5]*

3.7 KGP members decided at the meeting on 2nd November that they could not make a decision that evening, and would need to consult party members back in Kingston.

This fact was leaked to the Guardian and a Guardian journalist tweeted this. *[Appendix 5, section 8; and Appendix 6]* Not only did this create pressure on KGP members in itself, but also led to further pressure on KGP members the following day via social media, including from R&TGP members themselves.

3.8 When the decision to stand down was made public by the Green Party, the press release said that the decision had come from local party members, and this was picked up in the press. Given the huge amount of external pressure that had been applied to KGP members, this was infuriating and insulting. It also created the potential for adverse publicity in the case that this were exposed as a falsehood.

3.9 **The involvement of the Guardian, and pressure from the leadership not to embarrass the party in the eyes of the media, made local members feel that they no longer had any choice. We believe that the Guardian should have been kept at arm's length until after local parties had made their decision – or at least, the fact of the Guardian's involvement should not have been allowed to influence the decision at the meeting on 2nd November in the way that it was.**

3.10 **We believe that both local parties involved should have been consulted about the involvement of the press, rather than allowing this to be a surprise for KGP.**

3.11 **We believe the deliberate leak to the Guardian at the end of the meeting on 2nd November was inappropriate and added further pressure to KGP members.**

3.12 **Given the nature of the process that led to the decision of R&TGP and KGP to stand down and the sheer extent of external involvement in this, we believe it was an error of judgement on the part of party press staff to brief this as a "local party decision," causing further injury to feeling for local party members.**

Direct pressure on local members

4. The local party membership were influenced at the meeting on 2nd November by Jonathan Bartley, who stood up and spoke in favour of standing down, as well as warning members not to embarrass the party in the eyes of the press. Furthermore, members of KGP's committee received messages via social media, emails and phone calls from GPEx members, PolComm members and party staff which pressured them to agree to stand down in the by-election.

4.1 Jonathan Bartley was present at the meeting of R&TGP and KGP activists on 2nd November when the discussion and vote over standing down were held. Jonathan stood up to make his speech, and spoke in favour of standing down. *[Appendix 5, section 5]*

4.2 As previously noted, Jonathan also asked local members not to risk the Green Party's credibility by appearing to change our minds, given the fact that the national press had already been informed that the party would be standing down. *[Appendix 5, section 6]*

4.3 Direct pressure on KGP committee members became particularly apparent on two particular occasions. The first was on 26th October; and the second was on 2nd and 3rd November, around the time of the meetings of R&TGP and KGP, pressuring them to decide to stand down.

4.4 The following were reported to have contacted members of the KGP local party committee via phone call, social media and email to encourage them to stand down: Jonathan Bartley; Caroline Russell; Judy Maciejowska; the GPRC Co-Chairs (some of which included forwarded communications from Political Committee); Tom Chance (GPEx co-Management Co-ordinator); and several members of party staff.

4.5 Ryan Coley, Kingston Green Party Chair, complained about these attempts to "pressurise" KGP in an email and asked for them to stop. *[Appendix 7]* A former KGP committee member, Jack Grant, also complained about the messages he had been receiving when he attended the meeting with Caroline Lucas on 26th October.

4.6 It is difficult to be certain to what extent this pressure was organised. Certainly, the situation was under discussion amongst Political Committee members (which is evident from PolComm email discussions which were forwarded by the GPRC Co-chairs to members of KGP local party committee) which may have led many of them to decide to contact the local party committee. The situation with the conditional donation (see section 5) also seemed to be under discussion amongst actors at the

national level, with the local party receiving communications on this variously from party staff and from the GPEx co-Management Co-ordinator.

4.7 **We believe that, in the current absence of any mandate for a national strategy for a progressive alliance, the decision of local party members should not have been directly influenced by the leadership, and Jonathan Bartley should have excused himself from the meeting on 2nd November.**

4.8 **We believe that national-level actors within the Green Party should not have become involved in local party decision-making by contacting committee members to apply pressure to them.**

Pressure from party staff over a donation

5. **Party staff added pressure on a small group of KGP members by telling us that there was an offer of a large donation to the party which was conditional on the party demonstrating its desire for a 'progressive alliance.' KGP members were told this could affect the jobs of party staff. There was therefore a desire for local members to comply.**

    5.1 Party staff present at the meeting on 2nd November informed a group of KGP activists, in confidence, that the party staff were keen for us to agree to stand down. This was because there would be serious, but confidential, implications for the national party – so serious that they could even affect the jobs of party staff – in the event that we did not do so. Later in the evening, it was clarified by party staff (ostensibly on the instruction of the Chief Executive) that this related to a donation offered to the party of some £250,000 which was conditional on the party showing its seriousness about the 'progressive alliance' initiative.

