

The Independent Group's Amendment to

Failsworth Independent Party Motion March 2024

Councillor Marc Hince to MOVE, Councillor Sandra ball to SECOND

RED Remove GREEN Insert

Commission a Judge Led non-statutory independent inquiry into all aspects of historical and current instances of child sexual exploitation within the borough

Contrary to the claim made by the previous Council leader, being groomed and gang raped did and still does destroy lives. The initial failures of those whose responsibility to protect them were scandalous and it is right that she was forced to publicly apologise for the failings of this council.

The systematic grooming and sex abuse of some of the most vulnerable within the borough will live with the victims, their families, carers, and friends for life. The reputation and confidence in this council and other agency's ability to serve the needs of the community, protecting those who need protecting most damaged seemingly beyond repair.

Rather than working toward recapturing that confidence and trust by implementing a full independent inquiry into historic child sex abuse within the borough. As repeatedly called for by opposition parties, independent groups, and campaigners. The controlling Labour administration chose to commission a GM Mayors Assurance review . Which by association and political allegiances could not be asserted as impartial our independent.

The victims were promised the GM Mayors Assurance review would be a comprehensive review of historic CSE giving victims a chance to tell their stories with the promise lessons would be learned.

Unfortunately, the findings of GM Mayor's so-called Assurance Review neither provided assurance nor sufficiently reviewed what had taken place. Despite claiming there was no cover up, and that lessons had been learned, allegation after allegations have proven to be true.

The most terrifying was that the ringleader of the infamous Rochdale Grooming Gang, had been an Oldham Council employee with access to children for 18 years. People from across all communities of Oldham have lost trust in this council after this revelation was confirmed as accurate. A

revelation that had been kept hidden from all of us.

As recently as this January, the highly respected Maggie Oliver referenced the Oldham Assurance Review and told its authors Malcom Newsam & Gary Ridgway that in Oldham they had been prevented from getting to the truth. This is after it emerged that survivors had been prevented from giving testimony to the Review Team. The individual identified within the Assurance Review as responsible for preventing survivors from testifying is a senior Oldham Council employee.

There have been several attempts so far to secure the support of this Labour Party run council, under 3 different leaders, to call in the government and lead a fit for purpose inquiry. On each occasion, including calls for a Public Inquiry, every Labour Party councillor has voted to block these motions.

Given Maggie Oliver's most recent statement, and the failure of Operation Sherwood to so far charge a single offender, it is time that this Council looked to itself to secure justice for the as of yet unknown number of children that this council failed.

The commissioning of a non-statutory inquiry, an action within the powers of this Council, will allow the opportunity for victims, survivors and whistleblowers to give evidence in private and free from any other pressures or interference. This is especially important because of the up to now less than candid role of both Oldham Council and Greater Manchester Police. Such arrangements will hopefully also encourage other victims to come forward and once and for all lift this dark cloud that has hung over this town for too long.

The Council notes;

That since the review in 2022, little has been done to bring to account those responsible, both within the Council and other authorities and externally by way of criminal prosecutions.

That survivors deserve to see the full powers of law enforced on perpetrators and facilitators.

We as a council, and as such members herein, have a duty to protect children and vulnerable people of the borough and beyond. The reality is, until we get to the root of the issue, we cannot move forward as we are unable to ensure that failings highlighted in the review are not continuing.

It is very clear there is significant dissatisfaction from the public and opposition parties on the lack of action on this issue and this has been further evidenced in the press and on social media. There is a significant groundswell of opinion that an independent inquiry is needed to address the issue of CSE in Oldham, both historically and in the present.

It is beyond question that the failure of the council to act in accordance with the wishes of both victims and growing public opinion, means that calls for an independent inquiry grow ever stronger.

Therefore, a Judge Led non-statutory independent inquiry enquiry is clearly in the public interest and will give the council chance to finally satisfy its publicly perceived moral obligations.

The purpose of the Inquiry should be to fully investigate and establish the facts of child sexual exploitation across the Borough of Oldham, to identify if, and where, public, and other, services had failed and where possible, to establish who was accountable for any failure and to make recommendations for the future.

So that trust can once again be rebuilt in this borough, survivors finally have their testimonies heard and those that abused our children and those also that covered up the abuse are brought to justice, and lessons learned.

This Council resolves;

- to approve the commissioning and implementation of a non-statutory independent inquiry into all aspects of historical and current instances of child sexual exploitation within the borough.
- to ensure the inquiry has a clear and transparent terms of reference, with unimpeded access to employees, records and any such material deemed relevant to the enquiry.
- to ensure victims are treated with the upmost dignity and are central to the inquiry and its outcomes.
- instruct council officers to commission such an inquiry immediately.