

Minutes of the Meeting of the RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West Bridgford on Thursday, 29 July 1999 at 6.30 p.m.

Present:-

Councillor B. A. Nicholls, Mayor in the Chair  
Councillor R. H. Butler, Deputy Mayor

Councillors J. R. Bannister, T. D. S. Barlow, D. G. Bell, S. Bennett, S. J. Boote, A. Brown, G. A. Buckley, Mrs. D. P. Butler, J. N. Clarke, R. Cook, J. E. Cottee, J. A. Cranswick, J. A. Craven-Griffiths, P. J. Curry, G. N. Cutts, B. G. Dale, G. Davidson, P. Davis, R. M. W. Deaville, C. J. Evans, J. E. Fearon, J. E. Greenwood, C. T. Hayes, T. W. Holt, G. P. Jackson, J. G. Kelk, K. W. Keyworth, A. MacInnes, Mrs. M. M. Males, P. F. McGowan, W. R. D. Mott, K. O'Toole, K. L. T. Pratt, P. M. Robinson, R. E. Rodwell, P. Smith, P. W. Smith, P. J. Stephens, M. Stockwood, B. Tansley, J. M. Teece, S. K. Tiplady, H. Tipton, B. M. Venes, T. Vennett-Smith, E. P. Woolsey and K. Wright.

Apologies for absence

Councillors R. E. Chapman, C. M. Lawson, Mrs. D. J. Mason and L. Roberts.

OPENING PRAYER

Prior to the commencement of business, the meeting was led in prayer by the Mayor's Chaplain, the Reverend Canon P. Humphreys.

(19) MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 24 June 1999 were received as a correct record and signed by the Mayor.

(20) MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) Civic Service

The Mayor thanked Members for their support and in particular thanked his Chaplain for conducting the Service. He was particularly sorry that Canon Worwood was unable to be part of the Service but sincerely thanked Peter Lawson, a past Councillor and Mayor of the Borough, who stepped in to take part in the Service.

(b) Bishop of Southwell

The Mayor reported that, together with the Mayoress, he attended the consecration of the Venerable George Cassidy as Bishop of Southwell which took place at York Minster at the end of June.

(c) Deputy Mayor

The Mayor thanked the Deputy Mayor who represented him at the installation of David Wakefield as Vicar of Car Colston, Screveton and Flintham.

(d) Twinning Ceremony

The Mayor reported that he had attended a twinning ceremony at St. Mary's at Radcliffe-on-Trent when Radcliffe, Holme Pierrepont and Gamston officially twinned with Bussy St. Georges, near Paris, France.

(e) Launch of Rushcliffe Business Partnership

The Mayor reported that during his year of office, he was keen to promote working relationships with business partners in the Borough and with this in mind, attended the launch of the Rushcliffe Business Partnership at the headquarters of NSK-RHP, where Kenneth Clarke delivered the keynote speech.

(f) Mayor's Engagements

The Mayor reported that, together with the Mayoress, he had been very busy over the past month attending many engagements, including the Queen's Garden Party at Buckingham Palace, visiting residents in the Borough celebrating their 100<sup>th</sup> Birthdays and Golden and Diamond Weddings and also galas at Keyworth and East Leake. In addition, he had visited the Bass Museum at Burton-on-Trent when he was joined by Graham Mee, the winner of the Recreation Department's competition "Name the Ale", with the name "Rushcliffe Silver Pride" being the winning entry. The ale would be launched at the Rushcliffe Festival on 4 September.

He reminded Members that the Festival Finale Concert would take place on Sunday, 19 September 1999 at 7 p.m. at Nottingham Playhouse.

(21) HOUSING INVESTMENT PROGRAMME

Councillor Buckley, the Leader of the Council, presented the report of the Cabinet together with the comments of the Policy Review Group on the Housing Investment Programme Report.

Councillor Buckley indicated that the paper was very important in setting out what the Council was trying to achieve and what it was hoping to receive in terms of finance from the Government. He particularly drew attention to the work carried out to date and which would be continuing, to establish local housing need. The Council had also undertaken a programme of tenant participation which built on the excellent relationship already existing via the rent collection service and the tenants' newsletters.