    5.2 We were told that this information was held only by a select group of staff within the party and by one of the co-Leaders. Nevertheless, on 3rd November, shortly before the KGP meeting, Tom Chance (co-Management Co-ordinator on GPEx) contacted Clare Keogh about this claim (specifically to suggest the local party could receive a share of it in the form of support for our local election campaign in 2018), leaving us unsure about the extent of the knowledge of these claims.

    5.3 We understand that the potential donation has now failed to pass Donation Scrutiny and the party will not be accepting it.

    5.4 We do not wish to lay the blame on any individual member of Green Party staff who may have been present at the meeting of 2nd November, as they may well have been placed in a very difficult position at this time.

    5.5 **We believe that the decision of party staff to divulge details of the conditional offer of a donation was wholly wrong. Not only should party staff have been impartial in the decision, but knowledge of a large conditional donation should not have been allowed to affect the decision of party members. Local party volunteers should also never have been made to feel responsible for the jobs of party staff members.**

Relationship between two local Green Parties

6. The decision over Richmond Park has shown that, where a constituency is covered by two local parties, the experience of being asked by GPEx to consider pulling out of an election as part of a 'progressive alliance' initiative can be deeply damaging – particularly where the initiative is likely to have a different impact on each local party. The result of the decision to stand down in Richmond Park was vastly more favourable for R&TGP than for KGP. Despite this, R&TGP was able to make a unilateral, last-minute decision to pull out of the running in the Richmond Park by-election, leaving KGP with few options.

6.1 Electoral prospects for the 2018 local elections have been significantly more realistic in KGP than in R&TGP. In R&TGP's primary target ward, the lead candidate came seventh behind three Tories and three Lib Dems with just 420 votes, i.e. 896 votes fewer than the candidate in 3rd place. In the primary target ward in KGP, the lead candidate came fourth behind three Tories with 891 votes, i.e. 350 votes fewer than the candidate in third place.

6.2 KGP intended to use the by-election to mount a significant campaign in the target wards, making use of the national attention to attract activists and resources from outside the local area, organising action days and gathering significant data. This would have contributed to the local party's electoral prospects in 2018. Two of the three candidates necessary had already been selected. As mentioned above, KGP had already begun campaigning in this ward.

6.3 Jonathan Bartley was initially very supportive of KGP's plans for campaigning in this At the London Green Party AGM on 22nd October, he spoke publicly in favour of standing in this election to send a clear national message on opposing airport expansion; he also spoke to KGP activists at this AGM. He agreed to attend a campaign planning meeting on 2nd November (which later unfortunately became a meeting to discuss withdrawing from the by-election) and agreed to attend a session to phonebank local activists later in November.

6.4 Until 1st November, both R&TGP and KGP had been in favour of selecting a candidate and being ready to fight the by-election, whilst still being open to any electoral deal that might be proposed. This was reversed suddenly on 1st November, after the deadline for nominations in the selection process, when the only nominee, Andree Frieze, decided to withdraw and R&TGP decided unilaterally to change the subject of the meeting on 2nd November to a discussion about not fielding a candidate in the by-election.

6.5 At the meeting on 2nd November, Jonathan Bartley had changed his position to one of being in favour of withdrawing from the by-election.

6.6 One of the reasons for withdrawing given by R&TGP members present on 2nd November was the talks which they had held with the Richmond group of Liberal Democrats. Although R&TGP did not actually have any firm commitments from the Liberal Democrats, R&TGP members believed that these talks gave them a hope of electing councillors in the 2018 local elections. A prominent Liberal Democrat in Richmond had threatened Andree with pulling out of any 2018 talks if she had stood in the by-election. *[Appendix 5, section 4]* The talks held between R&TGP and the Richmond group of Liberal Democrats did not benefit KGP or KGP's target wards in any way.

6.7 Another reason given by R&TGP members present on 2nd November was their inability to mount a full-scale by-election campaign. Despite this, since that time, R&TGP has effectively run a full-scale by-election campaign (without a candidate in the race). This has included canvassing, leafleting (six out of seven wards in R&TGP's part of the constituency have been leafleted), and inviting a number of prominent Green Party politicians to attend their action days.

