

## RMBC Council Meeting on 23.5.18 – Petition transcript

[https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast\\_interactive/352894](https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/352894)

6.28 Mayor – the first petition is from Mr Harron.

Off mike – it is actually from an adult survivor ... Elizabeth has agreed to read out a statement

6.50

The lead petitioner is an adult survivor of childhood sexual exploitation (CSE) in Rotherham. The lead petitioner does not want to take any risk about her identity being revealed. As another adult survivor of CSE I have been asked to read the statement that follows.

On the 10th February of this year, this petition was sent to Democratic Services. Coincidentally ten days later, on 20th February, a statement was issued by the National Crime Agency saying that their staff estimated that 1510 children were abused in Rotherham and that the NCA was actively engaged with about 260 of those victims. Therefore, it is likely that at least 1250 victims have not yet engaged with the NCA, probably many more than 1250.

**Everyone in this chamber needs to reflect very seriously about this.**

Many of those who provided their voices for the publication **Voices of Despair Voices of Hope** will never trust anyone holding an official position in Rotherham following the lies told about our voices.

Having freely worked on their publication for three months and having fully consulted officials at RMBC and South Yorkshire Police, on 28 February 2015, Chrissy Meleady MBE and Liam Harron bravely published at their own expense 500 copies of Voices of Despair Voices of Hope. Ten days later an officer at Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) ordered 1500 copies (at a cost of £6000) and these copies were delivered to Rotherham Council before the end of March 2015.

I joined a trip to the Houses of Parliament on 25 March 2015. There is information in the online version of this petition including a link to a radio broadcast made during that trip. I strongly encourage EVERY SINGLE COUNCILLOR to listen to that radio broadcast – especially to the statement made at the beginning by the former Deputy Leader of the Council

We held a meeting with MPs and a Lord in the Houses of Parliament, then handed copies of Voices of Despair Voices of Hope into 10 Downing Street. We handed in more than 100 copies, one for every member of the Cabinet and the Shadow Cabinet and one for every member of several Select Committees.

Rotherham Borough Council paid for the coach for the trip. An officer (and his daughter) joined us and this officer spoke in the meeting in the Houses of Parliament. He then photographed us handing copies into 10 Downing Street. Please also listen to this officer's voice in the radio broadcast.

Following the dreadful intrusion on 5th September 2015 by the so-called Britain First into Rotherham, Liam Harron emailed the same RMBC officer who joined us on 25 March 2015 and the Head of Children's Services about the urgent need to produce a second edition of Voices of Despair Voices of Hope about those who were suffering from hate and racism. On 15 September 2015 this officer replied by stating that a decision has been made by officials in RMBC to not distribute 1400 copies. **The reasons this officer gave were completely false. And since then lies have been told over and over again by other officers.**

The time has come for officials at RMBC to issue a true statement.

**Therefore this petition calls on the Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services (or the Chief Executive) in Rotherham Borough Council (RMBC) to:**

**issue a public statement giving the reasons for deciding to return 1400 copies of the publication.**

**The statement needs to take note of:**

- 1 the fact that it was agreed that a leaflet produced by RMBC would be distributed along with Voices of Despair Voices of Hope;**
- 2 the further arrangements suggested in a meeting in April 2015 by the officer who facilitated and joined the trip to the Houses of Parliament and Downing Street on 25 March 2015.**

But can I also add that these people in this publication have been let down. We've been through enough and they deserve to have their voices heard. And it's about time that they actually got the truth. Thank You.

11.28 Mayor – Thank you for that. Leader do you want to make any comment? You don't. Okay. The petition will be referred to the relevant strategic director for a response.

11.39 Councillor Brian Cutts. Mr Mayor would it be appropriate if I make a comment.

Mayor – No. Not at this moment in time.