

THE CABINET
3rd September, 2014

Present:- Councillor Lakin (in the Chair); Councillors Beck, Doyle, Hussain, McNeely, Rushforth, Smith and Wyatt.

Also in attendance Councillor Whelbourn (Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board), Councillors Clark, Cowles, Ellis, Finnie, Parker, Reynolds, Sims, Steele, Turner, C. Vines and M. Vines.

C39 INTRODUCTION

The Chairman welcomed everyone present to the meeting and reported that it was with a deep sense of regret that the Cabinet were to discuss how in the past the Council badly let down the young people and families it was supposed to protect.

The failings identified in the Alexis Jay report were unacceptable and inexcusable and the public were rightly outraged, as were the Council as to its findings, both in the scale of the horrific abuse and the significant failings of this Council and other agencies to help those we were here to protect.

The pain and devastation that these young people and their families have suffered was inexcusable and no apology would take this away and the Council were deeply sorry.

The report indicated that services today were better and were now fit for purpose and significantly improved, but this offered little comfort to those who were badly let down in the past.

Public confidence in services had been shaken and the Council was now determined to win it back by actions.

The Centre for Public Scrutiny had been asked to provide independent advice and support to the scrutiny work so the Council could make sure it worked as it should, to which they had agreed.

The Local Government Association had also been asked to provide independent advice and support to look at how the Council could make the big changes that were needed. This would include advice on Human Resources matters, to which they had agreed.

The Council had not stood still and was already changing and this time next year the Council would look very different.

As a Council and a community the survivors of child sexual exploitation of the past were owed nothing less than the pledge that everything would be done to better protect young people in the future.

For these reasons it was important that today's discussion was as open as possible.

A variation to the Council's Standing Orders and Executive Procedure Rules was moved in order to allow for the filming of the Cabinet meeting and that the extension of the time allowed for members of the public to be extended from twenty minutes to thirty minutes and to remove the restriction on asking questions about individual employment issues in order to be as open and transparent as possible.

Today's meeting would consider two main items, which the Chief Executive was presenting:-

1. The Alexis Jay report in to cases of historical child sexual abuse in Rotherham.
2. The Chief Executive's response to the report and his recommendations to the Cabinet, which included an action plan setting out immediate action for further improvement.

Resolved:- (1) That a variation to the Standing Orders to allow for filming in the Council Chamber be approved.

(2) That the time allowed for members of the public to ask questions be extended from twenty to thirty minutes and for the restriction on the content of the questions relating to individual employment issues be waived.

C40 QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

(1) A member of the public referred to Page 110 of the Jay report, which explained in detail the seminar that was held in 2005, which thirty out of sixty three Elected Members attended, on the extent of child sexual exploitation, the people involved how could this Cabinet say that anyone there and on the Council at the time did not know that child sexual exploitation in Rotherham was happening?

The Cabinet Member for Finance, confirmed that he was aware that child sexual exploitation was happening, especially from the seminar that took place. The seminar also covered the issue of this being a national problem and a specific issue in Rotherham. This was not considered as large a scale problem was later identified.

At the end of the seminar presenting officers confirmed that steps were being taken to deal with the issues and that the Police were watching particular areas and requested specifically that the information be treated as confidential. Any information taken from this could disrupt enquires as

this was an incredibly difficult area of work in obtaining convictions and that gathering evidence could be prejudiced.

The Jay Report reflected a lack of trust that people in all agencies were doing their jobs properly. At the time there were no reasons to suspect that this was the case. The reassurance was not sufficient and throughout the report areas of failings around Rotherham could be identified.

In a supplementary question the member of the public asked why the relevant Scrutiny Panel did not scrutinise what was happening to ensure that the procedures in place were being done properly. It was not enough to say that the matters were confidential as the children of this borough were at risk, being raped, being abused and to say that as a Councillor you were not allowed to say anything or would not say anything was unacceptable.

The Chairman advised that those Elected Members, who were not Cabinet Members, who wished to speak would get another opportunity to ask questions.

(2) A member of the public claimed this was just another example of the bullying that was taking place within the Council in not allowing people to speak (namely other Councillors) because people were unable to express their opinion. The public were very angry and did not know why all the Councillors had not resigned.

The Chairman said it was not an issue of bullying, but a case of sticking to the Council's Constitution and the rules and procedures. Other Councillors would have the same opportunities to ask questions on the report in another forum. The questions today were from members of the public.