6.8 As a result of failing to agree with the R&TGP members on 2nd November and delaying the decision for 24 hours, contact was made between KGP members and the Kingston group of Liberal Democrats. However, only the very vaguest of commitments was secured from the Kingston Lib Dems in this time, merely agreeing that discussions on campaigning in target wards would begin after the Richmond Park by-election. This falls well short of anything approaching an 'alliance.' *[Appendix 8]*

6.9 When KGP members met on 3rd November, given the unilateral decision taken by R&TGP and the pressure applied by Green Party actors at national level, a majority of those present felt there was no choice but to field no candidate.

6.10 The disagreement between R&TGP and KGP over the Richmond Park decision has caused lasting damage to the Green Party in this area. This has included members leaving the Green Party and committee members resigning their positions.

6.11 **We believe that, where a Parliamentary constituency is covered by two or more Local Parties, any decision to withdraw from an election, not to field a candidate or to enter into an electoral alliance must have the backing of all Local Parties involved in order to go ahead. This is in recognition of the fact that different Local Parties may have very different circumstances, and may already have put in a great deal of work in order to achieve their goals.**

6.12 **We believe that, unless an election could genuinely not have been anticipated, any decision to withdraw, not to field a candidate or to enter into**

an electoral alliance should be made well in advance of the deadlines for registration of candidates. This would give all Local Parties involved some certainty over the process.

6.13 **It has been suggested that the problems in Richmond Park were caused by rapidly changing political circumstances, and the inability of the Green Party's governance structures to deal with this. This is not the case. There was no change in the political circumstances on 1st November which could have prompted such a sudden change in the position of R&TGP; rather, this by-election was anticipated well in advance and work on it began as early as late 2015.**

Recent comments in the press

7. On 26th November 2016, Caroline Lucas made comments to the Guardian which said the Green Party was "backing" Sarah Olney, the Liberal Democrat candidate. There was no mandate for this from either R&TGP or KGP. This was despite a proposal on GPEx, which Caroline had agreed with, that local parties should be kept in the loop over any dealings with the media. On 28th November, a group of KGP members responded in kind in the Guardian.

7.1 Since 3rd November, discussions have been ongoing on GPEx over how to respond to the decision in Richmond Park and the complaints raised by members of KGP over this. One of several proposals emerging from these discussions was that local parties should be kept in the loop over any dealings with the media, to avoid a repeat of the situation in Richmond Park whereby the Guardian's involvement was an influence on the decision. This proposal had the agreement of Caroline Lucas, amongst other members. The proposals have yet to be formally adopted owing to continuing discussions.

7.2 Despite this, on 26th November, Sarah Olney, the Liberal Democrat candidate, was invited to campaign alongside Greens in Richmond Park and Caroline Lucas was also present. KGP had not been made aware of this. Caroline Lucas gave comments to the Guardian to say that the Green Party was "backing" Sarah Olney. This was despite no decision being made by R&TGP or KGP to back any particular candidate. KGP was not kept in the loop during this contact with the Guardian.

7.3 On 28th November, a group of KGP members (including the authors of this report) responded in kind in the press.

7.4 Caroline Lucas has apologised for the comments she made in the Guardian.

7.5 **We decided on 3rd November that we would minimise any public damage to the party from the Richmond Park decision; hence the statement released by KGP at that time. We therefore regret that we have had to respond publicly to these recent comments. However, we felt strongly that we did not want to be associated with the position wrongly ascribed to our party, and that attempts to deal with our complaints internally had been unfruitful.**

7.6 **We believe that the party leaders must not make public comments about 'progressive alliances' and/or endorsements of other parties' candidates, until and unless there is a mandate to do so from party members through a proper process.**

Conclusions

8. We do not feel it is possible to say that the decision of the Green Party to stand down in Richmond Park was a local party decision, despite what was briefed to the press.

8.1 We believe the Elections Co-ordinator should have consulted with both local parties involved at the same time and in the same manner, and we are grateful for her apology over this.

8.2 We believe high-level meetings to discuss our local selection process should not have occurred without the involvement of local party members from the outset.

8.3 We believe that the nature of GPEx's initial involvement with one of the Local Parties involved rather than both, as well as the lateness of their involvement in the run-up to this long-anticipated by-election, was the root cause of the difficulties and disagreements over the decision not to field a candidate in Richmond Park.

