

Minutes of the Meeting of the RUSHCLIFFE BOROUGH COUNCIL held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Pavilion Road, West Bridgford on Thursday, 6 July 2000 at 6.30 p.m.

Present

Councillor R. H. Butler, Mayor in the Chair  
Councillor T. D. S. Barlow, Deputy Mayor

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

Apologies for absence

Councillors S. Bennett, R. Cook, J. A. Craven-Griffiths, G. P. Jackson and C. M Lawson,

COUNCILLOR PETER CURRY

Prior to the commencement of business members and officers stood in silence as a mark of respect to the late Councillor Peter Curry.

The Mayor paid tribute to the dedication of Councillor Curry to his work on the Council and in representing the people of Bingham.

Councillor Davidson also paid tribute to the work of the late Councillor Curry. He reminded members of the excellent work that he had carried out for the local community in Bingham. He added that Councillor Curry, who had worked hard for Bingham for many years, had independent spirit and was a sad loss to the Council and the Town of Bingham.

Other members indicated their support for these tributes

OPENING PRAYER

The meeting was then led in prayer by Canon Worwood.

(9) MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on 25 May 2000 were received as a correct record and signed by the Mayor, subject to the addition of Councillor K. L. T. Pratt in the attendance list.

(10) MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

(a) West Bridgford Town Centre

The Mayor informed members that he had the pleasure of attending the official opening of West Bridgford Town Centre Pedestrianisation Scheme on 13 June 2000. He considered that this scheme had shown just how much could be achieved through working in partnership – in this case with Nottinghamshire County Council. He also placed on record his thanks to local people, traders and shoppers for their patience during the construction work and hoped that they were as pleased as he was with the scheme.

(b) GOSH Week

The Mayor reported that during 'GOSH' week - a national event to promote warden aided accommodation – he had attended a summer fete at Debdale House Sheltered Scheme, where he had the honour of crowning the May Queen - Millie Fisher. Millie was also a May Queen in Clifton in 1924, so the day brought back many happy memories for her.

The Mayor also reported that he had invited Millie, together with a group of her friends and the Warden at Debdale House, to join him for tea in the Mayor's Parlour to thank them for their hospitality. He was pleased to report that the ladies presented him with a cheque for £150 for his charity appeal – which this year will be in support of the Rushcliffe MENCAP Project - from proceeds of their summer fete. He placed on record his thanks for their kindness and generosity.

(c) Edwalton Municipal Golf Courses

The Mayor thanked the members of Edwalton Municipal Golf Club for holding a Golf Day in aid of his Charity, which raised £2,100.

(d) West Bridgford Round Table

The Mayor thanked members of the West Bridgford Round Table for their generous donation of £100 to his Charity Appeal.

(e) Retirement of the Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire

The Mayor reported that he was delighted to welcome Colin Bailey and his wife, Christine to a lunch at the Civic Centre to mark the retirement of Mr. Bailey as Chief Constable of Nottinghamshire. The Mayor informed members that Mr. Bailey had written a letter to him to thank the Council, its elected members and officers, for the support provided to the Nottinghamshire Police, working in true partnership to improve the lives of the citizens of the Borough.

(f) Community Strategy

The Mayor informed the Council that he would be welcoming guests to a community strategy event at the conference hall at Holme Pierrepont Water Sports Centre, on Monday, 17 July at 2.00 p.m. and invited members to support the event.

He added that a number of key service providers in Rushcliffe had joined forces to find out what local people consider to be the key issues for the future and attendance by members would show the Council's commitment to this initiative.

(11) REVIEW OF POLITICAL MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS  
(MINUTE 91,1999/2000 REFERS)

Councillor Clarke, Chairman of the Review Group established to review the political management arrangements of the Council by Minute 91,1999/2000, presented the report and recommendations of the Group.

He indicated that when the present arrangements were introduced last year by a unanimous decision of the Council, on the basis of the cabinet/leader model, it was agreed to carry out a review of the arrangements after 12 months. The Group had sought the views and opinions of members, individually and through membership of various groups, employees and trade union representatives and had considered all the comments raised both directly at meetings of the Group and through a questionnaire circulated to all members and employees. He considered the review to be particularly important, as it would determine how the decision-making procedures of the Council would be arranged for the future in anticipation of the introduction of the new legislation.

Councillor Clarke expressed his disappointment that the Review Group had been unable to reach a consensus on the question of giving delegated powers to a single party Cabinet, which could only be approved by the Council under the present legislation provided no member voted against. On this basis, the Group had put forward two alternative proposals for consideration by the Council, one granting delegated authority to the Cabinet to take decisions on matters within the policy and budget approved by the Council, subject to a call-in procedure by which members could refer Cabinet decisions for scrutiny before they could be implemented; or, if unanimous agreement could not be reached on the proposed delegation, to retain the present arrangements by which the Cabinet has no delegated authority and all items requiring a decision would be referred to the Council for approval.