(3) A member of the public wished to illustrate how the Members were conducting themselves over a number of years. He referred to the attitude of Shaun Wright, which was of arrogance and contempt and not becoming of any representative of the public. Mr. Wright was a Councillor for fourteen years and development of this characteristic came from the Council Chamber. It was the Chamber that was responsible to the Rotherham public and the attitude of individual Elected Members. The member of the public had been a former Councillor for eight years and had been fully aware of the problems.

The member of the public was challenged by other members of the public about his knowledge around child sexual exploitation.

The member of the public referred to three examples, which he wished to illustrate as to what kind of actions took place in the Chamber and went into one particular case in detail. He wished to make the point that ninety-seven letters had passed between himself and the Council who had still

failed to furnish him with a telephone number to the lady to whom he referred. Little action had been taken by the Council and the lady in question eventually went to the media for action.

He asked should this Council not stand down and resign and let the public re-elect a new Council.

(4) A member of the public asked about the taxi firms in Rotherham and the children who were currently being cared for by Social Services and being transported by taxi to and from school paid for by the Council. Why were the taxi journeys not timed and monitored to take children to and from school as children were taken to Manchester. Children were returning back at 10.00 p.m. at night in school uniforms and why was this not being questioned?

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services would like to see evidence where this practice was happening. She was not aware of this personally and any information shared would be checked through the licensing activity to ensure this was dealt with robustly to tackle this head on.

In a supplementary question the member of the public asked if the taxi firms would be looked into.

The Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services confirmed that the Council had very robust procedures in place with contracts for taxi companies and also had safeguarding checks to ensure the people were appropriate and appropriately training. Any information or allegations against people behaving inappropriately were investigated and licenses suspended and referred to the Licensing Board so any information was welcomed.

In a supplementary question the member of the public asked in light of the Jay Report how many spot checks had been made on taxi firms and why were checks not made to ensure the young girls arrived to school on time and action taken if they were not.

The Strategic Director of Environment and Development Services confirmed she was not aware of any specific issues. Regular checks were made on the taxi operators and escorts and also on the standard and quality of vehicles. The Enforcement Officer in place would ensure that as far as able people accord with the standards. If evidence was submitted from the public or other organisations then quick and robust action would take place as the protection of young people was the highest priority.

The member of the public reiterated her concerns that matters had been reported to the Police and a blind eye had been turned. The people in the care homes should be asking questions about the whereabouts of these young people and action taken. All this information had just been swept under the carpet.

The Chairman asked for any evidence to be passed on after the meeting and this would be dealt with.

(5) A member of the public asked what the Children and Young People's Scrutiny Panel scrutinised?

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board confirmed that reports had been presented, but could not identify any actions or recommendations arising from the reports specifically. He did offer to look back at the reports submitted and their recommendations because clearly if the reports were not of a quality or standard that Members could understand or take action from them, then action would have been taken.

In a supplementary question, the member of the public asked why after all these years nothing had come from that Scrutiny Panel so it should be disbanded totally.

The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board welcomed the point made, but pointed out that Members of that particular Scrutiny Panel could only act on the information that they had been presented. Information identified now would indicate that Members were not made sufficiently aware of the true picture.

(6) A member of the public referred to the report where Section 8.4 identified the failings as being of an ethnic issue. Section 8.13 stated that nationally, the largest group of offenders came from the white background, whilst Section 8.14 went on to state in Rotherham the largest group was from an Asian background, going on to point out the Pakistani heritage. At no point did the true fact that they were of the Muslim region come out. Asian implied a race and camouflaged the truth. Why was this covered up and why were the cases that have been shelved almost exclusively specifying Muslim offenders, and also of larger groups per case, only actually pursuing offenders of predominantly white backgrounds and single offenders, allowing the groups to continue offending many more times?

The Chief Executive pointed out that the report from Professor Jay looked at evidence and confidential information and presented her conclusions. The conclusions in the report based on evidence that nationally the widest group of offenders relating to sexual exploitation were white males. The next largest group were Asian males. In the context of this particular report and how it related to Rotherham Professor Jay indicated a disproportionate amount of child sexual exploitation in Rotherham which

she described as coming from Pakistani heritage and the offender base that was in relation to Rotherham

In a supplementary question the member of the public asked why were there no Pakistani people present at the meeting to try to explain what had happened?

The Chief Executive explained that today's was a public meeting and everyone was welcome to attend.

(7) A member of the public asked why there had only been seven arrests so far?

