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SEE PAGE 28

# FOSTER ROW CHIEF 'MUST QUIT' – UKIP

## But council insists that decision to remove children was the right one

UKIP MEMBERS called for Rotherham children's services chief Joyce Thacker to resign this week — despite an investigation



**EXCLUSIVE**  
 by MICHAEL UPTON

concluding the borough council were right to remove three children from fosters carers who supported the party.

Elect ion

agent and UKIP member John Wilkinson — who masterminded newly-elected councillor Caven Vines' victory in last Thursday's Rawmarsh by-election — branded Mrs Thacker (pictured) "an affront to the freedom, justice and personal prosperity of the children and people of this borough".

claims the children had been taken away because their foster parents were UKIP members, noting that the council had to think about the children's "cultural and ethnic needs".

Rotherham Borough Council this week said an investigation had concluded that the decision was the right one and in the children's "best interests" but apologised for the way it handled the media focus after the row erupted.

Mr Wilkinson noted that the couple at the centre of the dispute had still to receive an apology and called for resignations, including that of chief executive Martin Kimber and council leader Roger Stone.

Continued on page 4



## 'Young muggers did this to me'

A MUGGING victim has described the vicious attack he suffered just metres from his own home which left him nursing two black eyes.

David Essex (56) of Old School Lane, Catcliffe, was mugged by two youths as he walked home from a nearby shop.

"They asked me if I had a cigarette," he said. "I told them: 'No, I don't smoke,' and walked on. Then they hit me from behind in the right eye and I fell to the floor," he added. "Then

Continued on page 4

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# Resign call in fostering row

Continued from page 1

"That Rotherham Council have now been forced to apologise in the case of the couple who were foster parents and members of UKIP, is a second serious embarrassment for Rotherham's head of social services, following on so soon, on the back of her role and lack of intervention, in the child grooming scandal," said Mr Wilkinson, who is UKIP's local organiser for Rotherham.

"Two questions remain unanswered — why have the foster couple not received an apology and why are they "unemployed" as foster parents?"

"That heads of functional departments are both responsible and accountable for their departments

cannot be ignored by the authority a second time.

"One mistake might be allowed, but a second, like any other addition can be habit forming and therefore not tolerable.

"Mrs Thacker must resign immediately, and if she does not, must be forced to do so by Mr Kimber and Mr Stone or they should also consider their own positions."

Mrs Thacker, who was hauled before the home affairs select committee earlier this year over allegations of grooming of young girls by Asian men in Rotherham, appeared before TV cameras on November 24 last year to justify the decision to remove two girls and a boy from their foster parents' care.

She said: "When it became clear to us that the couple had political affiliations to UKIP we had to seriously think about the longer term needs of the children.

"We have to think about UKIP's clear statement on ending multiculturalism, for example. The children were from EU migrant backgrounds and UKIP has very clear statements on ending multiculturalism, which might be sensitive to these children."

The council said in a statement: "Following a detailed review, we are clear that the action taken to remove the children was in their best interests.

"However, we accept the impression left following media interviews on the morning of November 24 was that the removal

of the children was solely because of the foster carers' membership of UKIP and the council apologises for this.

"As this is a child care case legal reasons continue to prevent us from releasing further details.

"However, we know that there are important lessons the council must learn.

"As a consequence the council has taken action to strengthen the way it makes decisions, communicates and shares information.

"The council can confirm that membership of UKIP would not prevent any individual from being considered as a foster carer in Rotherham and could not be a reason for removing foster children from a placement."

It is understood the children were initially put into the couple's care in an emergency and foster agency officials became worried that their safety might be put in jeopardy if the couple's details were uncovered.

Education secretary Michael Gove this week sought to draw a line under the row, despite having called the situation "indefensible" last November.

Mr Gove accused the council of making "the wrong decision in the wrong way for the wrong reasons" when the row caused a national outcry, while UKIP leader Nigel

Farage said: "Politically, I am not surprised at all.

"This is typical of the bigotry you get from the Labour party and Labour-controlled councils."

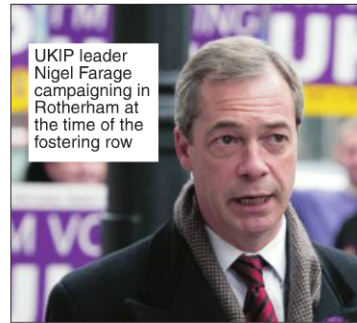
But the Department for Education issued just a one-line statement on the outcome of a review into the council's actions this week, with a spokesman saying: "We now consider this matter closed."

