

PICKLES: ROTHERHAM COUNCIL CHARACTERISED BY 'INSTITUTIONALISED POLITICAL CORRECTNESS'

DONNA RACHEL EDMUNDS | 4 Feb 2015

Eric Pickles has announced his intention to send a team of five commissioners into Rotherham Borough Council to completely take over the executive functions of the council, following the publication of a report which found the council to be “directionless” and suffering from “institutionalised political correctness”. The council will also be ordered to hold new member elections in 2016.

Last August, the Jay report commissioned by Rotherham Council to investigate child sexual exploitation within Rotherham was published. It found that 1,400 vulnerable children had been groomed, trafficked, raped, and in a few cases even murdered at the hands of mostly men from the Pakistani community.

In her report, Jay noted: “It is hard to describe the appalling nature of the abuse that child victims suffered. They were raped by multiple perpetrators, trafficked to other towns and cities in the north of England, abducted, beaten, and intimidated. There were examples of children who had been doused in petrol and threatened with being set alight, threatened with guns, made to witness brutally violent rapes and threatened they would be next if they told anyone. Girls as young as 11 were raped by large numbers of male perpetrators.”

In response to the Jay report, Communities and Local Government Secretary Eric Pickles commissioned an independent report into whether Rotherham Council was fit for purpose, led by Louise Casey. That report has today been published.

According to Casey, she found a council “in denial. They denied that there had been a problem, or if there had been, that it was as big as was said. If there was a problem they certainly were not told – it was someone else’s job. They were no worse than anyone else. They had won awards. The media were out to get them.”

The conclusion she therefore reached is that Rotherham Borough Council is “not fit for purpose,” and had failed to “accept, understand and combat the issue of Child Sexual Exploitation (CSE), resulting in a lack of support for victims and insufficient action against known perpetrators.”

This afternoon, Pickles told the Commons that the report “presents a disturbing picture of a council failing in it’s duty to protect vulnerable children and young people from harm. It reveals the councils failure of past and present to accept, understand and, combat the crime of child sexual exploitation.

“It concludes that this culture of denial is intrinsic and has resulted in a lack of support for victims and a lack of action against known perpetrators. It also confirms a complete failure of political and officer leadership in Rotherham.”

He continued “There is a pervading culture of bullying, sexism, suppression, and misplaced political correctness which has cemented the council’s failures. Members and officers lack the confidence to tackle difficult issues for fear of being seen as racist or upsetting community cohesion.”

And he said that the report led him to conclude that “the council is currently incapable of tackling it’s weaknesses without substantial intervention.”

In response, Pickles is planning to send a team of five commissioners in to take over all the functions of the council leadership. The team will consist of a lead commissioner, a managing director, a children’s commissioner appointed by the education secretary Nicky Morgan, and two further commissioners to support their colleagues work. Pickles has written to the council inviting them to make representations before the plan is put into action.

Pickles stressed that the functions of the taxi licensing board were also to be managed by the commissioners, following specific failings in this area being uncovered by the Casey report, noting that “concern around taxis remains pervasive in the town.”

The Jay report revealed that concern had been raised about taxis in Rotherham as early as the 1990s: “Residential unit heads met in the 90s to discuss taxis collecting girls, school heads in early 2000s reported

taxi picking girls up to provide oral sex in the lunch break,” Jay said.

Despite this, Casey found there to be complete denial within the Council of the role played by taxi drivers in the abuse. “In interview, the Director of Housing and Neighbourhood Services, who is responsible for the licensing service, expressed annoyance at the impact the Jay report had had on the Council and remained adamant that the four CSE-related revocations of licences quoted by Professor Jay represented the full extent of taxi driver involvement in CSE in Rotherham,” she reported, also noting that he attempted to allocate any blame elsewhere.

In addition, Pickles announced that he would be bringing an end to “taxpayer reward for failure” by “stopping special allowances for councillors with cabinet functions” following revelations within the Casey report that the leader of the council had been appointing on average three “cabinet advisors” for each Cabinet role within the council, all of whom received an extra allowance. She noted that the standard allowance for members was already “on the generous side”.

It is clear that the political leadership is unable to hold officers to account, and there is an inability by all members to properly represent the interests of local people”, Pickles said, before announcing that new elections to the council would take place in 2016.

<http://www.breitbart.com/london/2015/02/04/pickles-rotherham-council-characterised-by-institutionalised-political-correctness/>