The Chief Executive pointed out the responsibility for the criminal justice system lay with other agencies and everyone was of the same opinion that the perpetrators should be brought to justice. The Council had written to the Chief Constable in the past and asked for assurances that historic crimes of sexual exploitation were thoroughly investigated and there were a number of live criminal investigations occurring at the moment relating to past crimes and it was hoped that these would be thorough and painstaking resulting in charges and subsequently prosecutions.

In a supplementary question the member of the public asked if the Councillors wages were really worth and asked that the Members resign.

(8) A member of the public asked was it a fact that the Councillors were told not to reveal information after the seminar in 2005 to protect the professional services of Rotherham rather than going public?

The Cabinet Member for Finance confirmed that the reason for not revealing information after the seminar was to prevent any alert to perpetrators that could have spoilt those enquiries. It was not about protecting professional services.

In a supplementary question the member of the public asked did all the Councillors who were present at the seminar have a moral responsibility to their silence and it was noted that some of the Councillors who were at that seminar were not in attendance today.

The Cabinet Member for Finance acknowledged that reading the report the scale of the abuse was devastating and had Elected Members known about the true scale of the abuse and the outcomes, then of course could look back and question whether this was the right thing to do. The Councillors acted on the advice of what was considered the best interests. Certain actions arose from the seminar, which was historic and part of a major jigsaw which went on to create the Safeguarding Board, new service department and the too few prosecutions. The report had pulled together part of that jigsaw and acknowledged that part of the political management was also part of the jigsaw. There were many aspects to

this report and Rotherham by highlighting this report had stood up to alert the nation to a deep and insidious problem.

(9) A member of the public asked for clarification as to the detail highlighted in paragraph 8.19, particularly the words “manipulation of cultural norms”

The Chief Executive referred to Professor Jay’s report and her points about the greater values placed on the male and female in certain relationships when a more balanced relationship was what was needed.

(10) A member of the public asked why all the Councillors and officers present were not explaining why the reputation of Rotherham had been damaged along with the young girls’ lives and why this had been allowed to go on for so long?

The Council’s Legal Officer explained how the Executive Procedure Rules governed the way in which this meeting was conducted. Questions had been asked by members of the public and answered by relevant officers and Elected Members.

(11) A member of the public asked if any action was to be taken against all the Councillors who did know about what was going and whether they thought more about their salaries than what was happening to the girls?

The Chairman explained that part of the Chief Executive’s report was about referring the actions of Councillors to the relevant Group Whip of a particular political party, which he would be doing. The Labour Party also suspended four Elected Members yesterday and there were others under investigation.

(12) A member of the public asked find why it had taken so long for the report by Professor Jay, commissioned by the Chief Executive, for action to be taken when three other reports had already been produced?

The Chairman clarified that the Chief Executive was asked to commission an independent report at the request of the former Leader of the Council.

C41 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest to report.

C42 INDEPENDENT ENQUIRY INTO CHILD SEXUAL EXPLOITATION IN ROTHERHAM - 1997-2013

Consideration was given to the report presented by Martin Kimber, Chief Executive, following the publication of the Alexis Jay independent report into historic cases of child sexual exploitation.

The Council had already apologised that it had previously let young people and their families down. Some of the Council's previous services were simply not good enough.

The report did not make comfortable reading. There were not many people who would feel anything other than absolute dismay at the awful abuse suffered by some of the young people in the past. The report is clear, young people were let down by the Council and other agencies who were there to protect them. More should have done more to protect them from the most damaging form of abuse imaginable. The report contained some historic case studies that anyone involved in protecting young people past or present could not help but find deeply distressing. One can only admire the bravery of the people who have helped by recounting the most horrific period of their lives, in order to ensure a better response from agencies in the future.

The survivors of child sexual exploitation's long wait to have their voices heard, for their stories to be believed and for all of the events that they suffered had now succeeded. The Council owed the survivors nothing less than the pledge that everything would be done to better protect young people in the future and to take immediate steps laid down in the report to make this happen.

The recommendations within the report were accepted in their entirety and action would be taken to make the recommendations were implemented promptly.

The Council was determined to ensure that the people that committed the vile criminal acts were brought to justice and steps had already been taken to ensure this action was taken.

The report provided with an extremely distressing narrative of what went wrong in Rotherham and the reasons why. The details were set out in the Independent Inquiry and they were set out within the report submitted in response.

A series of historic failings in the Council and other agencies amounted to a series of missed opportunities to understand and tackle child sexual exploitation dating back to 2002 and, therefore, the missed opportunities prevented the Council from ensuring that there were far fewer victims that the report indicated.