8.4 The involvement of the Guardian, and pressure from the leadership not to embarrass the party in the eyes of the media, made local members feel that they no longer had any choice. We believe that the Guardian should have been kept at arm's length until after local parties had made their decision – or at least, the fact of the Guardian's involvement should not have been allowed to influence the decision at the meeting on 2nd November in the way that it was.

8.5 We believe that both local parties involved should have been consulted about the involvement of the press, rather than allowing this to be a surprise for KGP.

8.6 We believe the leak to the Guardian at the end of the meeting on 2nd November was inappropriate and added further pressure to KGP members.

8.7 Given the nature of the process that led to the decision of R&TGP and KGP to stand down and the sheer extent of external involvement in this, we believe it was an error of judgement on the part of party press staff to brief this as a "local party decision," causing further injury to feeling for local party members.

8.8 We believe that, in the current absence of any mandate for a national strategy for a progressive alliance, the decision of local party members should not have been directly influenced by the leadership, and Jonathan Bartley should have excused himself from the meeting on 2nd November.

8.9 We believe that national-level actors within the Green Party should not have become involved in local party decision-making by contacting committee members to apply pressure to them.

8.10 We believe that the decision of party staff to divulge details of the conditional offer of a donation was wholly wrong. Not only should party staff have been impartial in the decision, but knowledge of a large conditional donation should not have been allowed to affect the decision of party members. Local party volunteers should also never have been made to feel responsible for the jobs of party staff members.

8.11 **The cumulative effect of all of this was to leave a majority of active KGP members feeling that they had been backed into a corner, and that they had been left with no choice but to agree to stand down.**

8.12 **To date, there has been no endorsement from Green Party members of the strategy of electoral alliances proposed by the party leadership, or any debate over the form it should take. Given this, there is no mandate for any external pressure from the leadership, GPEx, PolComm, party staff or others in local party decisions, and we believe local party autonomy must be respected.**

8.13 We believe that, where a Parliamentary constituency is covered by two or more Local Parties, any decision to withdraw from an election, not to field a candidate or to enter into an electoral alliance must have the backing of all Local Parties involved in order to go ahead. This is in recognition of the fact that different Local Parties may have very different circumstances, and may already have put in a great deal of work in order to achieve their goals.

8.14 We believe that, unless an election could genuinely not have been anticipated, any decision to withdraw, not to field a candidate or to enter into an electoral alliance should be made well in advance of the deadlines for registration of candidates. This would give all Local Parties involved some certainty over the process.

8.15 It has been suggested that the problems in Richmond Park were caused by rapidly changing political circumstances, and the inability of the Green Party's governance structures to deal with this. This is not the case. There was no change in the political circumstances on 1st November which could have prompted such a sudden change in the position of R&TGP; rather, this by-election was anticipated well in advance and work on it began as early as late 2015.

8.16 **We decided on 3rd November that we would minimise any public damage to the party from the Richmond Park decision; hence the statement released by KGP at that time. We therefore regret that we have had to respond publicly to these recent comments. However, we felt strongly that we did not want to be associated with the position wrongly ascribed to our party, and that attempts to deal with our complaints internally had been unfruitful.**

8.17 **We believe that the party leaders must not make public comments about 'progressive alliances' and/or endorsements of other parties' candidates,**

until and unless there is a mandate to do so from party members through a proper process.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Email from KGP Co-ordinator to R&TGP Co-ordinator, and response, at which point KGP committee members became aware that national-level actors were now involved in the decision.

From: Richard Bennett [mailto:richardbennettuk@icloud.com]
Sent: 17 October 2016 14:12
To: Ryan Coley <ryan.coley@live.co.uk>
Cc: Cami Ouzerdine <cami.ouzerdine@greenparty.org.uk>; Monica Saunders <monica.saunders@btinternet.com>; andree_frieze@yahoo.co.uk; Kieron Merrett <gp@kieronam.net>
Subject: Re: update from meeting with JS

Hi Ryan

We are being obliged by the Party at National level to hold and await whether there is progress on agreeing an alliance candidate.

Best wishes
Richard

Sent from my iPhone

On 17 Oct 2016, at 13:01, Ryan Coley <ryan.coley@live.co.uk> wrote:
Hi guys,
Any update?
Have just seen an article on the beeb saying no decision tomorrow but likely the following Tuesday.
Would be good if we are prepared for then.
Thanks
Ryan
Get Outlook for Android

Appendix 2: Email from R&TGP Co-ordinator to KGP members, indicating that the instruction to halt the selection process had come from the co-Leader.

