



Department
for Communities
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27th January 2015

Rt Hon. Eric Pickles
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government
Department for Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
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RE: INSPECTION OF ROTHERHAM METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Please find enclosed my inspection report.

You will see that I have concluded that Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council is failing in its legal obligation to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which it exercises its functions, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

I propose that, as the Secretary of State, you should exercise your powers under section 15 of the Local Government Act 1999 to give Directions to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. The form and content of any such Directions will be a matter for you to determine.

However, it is my view that the purpose of the Directions should be threefold:

1. to address the deep-seated culture of poor governance and leadership identified by the Inspection;
2. to drive improvements in services and outcomes for local people; and
3. to restore public trust and confidence in Rotherham.

More specifically, the objectives of any Direction(s) should be to ensure that:

1. There is a rapid improvement in the performance of key services that effect public safety, children and any others identified in the report;
2. The Council effectively tackles historic and current concerns regarding child sexual exploitation, including support for known victims; and establishes a stronger partnership with South Yorkshire Police to take action to tackle perpetrators.
3. The capacity, skills and competencies of the political leadership is built and sustained and good member-officer relationships are established;
4. That values are established to deliver a healthy and positive culture that also challenges the misguided attitudes to race;
5. The Council plays an effective role in working with external partners to improve the prospects of the people of Rotherham;
6. Under the leadership of a new Chief Executive, the Senior Management Team is strengthened to ensure it is effective.

I propose that you should consider:

1. Suspending the democratic process for 2015 to give the Council some short-term stability while it focusses wholly on addressing the many weaknesses we have identified. Full elections would then be held in 2016 giving the council a fresh political start.
2. Appointing a full-time Commissioner to act as Managing Director, overseeing the required changes in leadership and management, including the appointment of a permanent Chief Executive and senior management team, and ensuring that services and outcomes improve.
3. Agree with the Secretary of State for Education to the extension of the appointment of the Children's Commissioner to make it an almost full time role, given the extent and severity of the deficits identified in Children's Social Care.

4. Appointing an overseeing Commissioner with all the powers of the Council. Normal decision making processes should be followed but with the Commissioner holding the power to over-ride in the interest of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The Managing Director would report to this Commissioner in order to re-build effective partnerships, ensure action is taken in relation to CSE, and restore public trust and confidence in the Council. The overseeing Commissioner would work closely with the Children's Commissioner. These appointments should last until a re-inspection of the Council confirms that it is capable to manage its own affairs.

I would be prepared to lead on a re-inspection within the next 12 months to ensure that there is a determination to deliver the improvements within a reasonable time-scale and to ensure a continuity of judgement about whether the Council has reached an acceptable standard.

I look forward to our meeting this week and to discussing the report. I am grateful to you for the opportunity to conduct this Inspection.

LOUISE CASEY CB

Cc: Sir Bob Kerslake, Permanent Secretary