Given the nature of the failings there was a desire for those at fault to be held to account and the employment approach being taken was explained further along with the recommendations and the response to other agencies.

The Council took seriously its responsibility as an employer, would initiative approach action where evidence was available to support this.

Independent legal advice had now been sought on two occasions to assist the Council in relation to employment matters and to assist in any appropriate courses of action. In common with other agencies the only information to form judgement was the report, case studies, case files and confidential reporting arrangements. In respect of current employees of the Council the approach must be made in accordance with the relevant codes and procedures.

A list of individuals, currently employed by the Council, involved in child protection had been shared with the report author who confirmed that in all cases no adverse comments made in the course of the inquiry either through interview, written submissions or case interviews that would warrant investigation. One individual had been asked further relevant questions as to their knowledge about child sexual exploitation issues. In addition, preliminary discussions were to take place with one further employee, to be concluded as swiftly as possible, and may or may not lead to further action.

The Jay Report was publically available and those employers of employees no longer employed by the Council could have the opportunity to consider further action. The report contained considerable information where general conclusions had been drawn and it was not possible to consider a professional capacity referral for employees past or present to any of the relevant professional bodies.

The concept of responsibility and accountability were important to the Council. Information would be kept under review. The Council was proactively looking at information sources and if anything became available it would be promptly and thoroughly considered. If it indicated malpractice or misconduct in respect of any current employees the Council would take appropriate action.

Other agencies were also named in the report who had a contributory role in the failure of service provision. The report also refers to the role of the Police and the report had been formally referred to the Chief Constable for his consideration. He had already made some announcements on his intended actions.

Young people and families who needed help who did not come forward because they do not think they would be believe were re-assured that the services were fit for purpose and anyone that needed help would be provided with any assistance.

The Jay Report indicated that the services were stronger today, but this offered little comfort to the victims of the past. Sadly this did not mean that young people in Rotherham would never be subject to sexual exploitation.

The multi-agency working and prevention strategies were stronger today and better developed. It was hoped that this would reassure young people and their families that if help and protection was required, they would be listened to, believed and be given the support needed.

This awful crime happened in each and every town and city and there continued to be many predators intent on harming young people. If this crime was not sought out it would remain deeply hidden. The Council wanted those with criminal intent to know that the whole of Rotherham, citizens, agencies and parents intended to tackle child sexual exploitation with vigour.

It was hoped that the report would contribute to the national debate and national learning about child sexual exploitation and to play its part in all that it could in preventing these vile acts.

The strength of the community must be shown to actively marshal all efforts to ensure that young people were as safe as they could be. This horrific form of abuse was carried out by criminals and attention must be focused on them with a strong and united message that together they would be found and referred them to the Police. This Council had already asked the Police to reassure it that it was doing everything it could to bring perpetrators of past crimes to justice. It was expected that the criminal justice system would punish these perpetrators and ensure that justice was provided to the young people and their families.

The community could only be effective by working together and dealing with the horrendous crime was not something a single agency could deal with alone and required the collective efforts of everyone. Assurance was given that where information came forward it would be looked promptly, vigorously and appropriate action taken.

The Chairman invited Cabinet Members to ask questions on the report.

- The Cabinet Member for Business Growth and Regeneration expressed his shock at the details contained in the Jay Report and suggested that the Council must ensure that no corner went unchecked or stone unturned to provide justice to the victims nor must there be no let-up in the pursuit of the wrong doers of the past and of the perpetrators of child sexual exploitation.

In terms of the Rotherham brand and its reputation it was noted that inward investment was already being affected by some companies re-evaluating their decisions due to the damage done by the outcome of the report.

The role of Licensing had been strengthened, which was reflected in the report, but not enough reassurance was provided to convince that enough had been done. It was, therefore, suggested that the Licensing Board be asked to carry out a comprehensive review of

their processes and procedures to ensure that the issues highlighted in the report around the role of taxi drivers could be prevented in the future.

The Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Services confirmed that the Jay Report did identify licensing issues, but indicated that the processes in place were robust. It was noted that there had been six cases reported to the Licensing in the last seven years relating to the welfare of children and those drivers had been immediately suspended and no longer working in Rotherham.

All the taxi drivers in Rotherham (over 800) have an enhanced disclosure and barring reference check completed and due to this being a notifiable occupation any concerns relating to taxi drivers by the Police were immediately referred to the Licensing Section. The relationship between the Licensing and Safeguarding Services had been strengthened and shared meetings did take place highlighting areas of any concern and relevant officers had attended specific meetings. More could be done and further work was taking place on improved enhanced standards in relation to taxi licensing in respect of the welfare of passengers. If the Licensing Board wished to look at this in further detail the service would welcome the opportunity for further scrutiny.