But Rotherham Tory councillor John Gilding said there were still questions to be asked, demanding to know who made the actual decision to move the children out, while fellow Conservative Cllr Tony Mannion said: "I am concerned that such an important case should be treated in such a fashion, with a flimsy press release giving no details and no answers to the questions posed by all concerned by this case."

Meanwhile, newly-elected UKIP councillor Caven Vines accused them of making a "half-hearted apology".

He added: "Why have the council only now issued this half-hearted apology only hours after I was elected and after I made a statement on Friday that as part of my councillor duties was to seek answers to secrecy around such cases as this?"

See Comment — page 8.



UKIP leader Nigel Farage campaigning in Rotherham at the time of the fostering row

ROtherham Borough Council chief executive Martin Kimber (below) said: "The Secretary of State has confirmed publicly that he considers the matter closed, having been informed of all the facts of this case.

"It is highly unlikely that this course of action would have been taken unless he was entirely satisfied that the council had made its decisions in the best interests of the children, giving due



regard to all appropriate safeguarding issues.

"Neither the council nor its individual officers should be criticised for looking after our children well."

## Move 'not politically motivated'

THE DECISION to remove three children from foster parents who were members of UKIP was not politically motivated, a senior councillor insisted this week.

As Rotherham Borough Council apologised for its handling of the media furore surrounding the row, the council's Cabinet member for children's services, Cllr Paul Lakin, said: "We acted properly in terms of removing the children."

Cllr Lakin was speaking after the council

said an internal investigation of the circumstances had concluded the decision taken was in the children's "best interests".

He added: "They were not removed for political reasons. The report has come out with the fact that the children were removed in their best interests of their welfare and I'm satisfied with that. An investigation has been carried out and I'm happy it's been done right."



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## Elected: Now for the 'evil' bedroom tax..!

FORMER councillor Caven Vines bagged a spot back in the Council Chamber as he swept to victory in the Rawmarsh by-election — and immediately set to work taking the Government to task.

The newly-elected UKIP representative has written to work and pensions minister Iain Duncan Smith inviting him to Rotherham to defend the Government's controversial "bedroom tax," which Cllr Vines branded "evil".

The victorious councillor — who previously served on the council for Labour and as an independent — put Labour rival Lisa Wright in the shade, winning by more than 100 votes.

Rotherham Labour Party is now reflecting on the defeat, which was described as a wake-up call by one council insider.

The election was sparked when Mrs Wright's husband Shaun Wright quit after being elected as police and crime commissioner.

Cllr Vines — who declared the result a "coup" for UKIP — emerged victorious in last Thursday's poll with 1,143 votes to Mrs Wright's 1,039, while Conservative candidate Martyn Parker's 107 equated to barely a tenth of the UKIP share of the vote.

Triumphant Cllr Vines dismissed suggestions UKIP had benefited from protest votes, insisting: "We came top because the people are sick of being ignored.

"They want someone to represent them with

common sense policies."



Mrs Wright said: "I fought a strong campaign and the result was very close, but in the end this was a by-election. They often throw up unusual results, and it comes just a couple of weeks after UKIP stole all the headlines for their performance in the county council elections.

"They had momentum from that, but this seat is up again next year and Labour will work hard to win it back."

Rotherham Labour Group spokesman Neil License was more outspoken, admitting that "the Labour party will want to reflect on the way we will need to respond to the result" but adding: "Up to now UKIP have been seen as an anti-European isolationist party, now with electoral success comes greater scrutiny.

"That scrutiny reveals a range of policies that varies from eccentric to downright bizarre.

"It's our job to expose those policies to the public gaze."

Cllr Vines was praised by UKIP leader Nigel Farage, who described him as "a fantastic candidate who will make a superb UKIP councillor".

**Full results:**  
 George Baldwin (BNP) 80.  
 Andrew Gray (TUSAC) 61.  
 Mohammed Meharban (Lib Dem) 28.  
 Martyn Parker (Con) 107.  
 Caven Vines (UKIP) 1,143.  
 Lisa Wright (Lab) 1,039.

## Mugged

Cont from p1 they hit me in the face again and took my wallet.

"I had taken £100 from the bank and I had £80 left. They took my wallet with the cash, my bank cards, my driver's licence and the keys to my safe.

"My face is black and blue and I've got two black eyes."

David thinks that he was targeted because he was carrying shopping at the time of the attack, which took place shortly before 4pm last Wednesday.

"They knew I had been to the shop because I had a carrier bag," he said, "so they knew that I had spent some money and probably had some more.

"You would think that you're safe on a sunny day like that, but you're obviously not."

A police spokeswoman confirmed that officers were investigating the attack.

Witnesses are asked to contact police on 101.