He did express concern that the Government was promoting tenant compacts which, in his opinion, were designed for authorities with large housing estates. He would be meeting with GOEM shortly to campaign on behalf of the Council, indicating that Rushcliffe could be unfairly treated in view of the location and make-up of its Council housing estates. He commended the Housing Investment Programme document and supported the comments of the Policy Review Group. He stressed that throughout the document, there was a central theme of "partnership" with many other organisations involved in achieving the best results for the residents of the Borough.

Councillor MacInnes, Vice-Chairman of the Policy Review Group, commended the paper and, in particular, was pleased to see the tenant compact, which would ensure that tenants would have an input. He commended the initiatives in respect of Houses In Multiple Occupation, which he hoped would improve the standard of houses in the private sector and in particular, in West Bridgford. He also welcomed the Rent Deposit Guarantee scheme, which would assist the vulnerable sections of the community.

He expressed concern about the lack of reference to social housing, provision of housing for rent and also the housing waiting list.

Councillor Hudson indicated that much work had been undertaken, including advice on maintenance from the Housing Energy Officer, replacement of metal windows with uPVC windows, tenant participation etc. Consultants were currently working on a study to investigate the need for affordable housing. He felt that the present Government and the last Government, were not providing local authorities with enough funding for housing initiatives. The only initiative from the present Government was the release of capital receipts last year and whilst welcome, it was only an authority to borrow money to spend.

He indicated that the housing allocation list was currently under review and the report would be considered by the Council in due course.

Councillor Cook supported these comments and indicated that the condition of the Council housing stock was excellent and envied by other local authorities in the County.

Councillor Curry welcomed the new housing initiatives and indicated that the PEP consultants had already held a meeting in Bingham and CCTV was being used, where tenants were being harassed.

Councillor Buckley indicated that due to Government policy, Council housing rents were capped and Councils could not use revenue contributions to support capital schemes.

He welcomed the support for the paper which he hoped would benefit all residents of the Borough in both the private and public sectors.

RESOLVED that -

with the inclusion of the comments of the Policy Review Group, the Housing Investment Programme 2000/2001 be approved.

(22) PERIODIC ELECTORAL REVIEW

Councillor Buckley, the Leader of the Council, indicated that some work had already been undertaken with a view to submitting proposals on the Periodic Electoral Review to the Local Government Commission by 31 August 1999. A Member Working Group had considered options and these had been circulated to Parish Councils and organisations in West Bridgford for comment. However, it was clear that there was some misunderstanding regarding the Review and with this in mind, meetings had been arranged for next week with Parish Councils and organisations in West Bridgford to clarify the situation. In view of this, the Local Government Commission had agreed to extend the deadline for the Council's submission to 13 September 1999

to enable this further consultation to take place and for the Council to consider and approve its submission at full Council on 9 September 1999.

Several Members welcomed the proposed meetings with Parishes and organisations in West Bridgford and also the extension of time for submission of comments. In particular, it was felt that detailed consideration should be given to the warding in rural areas to ensure that the outcome was the most suitable for all concerned.

Councillor Cook felt that the outcome should reflect the views of the people the Members represented and that in reaching a decision, the Council should be seen to have acted in an impartial manner. He indicated that notification had been received from the Department of Environment, Transport and Regions that the proposal to implement the new arrangements with elections in 2001 had now been dropped and that the next Borough elections would take place in 2003.

Councillor Vennett-Smith welcomed the consultation but expressed concern that more notice should have been given to Parishes, who often had a recess during August.

Councillor Buckley indicated that he hoped the meetings arranged for next week with Parishes and also organisations in West Bridgford, both of which could be attended by Borough Councillors, would clear up any misunderstandings and comments received thereafter would form part of the Council's submission to the Local Government Commission.

RESOLVED that -

the report be noted.

(23) REVIEW OF COMPLAINTS - 1998/1999

Members considered the report of the Administrative Services Manager in his capacity as the Council's designated Monitoring Officer with a role to report to the Authority on any contravention of the law or statutory code of practice or a ruling of maladministration or injustice by the Local Government Ombudsman.

The Administrative Services Manager indicated that he was also responsible for dealing with complaints through the Council's official complaints procedure and also those reported to the Local Government Ombudsman.