- The Cabinet Member for Business Growth and Regeneration welcomed the reassurance given and formally asked that the Licensing Board look into this in more detail in the form of a further recommendation.
- The Cabinet Member for Business Growth and Regeneration made reference to the current demand on resources and with the potential for more victims to come forward and in moving forward asked were the necessary resources available to officers for them to carry out that increase in demand.

The Chief Executive confirmed that this was a top priority for the Council and that there was a series of recommendations which referred to resourcing and work was taking place with partners to increase the resource base. Propositions would be coming forward shortly, which would include Health partners for long term therapeutic needs relating to past and future victims.

The findings from the Jay Report would also be fed into the budget setting process and need would be assessed and provision provided.

- The Cabinet Member for Communities and Cohesion referred to the clear and concise report. He referred to the childhoods stolen by the perpetrators of crime, which were not only vile and evil, but who lived amongst the communities of Rotherham. He believed everyone

should be committed to root out the evil and those people who had committed those heinous crimes. Those people that used ethnic origin to not prosecute should be held to account and should never be used as an excuse. It did not matter which community or town they lived in if a crime was committed then they should be held to account. This was where the young people of this town had been let down because individuals had acted on decision that they believed to be right. It was inappropriate to suggest that certain crimes were acceptable and this should be happening in the criminal justice system. This kind of practice should not be allowed to happen again. Information to officers across front line services should be provided to ensure they were in better positions to identify where sexual exploitation was occurring.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services gave assurances that front line staff were trained to identify where crimes were being committed and those involved reported to the Police to be brought to justice.

- The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care pointed out that the report had been commissioned because it was felt that the child's voice was not being heard. What the report had now done had given other young people the confidence to come forward and twelve other young people had done just that.

The report had highlighted gaps in services for post abuse support and partners in Health and other areas had been asked for their response and how they could help in this process.

The Strategic Director for Children and Young People's Services highlighted the processes and procedures that were in place to support those affected by this abuse and the services available by both the Council and Health Trusts.

Additional capacity was being considered with partner agencies and extra resources provided for those who had been the victims of abuse. However, meeting the needs had been identified as a gap and the services were working hard to ensure that appropriate resources were available.

The Cabinet Member for Finance also referred to sexual abuse and its definition regardless of ethnic origin and what role Health had had. As a former Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board it was stressed that children's services feature in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services confirmed that a Health Worker position had been established in the Child Sexual Exploitation Team who provided effective links directly into mainstream health services. How other services could be positioned to best meet the needs of victims was welcomed further.

- The Cabinet Member for Education and Public Health asked how schools and staff were made aware of child sexual exploitation as they were frontline workers, but asked if there were any gaps or barriers to providing that service within schools, if awareness training was up-to-date and what schools were doing to work with support staff to spot the signs of child sexual exploitation.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services confirmed that all secondary schools were actively engaged with the child sexual exploitation programme including all academies also pupil referral units and children's homes. Assurance was given about robust engagement and the excellent child sexual exploitation training module that was available to all schools for training safeguarding leads and governors.

- The Cabinet Member for Finance asked about the transfer of information from a lower to a higher level staff, as highlighted in the report, along with some concerns about communication channels between agencies and departments and asked about the Council's Whistleblowing Policy and how much this had been publicised to staff and whether there were any differences in the reports from the past to the present.

The Chief Executive confirmed that an important part of any organisation's governance arrangements was its Whistleblowing Policy, which was very strong and well used. Incidents received were immediately referred onto the Internal Audit Team for investigation and where additional help was required this was referred on to the External Auditors. Referrals were taken very seriously and acted upon appropriately. However, an organisation with an effective management structure did not have the need for a Whistleblowing Policy as there were many opportunities and arrangements for concerns to be shared and discussed.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services added assurance to frontline practice and referred to the Dispute Resolution Process and outlined how this worked.

- The Cabinet Member for Planning, Highways and Street Scene Services referred to the "Green" status of Recommendation 1 in the action plan, but references in the Jay report referred to a high number of cases not having a risk assessment in place. Clarification was sought on the "Green" status.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services referred to the work around risk assessments, which was flagged up in the Jay Report. A great deal of work had already been carried out, but there was further work still to be done. All cases had a risk assessment in place and were of a reasonable quality, which would continue to be improved. There was evidence through auditing work that good professional judgement was evident, but the risk assessment as a tool was not always present.