From: Richard Bennett [mailto:richardbennettuk@icloud.com]
Sent: 17 October 2016 18:47
To: Kieron Merrett <gp@kieronam.net>
Cc: Cami Ouzerdine <Cami.Ouzerdine@greenparty.org.uk>; Ryan Coley <ryan.coley@live.co.uk>; Monica Saunders <monica.saunders@btinternet.com>; andree_frieze@yahoo.co.uk
Subject: Re: update from meeting with JS

I understand that Caroline Lucas is the level.

Sent from my iPhone

On 17 Oct 2016, at 17:24, Kieron Merrett <gp@kieronam.net> wrote:
Hi all

Richard, where in the party at national level has this come from - are you dealing with Judy? Is it actually possible to "oblige" us to hold off from a selection? I didn't think that was the case.

I'm worried the idea of an alliance candidate is probably a hiding to nothing, and we're in danger of being absent when all the other parties are ready to go. It would be really helpful if we could have our candidate in place ready for the announcement of the by-elex or ASAP afterwards.

Why don't we go ahead with a selection process but reserve the right to pull it if there is an agreement on a PA candidate down the line? Since the selection process takes several weeks we would need to start it sooner rather than later.

Best
K

Appendix 3: Email from GPEx Elections Co-ordinator regarding a meeting with Caroline Lucas and Mike Shipley.

From: Judy Maciejowska [mailto:judymaciejowska@gmail.com]
Sent: 18 October 2016 12:20
To: Kieron Merrett <kieron.merrett@greenparty.org.uk>
Subject: Re: Richmond Park

Hi Kieran

I've been in contact with the R&T people who are happy to hold off selection for a day or two while we explore the possibility of an alliance of anti Heathrow parties. I think they're keen to get selection underway soon, if an alliance fails so I'm on my way to London now to speak to Mike Shipley (Gprc) and Caroline L.

I believe they have also been approached by somebody locally about an anti Brexit unity candidate.

Richard and the R&T committee will be able to tell you more, I'm sure, but do get back to me if you'd like to discuss.

Best wishes
Judy
07977 079 269
01822 840 311

Sent from my Samsung Galaxy Tab® S

-------- Original message --------
From: Kieron Merrett <kieron.merrett@greenparty.org.uk>
Date: 17/10/2016 22:39 (GMT+00:00)
To: judymaciejowska@gmail.com
Subject: Richmond Park

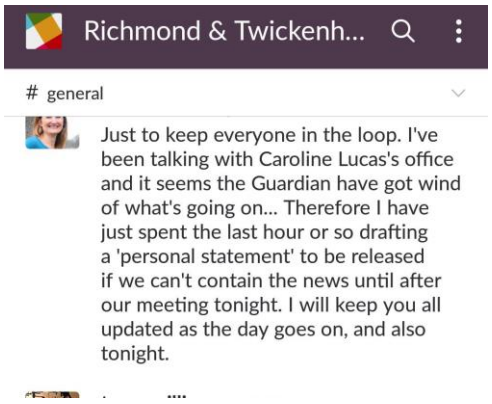
Hi Judy,

Hope you're well!

I just wondered if I could ask what the status is with Richmond Park? My colleagues in the local party seem to be in the dark about what's going on, whilst we're being told we're being "obliged" not to hold a selection (though I'm sure this is just crossed wires). Obviously we're all getting a bit nervous as the Heathrow decision could well be next week, whilst other parties have candidates already selected. Have you got any news on this?

All the best
Kieron

Appendix 4: Slack message from Andree Frieze to R&TGP members, indicating that she had been in touch with Caroline Lucas' office, who had informed her that the Guardian had been informed that she was standing down.



Appendix 5: Meeting notes from the meeting of R&TGP and KGP members on 2nd November, produced by a member of R&TGP present at the meeting.

