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Council Leader not involved in sex abuse 'cover up' at Knowl View

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Council Leader, Councillor Richard Farnell

The claims and counter claims of who knew what about the sexual abuse perpetrated on children by adults, including paedophile MP Cyril Smith, at Knowl View special school in the late eighties and nineties continue to make headlines with allegations of cover ups and smear campaigns.

Rochdale Council Leader Councillor Richard Farnell, who also was leader of the Council between 1986 and 1992, has been accused in some quarters of having been involved in a council 'cover up'. In response, Councillor Farnell said: "I have always said that I have no recollection about being told about the allegations at Knowl View when I was last leader 23 years ago. I doubt if anyone can clearly recall events that far back. However, any suggestion that I knew about and did nothing about allegations at Knowl View is an outright nonsense. Any suggestion I was involved a cover-up is absolutely ridiculous.

"What is really important is finding out what the various agencies – the Council, the health authority and Police – did about the allegations and the reports which were carried out at the time and whether they acted correctly. That is the job of the independent review and I have already indicated to Neil Garnham QC that the review team has my complete support. The review is very important to the Council and Rochdale and the Inquiry should be allowed to get on with its job without interference from politicians.

"Until such time as the Review is finalised I am legally advised that, as Leader of the Council, it would be inappropriate for me to comment further."

Confidential letters and reports appear to back up Councillor Farnell's claim that he never saw any of the reports documenting the abuse. The documents give the impression that council officers did not see fit to share the reports with councillors until June 1992, after Councillor Farnell had lost his seat on the Council.

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