- The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Adult Services referred to the report highlighting the need to engage with women and children from minority ethnic communities. The action plan indicated that work takes place with mosques and madrassas and asked if this was sufficient to meet target groups, particularly as this was critical of traditional routes of engagement that were not working at this moment in time.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services said work had started with this recommendation and meetings had already commenced with the voluntary and community sector Child Sexual Exploitation Forum to discuss this and other issues and how best to engage. Work would also commence with colleagues in Community Engagement on how best to approach community groups of women. Funding had also been secured from the Safer Rotherham Partnership for the voluntary and community sector Child Sexual Exploitation Forum to do some awareness raising and they had been asked to engage with community groups in different settings.

The Chairman also asked about the engagement of ethnic minority groups, which he himself had raised at the Rotherham Safeguarding Board, and asked if this was the same kind of work as indicated above, which was confirmed by the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services. Other areas of work were also highlighted which would commence in October and evaluations would be available about impact hopefully by Christmas.

The Chairman was aware that until work commenced in addressing some of the cultural norms in some societies, the risk of sexual exploitation would never go away and asked if the Gold Group were looking to consult with communities.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services confirmed that this was a valid report about the manipulation of cultural norms and there were some issues around this, which was why Professor Jay was particularly recommending that the Council engage with women who, for a variety of reasons, may not get their voices heard as this was an area that was under reporting, with

particular emphasis of minority ethnic groups and that they be reassured that they would receive the necessary support should they wish to make any such disclosures.

The Chairman also referred to the issues of domestic violence within the Asian community and Asian females not feeling safe and asked what actions were being put in place to ensure that the sort of issues raised in the report did not happen in Rotherham.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services could not categorically say that these matters would not happen again as there were people in society who were controlling and coercing males and females in abusive relationships. Work was taking place with the Domestic Violence Community Group and a report was to be presented to Cabinet in the next month or so with a view to signing up to the White Ribbon Campaign, which would take a stand against violence against women. The Council were also working alongside Apna Haq who were an organisation supporting those suffering from domestic abusive from the black and minority ethnic community.

The Chairman also asked about the rising population of the Roma community and asked for an update on work being carried out within that community.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services provided information on the work taking place within the Roma community and the specific issues relating to child sexual exploitation as there were differences in law between the indigenous country where the age of consent was much lower than in England. Women and young girls were being supported through various pieces of work to enable them to understand what their rights were.

- The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care referred to the different awareness raising through various community groups and pointed out that perpetrators worked in secrecy to try to draw young people away from their support networks and asked how those young people could continue to be reached and supported?

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services confirmed that work was taking place with women and young girls so that they could identify grooming behaviours. The work taking place in schools was so important to try and identify and support those individuals showing signs of sexual exploitation, which was why training was so important to recognise the vulnerabilities..

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care asked if a child or young person was identified as being at risk what measures could be taken to prevent any incidents escalating to abuse.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services referred to the ranges of support that were available with examples from within a school setting to ensure that a package of support was available for that young person following assessment of risk and professional judgement.

The Cabinet Member for Finance also referred the national strategy for organised criminal gangs, which was being shared within Rotherham, and the mobile integrated youth support service which was recognised to reach the different areas to ensure safety.

- The Cabinet Member for Neighbourhoods and Adult Services also asked about the support that was available for parents when they disbelieved either a young person or a person in authority in order for them to be fully supported.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services confirmed support networks were available for parents as part of the support from the Child Sexual Exploitation Team for family support, through GROW and Barnardos. The Safeguarding Board's website also provided a great deal of advice should a parent be concerned, which had been revised and relaunched recently, bolstered also with the voluntary and community sector Child Sexual Exploitation Forum, work in schools and other materials available.

- The Chairman referred to the report which indicated a number of areas where the Council had failed around hearing the voice of young men, failing in the commissioning of services in the past for victims and in the placing of victims away from Rotherham and the support for victims not being good. Could the Cabinet be assured that the issues raised in the Jay Report and the systems for dealing with any victim that may come forward were in place?

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services referred to the current caseloads which included a small number of young men and the work and support currently taking place and gave an example of a recent operation in Sheffield which had predominately focused on young men, some of whom were from Rotherham. Advice had been sought from the National Working Group, supplemented by a number of agencies who supported young men. The Integrated Youth Support Service were also key to this work and had packages of support in place for vulnerable young men.