In this latter respect, he indicated that of the eight complaints referred to the Local Government Ombudsman during the year, none were found to involve maladministration or injustice. A total of thirty-two other complaints were considered.

Councillor Cook indicated that the Council and Officers who dealt directly with the public should be highly commended for their excellent work, which was reflected in the small number of complaints received.

It was proposed by Councillor Evans and seconded by Councillor Davidson that the recommendation contained in the report be amended to read as follows -

"RECOMMENDED that -

(a) the report be noted; and

- (b) the appropriate Ward Members be advised of any complaints made under the official complaints procedure."

In support of the amendment, Councillor Evans felt that if Members were aware of a particular situation, they may be able to help or act as arbiter. He felt that Members could be placed in an embarrassing situation if they were not aware of particular complaints.

Councillor Davidson supported the amendment and felt that if Members could be involved, it would be a more efficient use of their time.

Councillor Buckley acknowledged the reasons for the amendment, but felt that there may be certain instances when the complainant did not wish the Ward Member to be involved. It was the choice of the individual and the system had worked satisfactorily to date.

The Chief Executive and Director of Development Services reminded Members that the Council's official complaint form indicated that the matter could be taken up by the Ward Member if required.

On being put to the vote the amendment was declared lost.

RESOLVED that -

the report of the Monitoring Officer be noted.

(24) SCRUTINY GROUPS

- (a) General

As this was the first meeting of the Scrutiny Groups under the new political arrangements, several Members expressed concern about the format of the notes of the meetings and also the Chairmen's reports. It was felt that the notes should identify, where possible, the Members asking questions and also comments made by individual Members. Also, action points should be identified to assist Members where they had requested information or to enable them to monitor progress in certain areas. It was also suggested that the notes of all meetings should be bound as part of the Council Agenda.

It was felt that, in principle, the meetings were excellent with officers who attended being congratulated on their input. Several Members felt that the appropriate Cabinet Member should attend the Scrutiny Group and Councillor Buckley indicated that the Chairmen or Members of the Scrutiny Group could request this, if required. He felt that the Scrutiny Groups were positive and congratulated officers responsible in producing reports in such a short timescale. He felt that the new political arrangements were positive because Scrutiny Groups benefited considerably from having Service Managers attending to report and answer questions. He also felt that as the Council were scheduled to meet eleven times per year all Members would be involved in the decision making process.

Councillor O'Toole expressed concern about the role of Scrutiny Groups and requested that his abstention from voting on all the reports submitted to Council, be recorded.

(b) Housing Scrutiny Group - 14 July 1999

Councillor Bennett, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Group, felt that the first meeting of the Group had been positive and all Members requesting further information had now received it.

Councillor Jackson supported these remarks and welcomed the partnership initiatives with other agencies, in particular to promote fire safety. He also looked forward to the publication of guides for tenants and landlords.

Councillor Teece supported the comments in respect of the partnership to promote fire safety but expressed concern that the house refurbishment, costing £27,000, would not be value for money and the money could be spent elsewhere.

RESOLVED that -

the report be noted.

(c) Community and Leisure Scrutiny Group - 15 July 1999

Councillor Mrs. M. M. Males, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Group, indicated that the Council had recently appointed a new Sports Development Officer. She hoped that the West Bridgford Town Centre Pedestrianisation Scheme would commence on time in the autumn. Following a comment made by the Group about the Cotgrave Pool, she confirmed that the Pool was not dirty and that it was the design of the tiles on the floor of the Pool which gave the impression that there may be dirt there. She indicated that it was hoped to produce a booklet on Millennium celebrations around the Borough and for it to be circulated.

Councillor Tiplady expressed concern at the level and standard of provision of public conveniences in the Borough and, in particular, West Bridgford. She felt that although the conveniences were clean, they were not particularly well maintained. She felt that, as part of the work to West Bridgford Town Centre, consideration should be given to the provision of new conveniences for the area which would include baby changing facilities. She also requested that Councillors should be consulted about the future use of The Hall following the decision of the County Council to vacate the premises.

Councillor Clarke indicated that he had visited Cotgrave Pool following the meeting and found it to be in excellent condition. With regard to public conveniences, he indicated that they were being cleaned twice daily during the warm summer period and a review of lighting was being considered.