Richmond & Twickenham Green Party and Kingston Green Party
By-election planning meeting, 2nd November 2016

Richmond & Twickenham GP:
Rae Vermeulen
Roger Wilson
Alick Munro
Nicola Albon
Caroline Wren
Steve Smith
Rene Bach
Andrew Webster
Richard Bennett
Andrée Frieze

Monica Saunders
Chas Warlow
Mike Bangham
Tanya Williams
Clive Long
Elizabeth Nash
Mary Stephens

Kingston GP:
Ryan Coley
Simon Jakeman
Clare Keogh
Kieron Merrett
Peter Whitworth
Kate Worley
Alex Nelson
Hannah Smale

Other
Cami Ouzerdine (London Region Organiser)
Jonathan Bartley (Co-Leader, Green
Party of England and Wales)

1. Objectives for the by-election

The following were agreed:
- *Kick out Zac Goldsmith*
- *Improve our chances in 2018 local elections*
- *Improve our chances in next general election*
- *Create momentum for Progressive Alliance*

2. Arguments FOR fielding a candidate in this By-election

Cami asked attendees to list the key arguments for, and against, fielding a candidate to stand in this By-election. Reasons in favour of standing:
- *Standing will lead to increased awareness of our messages via the campaign that we will run*
- *Standing will help to build our resources (especially volunteers)*
- *Giving people a focus for their vote, so that the people who want to vote Green can do so*
- *Building public support for the Green Party*
- *Gathering valuable data in target wards by canvassing*
- *Being at the hustings to put our arguments to the public*
- *Training opportunity, for activists to learn how to campaign for an election*
- *Raise the stakes: if we do well, we will be taken more seriously (NB the converse was acknowledged, namely that if we do badly, we might be taken less seriously in future)*
- *It was suggested that we need to stand in order to gain publicity.*

3. Arguments AGAINST fielding a candidate in this By-election

- *We can still run a campaign without a candidate*
- *We can still participate in the debate e.g. Alick's idea is to put environmental and social questions to the candidates to publicly interrogate their credentials and voting intentions*
- *We won't do well – we will either stay at the 2% we are currently polling (i.e. a drop from previous General Election 6%) or could even fall further from that position, resulting in a lost deposit and damaged credibility, which could damage our 2018 chances*
- *If Zac wins and we've stood, we will be blamed for splitting the left vote*

- *If we stand, we will be accused of not taking Progressive Alliance seriously, despite the party's co-leaders driving that initiative – this would be damaging to our credibility*
- *There isn't enough capacity (of willing volunteers) to run the type of campaign that is probably needed to achieve a strong result*
- *The opportunity for publicity is greater, using the Progressive Alliance message, because of the national press attention currently focused on us*
- *Although we can't attend hustings, we could run our own events e.g. Compass might do something Tues 8th on PA so that Caroline Lucas can attend, or there's a pro EU group on Saturday*
- *We can further the Green Party's longer term objectives best, if we put our efforts into achieving proportional representation – and that, in turn, requires a Progressive Alliance.*

4. Andree's updates

- *The Guardian were planning to run a story tomorrow that we're not standing, but National party Press Officer, Matthew Butcher, has negotiated with them and achieved an agreement to hold off on the story while we make up our minds*
- *David Williams, influential local Lib Dem (former Council leader), visited Andree on Mon 31st Oct and said that there would be no PA in 2018 if she stood in this By-election*
- *Gareth Roberts, local Lib Dem co-ordinator, has confirmed in recent emails that he is open to 2018 PA – it feels as though good progress has been made*
- *It's acknowledged that there is no concrete deal, and that of course the Lib Dems could change their mind between now and 2018*

5. Jonathan Bartley's view

- *It's the local parties' decision*
- *Whatever we decide, there will be support from national party in terms of time and expertise, although not likely to be funding*
- *The Lib Dems will hit this by-election incredibly hard in terms of funding – possibly even harder than they contested Witney, (where they had a considerable swing), because this is their big chance*
- *2018's local elections surely remain the top priority and we should act to protect our chances there*
- *This feels like a moment of great promise, a watershed moment, when Progressive Alliance ideas could come to fruition – we are at the centre of the debate here*
- *Jonathan has recently come down in favour of that approach being the more suitable route for us.*

6. Discussion of the options

- *Kingston mentioned the idea of continuing with the selection process so that Andree would be officially selected as our candidate before she then stood down, but it was felt that the Guardian article had (unfortunately) already de-railed that approach*
- *Jonathan felt that the current situation warranted a strong statement about not standing, and that we should avoid any situation which would lead to lack of credibility now that the national press were involved*
- *Concerns were raised over the trustworthiness of the Lib Dems and there was no concrete assurance available to remove that particular concern.*