In terms of the commissioning of placements there had been concerns about this in the past and work was taking place with the Commissioning Team and the relevant Social Workers to make sure robust arrangements were in place for any child placed out of authority. The White Rose Framework Agreement would ensure that

young people were placed in appropriate settings which best met their needs and the risks they were presenting.

In terms of support for victims a good working relationship existed with the Sexual Assault Referral Unit at the hospital who did work in confidence with victims and survivors to ensure they received the report they needed.

The Chairman asked if those victims came forward today was there support available for them here and now?

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services confirmed that this support was available for all victims and urged anyone to come forward so that they could access therapeutic support to assist them in moving forward and having a fulfilling life.

- The Chairman asked about the absent voice which was the Police and asked if the Council could be assured that they were doing everything to track these people down and bring them to justice and what action could be taken if they were not?

The Chief Executive echoed the view across Rotherham that the perpetrators of abuse should be brought to justice for the vile crimes committed. South Yorkshire Police already had ongoing lengthy investigations in relation to allegations made by victims stretching back many years. The recommendations in the report could be strengthened to request formal assurance from the Chief Constable that this was the case. During 2013 assurance was requested that all historic case files had been reviewed and that the Police were doing everything they could to bring perpetrators to justice.

The Cabinet Member for Communities and Cohesion welcomed the opportunity to strengthen the recommendations as it was not just the perpetrators of the crimes, but the facilitators that needed to be investigated and the legality of reopening cases. The confidence of the community could only be rebuilt if the public could start to see justice, whilst ensuring that resources were available with a strong assurance from the Police that action would be taken.

The Chairman pointed out that the Police and Crime Commissioner had also asked the Crime Prosecutor to do some work on cases that went to court that were never progressed. The outcome of this review had never been received and the Council needed the assurances that the Crown Prosecution Services were looking at historic cases along with the Police and in ensuring that nothing had been missed. This should be included as a further recommendation from this meeting.

- The Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board referred to Page 7 of the report and missed opportunities and asked if the three reports ever went to any Elected Member and if so who and when. Linked to this Paragraph 8.12 would indicate that the wider body of Elected Members may not have seen those reports. Reference was also made to the action plan primarily Recommendation 3 and whether the minutes of the Corporate Parenting Board could be presented to the relevant Scrutiny Panel for monitoring. In terms of Recommendation 7 it referred to this being regularly reviewed and it was asked by who. Reference was also made to Recommendation 12 and the creation of a community engagement plan, which may have also been developed some time ago and it was suggested that there be some scrutiny involvement to develop this plan, which should be meaningful and effective. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board should be given the opportunity to scrutinise the report further to safeguard reassurances.

The Chief Executive confirmed that it would appear that reference to the circulation of reports may have been directed at middle managers and may not have gone any further. In the context about challenge one of the recommendations was to ensure that the report be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board with the expectation at that Board meeting that Scrutiny would set out its future requirements for scrutinising in detail matters arising from the report.

The Chairman confirmed that the past scrutiny function had been heavily criticised in the report and in order for the Council to be seen to taking action the Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board should seek to bring in independent scrutiny to look at this. The Centre for Public Scrutiny had already been contacted to see how they could support the Council in doing this, which they had agreed to do.

The Chairman took on board comments made by members of the public about the position in which questions on the report could be asked and used his discretion to grant other Elected Members present at the meeting the privilege to ask a question.

- Councillor Parker referred to the Members who attended the seminar in 2005 and the information shared today which indicated that following that meeting it was known that sexual exploitation was taking place and this was also referred to in the report. Questions were raised as to whether any Councillor who was aware of specific information following that seminar, but advised to ensure this remained confidential, at a later date raise concern, followed up on information or asked questions and if they had not, why not. This was negligence on their role as a Councillor and they should be subject to a charge of misconduct in public offence.

The Chief Executive was unable to respond to this question as he was not in his present position at that time.

In a supplementary question Councillor Parker pointed out that any further meetings on this issue should have been minuted with documentation in place.

- Councillor Turner referred to awards won by the Children and Young People's Directorate and believed that information that would have deterred that decision would have been suppressed.

The Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services was unable to recollect the criteria for the award.

- Councillor C. Vines referred to the two Elected Members who were also in position in 2005 and explained why he himself was unable to attend the seminar, but confirmed that his party colleague had. His party colleague had taken his concerns to the former Leader of the Council and, as indicated in the report, told to keep the matters confidential.