Following a question from Councillor Vennett-Smith, Councillor Buckley indicated that a report would be made to the next Council on grant-aid policy and that Ward Members would be consulted on footpath matters.

RESOLVED that -

the report be noted.

(d) Environment Scrutiny Group - 19 July 1999

Councillor Teece, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Group, indicated that the Group were concerned that appropriate publicity should be given to "one-off" special collections to ensure that all residents of the Borough were aware. He also highlighted the concerns raised about litter and suggested that local education authorities should be encouraged to teach children about the problems of litter.

Councillor Wright was pleased to note the policies in respect of recycling and also the satisfaction of residents on refuse collection. He thanked the operatives for their continued hard work in providing an excellent service. With regard to recycling, he felt that it was important to continue to recycle but that it was equally important to ensure that disposal was satisfactory. He expressed concern about people drinking in public, particularly on the War Memorial in West Bridgford, and requested that consideration be given to the introduction of local byelaws to control this problem.

Councillor Clarke indicated that he had recently attended a conference where it was reported that the County Council was reviewing its waste management strategy and hoped to report late in the year. This would have an impact on the Borough Council.

RESOLVED that -

the report be noted.

(e) Finance and Audit Scrutiny - 20 July 1999

Councillor Woolsey, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Group felt that the meeting had been positive and thanked the officers for their assistance. He particularly drew Members' attention to the request to see a clearer breakdown of work days lost to sickness. The Group was pleased to see information points for Parishes being provided and also the results of the Citizens Panel in which over 50% of those surveyed felt that the information provided by the Council relating to services delivered by Rushcliffe and the level of Council Tax levied, was very good. He referred to the recommendation of the Group that a Working Group be established to review the level of services for Members.

Councillor Buckley reminded Members of the excellent training offered to them. He felt that all Members should take advantage of these sessions.

The following amendment to the recommendation was proposed by Councillor Cutts and seconded by Councillor Mrs. Hayes.

"(c) the Working Group comprise the Chairman of all Scrutiny Groups and the Best Value Review Group."

On being put to the vote the amendment was carried.

RESOLVED that -

- (i) the report be noted;
  - (ii) a Working Group be set up to investigate Members' requirements with regard to equipment, services and training; and
  - (iii) the Working Group comprise the Chairman of all Scrutiny Groups and the Best Value Review Group.
- (f) Community Protection - 21 July 1999

Councillor Mrs. Hayes, the Chairman of the Scrutiny Group thanked the officers for their input and drew particular attention to the following points. The Group felt it was vital for the Council to promote services where they were in direct competition with the private sector. She indicated that statistics of prosecutions would be made available to Members and referred to the decision of Severn-Trent Water that the Agency service currently carried out by the Council on their behalf, would be terminated on 31 March 2000.

Councillor Kelk welcomed the point raised by the Scrutiny Group about the possibility of licensed private hire and hackney carriages having licence plates on the front of the vehicles as well as the rear.

RESOLVED that -

the report be noted.

(25) LOCAL PLAN

Councillor Clarke, the Chairman of the Local Plan Working Group, presented a report on the meeting of the Working Group held to review progress on the Local Plan. He indicated that following the decision to produce a plan, an extensive period of consultation was undertaken involving 32 public meetings resulting in over 9,000 representations being received.

Discussions with the other Districts in Nottinghamshire, particularly the City and Gedling, were continuing and dialogue had taken place with the County Council to try to achieve a more flexible approach to the housing figures contained in the structure plan with a flexibility of up to 10% being a possibility. He indicated that the next meeting of the Group would take place on 29 September 1999 and it was hoped to put the Draft Plan on deposit in February or March next year.

Councillor Evans expressed his great concern that the County Council were still maintaining that the Borough Council had to find 14,000 houses, when they had not given any indication about the provision of infrastructure to cater for this amount of housing.

In reply to a question from Councillor Vennett-Smith, Councillor Clarke indicated that the representations received were open to general inspection and that this open approach would continue in the future.

Councillor Buckley indicated that when the Working Group had concluded its review of the Local Plan, the Council would consider the formal Draft. He indicated that he would continue to press the Government for the necessary infrastructure to be provided to enable the Council to comply with the requirements of the Structure Plan to provide the housing.

RESOLVED that -

the report be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.10 p.m.

MAYOR