7. Governance of making the decision

- *Richmond & Twickenham Green Party activists were happy to have a vote on the spot, representing their members, but Kingston Green Party felt that there were not enough of their members present for them to hold a vote*
- *Richmond & Twickenham Green Party voted 1 in favour of fielding, 1 abstention, and the rest against fielding a candidate, so there was a clear decision from them*
- *Kingston Green Party are consulting their members tomorrow and reporting back (Thursday 3rd Nov), using the 'for and against' arguments from these minutes as the evidence to put to members*

- *There was further discussion about whether it would be sensible to continue with the selection process but, given that Andree had already made her personal decision not to stand, and that the press were aware of the situation, it was decided that the best way to proceed would simply be for her to withdraw her nomination right away*
- *This meant that there were no longer any candidates (there were no other nominees), so the selection process (due to culminate in an EGM on Thursday evening) was officially terminated*
- *The deadline for nominations for the By-election is Tuesday 8th so there is potentially still time for a new Emergency Selection Procedure to be run by Kingston Green Party, in which Richmond Park members would have the chance to vote.*
- *Standing Orders Committee have been in touch to confirm that Kingston Green Party would be able to trigger such a process if they chose to, even if that was counter to Richmond & Twickenham Green Party's decision.*

8. Closing the meeting

- *Kingston will report back after consulting their members*
- *Cami suggested that no further agenda items were truly relevant till we had a final decision, and the meeting was brought to a close*
- *It was then discovered that the Guardian journalist dealing the Green Party Press Office had in fact tweeted about the situation rather than keeping it to themselves.*

Appendix 6: Tweet from a Guardian journalist, seen by KGP and R&TGP members before they left the meeting room on 2nd November.

Appendix 7: Email from KGP Co-ordinator asking others to stop attempts to "pressurise" KGP with emails and messages.

From: Ryan Coley [mailto:ryan.coley@live.co.uk]
Sent: 03 November 2016 09:49
To: Andree Frieze <andree_frieze@yahoo.co.uk>; Judy Maciejowska <judymaciejowska@gmail.com>; Richard Bennett <richardbennettuk@icloud.com>; LUCAS Caroline (2nd Mailbox) <clucasmedia@parliament.uk>; Jonathan Bartley <jonathan.bartley@greenparty.org.uk>; Cami Ouzerdine <cami.ouzerdine@greenparty.org.uk>; Clare Keogh <cskeogh@gmail.com>; Kieron Merrett <gp@kieronam.net>; Stephen P. Smith <pagan@gn.apc.org>
Subject: Re: Fw: Richmond Park BE

Hi all,
Kingston are meeting to decide what to do tonight.
Ideally we would need some sort of deal in place tonight to help build confidence in this process that has now been set in motion. If there isn't a deal then it will be harder for Kingston to put its faith in the Lib Dems especially after us viewing the comments being made both internally in the Greens and externally especially in Lib Dem circles where they are making jokes about us 'learning from Witney'.
I appreciate that this is a tense situation but Kingston will be making a decision tonight and would appreciate only being contacted with concrete step forwards on the deal being offered. I have received several emails and message from people and attempting to pressurise Kingston is not helping the situation.
Again I know securing some sort of agreement with the Lib dems before the end of Kingstons meeting tonight will be difficult for you to achieve but hope enough progress can be made to alleviate some of our concerns.
Many thanks
Ryan
Get Outlook for Android

Appendix 8: Email illustrating the extent of the commitment from the Kingston Liberal Democrats to open talks about 2018 local elections in Kingston.

From: Liz Green <lizshard@hotmail.com>
To: Andree Frieze <andree_frieze@yahoo.co.uk>; Dave Ryder-Mills <d.rydermills@btopenworld.com>
Sent: Thursday, 3 November 2016, 18:54
Subject: Lib Dems and Greens

Hi Andree

Thank you for your email earlier today. I have switched to my personal email as it is more appropriate than the council one.

My personal view is that local Kingston Lib Dems and Greens should meet to discuss smart targeting for the 2018 local council elections. I cannot give guarentees on wards or candidates, but i would be happy to look at how we work together to ensure the mutual desire that the Conservatives do not retain control of RBK at the 2018 elections. I have to add that the Liberal Democrat aim will be to hold a majority control of the council, post election, but that does not mean that smarting targeting of wards and resources could not play a substantial part in that.

With the timescales given before Kingston Green Party decide this evening on if to field a decision in the RP byelection, i cannot give more of a commitment than that we will have those discussions and i am personally keen to see these working to mutual benefit.

Regards

Liz