Reference was also made to the Corporate Parenting Panel agenda papers which, having been fully restricted had now been made public.

Having explained the position those Councillors present at that seminar were requested to do the same.

Councillor Ellis confirmed she indeed was one of those Councillors who had attended the seminar in 2005 and explained her position in that Members were advised to keep information confidential in order to not jeopardise the Police investigations taking place at that time. With hindsight matters would have been dealt with differently had the full extent of the scale of sexual exploitation been known and the information shared at that seminar was welcomed.

It was right and proper that the report had been commissioned to understand what went wrong and to ensure that this was put right now. The report identified some good working practices and the Council was in a better position to be able to protect the vulnerable as much as it could.

Having listened to the concerns shared in the Council Chamber it was important that help and support be provided for the victims and the mistakes made in the past put right. Scrutiny was important and the Council needed to be united to ensure that mistakes never happened again and it was proper that the public had the opportunity today to raise their concerns.

Councillor Wyatt reiterated his position that he had not wished to jeopardise complex Police investigations and took cognisance of those people who requested that the information be kept confidential. In looking back at his own portfolio of work it was possible to see where actions had been influenced by the information shared to ensure the protection of children. Acknowledgement was given to the political management overall and with hindsight had people known about the scale of the abuse would have done things differently. Adequate reassurance was not sufficient and inspections undertaken in Rotherham in the past had indicated that children in Rotherham were safe.

- Councillor Cowles referred to the extraordinary times and the need for extraordinary resolutions and in achieving this an extraordinary person was required. Inward investment into the town was now being affected by the position the Council was in and only by removing the people involved now would the Council be in a position to move forward.

The Chairman gave his assurance that the issue of discipline would be dealt with by the Chief Executive, which had been referred to previously and that matters relating to past and present employees be followed up.

In a supplementary question Councillor Cowles confirmed that this was not merely for employees, but also Elected Members. Would those Councillors who were not up for election in 2015 go back out to the electorate to seek re-election as they no longer had the support of the people in Rotherham.

- Councillor Reynolds referred to the passing of time and the seminar held nine years ago and asked why no Councillors had spoken out against the abuse during this period or asked for progress reports.

The Chief Executive was unable to comment on the actions of Members and was only able to comment on the report as presented.

The Chairman confirmed that actions were being taken to follow up on the issues raised.

In a supplementary question Councillor Reynolds referred to the current Police and Crime Commissioner, who was the former Cabinet Member responsible for children's services, and his refusal to resign from his position on the basis that there was collective responsibility for the failings. Given this rationale were all Councillors who had this collective responsibility going to resign?

The Chairman confirmed that there was a collective responsibility on all Members of the Council.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care provided insight into the format and purpose of Council seminars and training packages, which would allow Elected Members to take on board information and support their role as a Councillor.

The Chairman formally thanked everyone for their attendance and confirmed that other opportunities would be available for all those who wished to comment further on the report.

Resolved:- (1) That the full the findings and recommendations of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Exploitation by Alexis Jay OBE, dated 21st August, 2014, be accepted.

(2) That the report confirming that services are significantly stronger today, there have been many improvements over the last four years and that there is evidence that multi-agency working is effective, be noted.

(3) That the recommendations set out in the report attached as Appendix 1, which will continue to drive improvements to the way child protection services in Rotherham are delivered, and that regular progress reports be presented back to the Cabinet in due course, be approved.

(4) That the references in the report to the reduction in public sector funding, placing Councils like Rotherham under extreme pressure when faced with high demands from vulnerable children and families, be noted.

(5) That the Council should co-operate with the National Working Group to improve the child sexual exploitation risk assessment tool and that the Government be urged to use Rotherham's report to provide evidence to a national investigation in child sexual exploitation.

(6) That a copy of the Independent Inquiry and this response be provided to the agencies and organisations referred to in paragraph 2.18 of this report, in order to add to the national learning and improvement to child sexual exploitation responses be approved.

(7) That the Independent Inquiry Report and this response to the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board be referred for consideration.

(8) That Police reassurance be sought to ensure the criminal investigations into historical crimes are being vigorously pursued with clear focus on justice for the victims.

(9) That licensing activities works jointly with the scrutiny arrangements to strengthen its responses to see how practices can be improved.

(10) To seek reassurance from the Crown Prosecution Service that it will play its part in supporting the Police to attempt to bring justice in all historic cases with a clear focus on justice for the victims.

(11) That help and support be sought around an independent scrutiny function to support the Council in strengthening its scrutiny arrangements.