He further indicated two of the main issues arising from the review were the question of opening up Cabinet meetings to all members and the public, which had been agreed unanimously by the Group, and also the need to strengthen the scrutiny role of members. In this latter respect, the Group had recommended that the Scrutiny Groups would in future be responsible for the best value review process, within the best value review programme approved by the Council.

Councillor Cutts seconded the motion.

The following amendments were then proposed and seconded.

(a) The following amendments were moved by Councillor Davidson and seconded by Councillor McGowan.

(i) That recommendation (b) be amended to read –

“the Cabinet to comprise of nine members to be appointed by the Council, comprising the Leader and Deputy Leader, five members from the Conservative Group and one from each opposition Group.”

(ii) That the following be added as a further recommendation –

“the appointments of the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Best Value Review Group, the Scrutiny Groups and the Policy Review Group be allocated to the political groups in proportion to their membership on the Council.”

(iii) That recommendation (t) be amended by the addition of the following words –

“a referendum to be held on the establishment of a Town Council for West Bridgford.”

Councillor Davidson indicated that he objected in principle to the proposal for a single party Cabinet and therefore, could not support the proposal to grant it delegated authority. He felt that a single party Cabinet would not meet the aims of the review, to achieve a more efficient and transparent decision-making process and that the recommendations only followed the directive of Central Government, which would not necessarily provide the best system for the Council or Rushcliffe residents. He referred to the IDeA report, which proposed the need to sharpen up the scrutiny and policy review roles, which he did not consider had been addressed by the Review Group. For example, he felt that there was no indication that scrutiny would be independent of the executive and no reference to a fairer allocation of the positions of Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of the Scrutiny Groups. He welcomed the proposals to open Cabinet meetings and the proposal for Scrutiny Groups to be responsible for best value reviews.

Councillor MacInnes pointed out that the aim of the Government’s modernisation programme for local government was to improve transparency and accountability in decision-making. In supporting the recommendation for a single party Cabinet, with delegated powers, he pointed out that this would clearly reflect the political control of the Council, subject to the ability of all members to scrutinise decisions and have an input into policy review and development thorough the scrutiny process and at Council meetings. He felt that the Liberal Democrats were using the expediency of proportionality in an attempt to share power because they were unable to gain control through the ballot box.

Councillor Boote considered that the Conservative Group was simply following the Labour Government's guidelines and continuing the one-party control, whereas the Liberal Democrats stood for power sharing and responsible Government. He was of the opinion that the Cabinet membership should be on a proportional basis, which would better reflect the views of the electorate and encourage power sharing. He added that public opinion of politicians was generally low and therefore more openness and accountability was needed.

Councillor Vennett-Smith welcomed the opening of Cabinet meetings to the public, but could not support the proposal to give delegated powers to the Cabinet as in his view this would reduce the role of other members. He added that he had opposed the present political management system, which he felt reduced the role of members compared with the previous committee system. He questioned whether without the Nottingham Evening Post's sustained objection to a secret Cabinet meetings, there would have been any changes. He welcomed the suggestion that the scrutiny role could be extended to include scrutiny of other agencies such as the Health Authority and the Police.

On being put to the vote, the above amendments were lost.

- (b) The following amendment was moved by Councillor Evans and seconded by Councillor McGowan –
  - (i) That recommendation (o) be amended to add the words “after discussion” after the words “the Scrutiny Group would decide....”
  - (ii) That recommendation (q) be amended by deleting “7.30 p.m.” and inserting therefor “7.00 p.m.”

In presenting the amendments, Councillor Evans indicated that the review process had been well structured, giving the opportunity for members and officers to give their views. Whilst welcoming a more open Cabinet system, he felt that decisions would continue to be taken by the controlling Group in private. He considered that scrutiny did not operate effectively last year and was disappointed that the Leader had dismissed the proposal for a fairer distribution of the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Scrutiny Groups. He informed members that the true definition of scrutiny was 'searching inspection' and that the Council was failing to achieve this.

On being put to the vote, the above amendments were carried.

- (c) The following amendment to amend recommendation (j) to read as follows was moved by Councillor Buckley and seconded by Councillor Cranswick –

“That the terms of reference of the Best Value Review Group be as follows -

To co-ordinate and monitor the best value review programme approved by the Council and to make recommendations to the Cabinet.

and Councillor G. N. Cutts be appointed as Chairman of the Group.”

On being put to the vote, the above amendment was carried.

- (d) The following amendment to add a further recommendation was proposed by Councillor McGowan and seconded by Councillor Evans –

“That a Lead Officer be designated for each Scrutiny Group and Policy Review Group responsible for co-ordinating the work programme of the Group and any research required in connection with any review.”

In support of this recommendation, Councillor McGowan indicated that this proposal was included in the original draft recommendations of the Review Group, but subsequently deleted on the basis that the level of officer support was to be determined by Chief Officers. He referred to the IDeA report, which recommended the need for dedicated support for the scrutiny function and felt that this recommendation was being ignored.

Councillor Evans felt that the scrutiny process would only work effectively if it was properly resourced and that it was essential to have dedicated staff to support the scrutiny process.

Councillor MacInnes supported these comments and indicated that the Group had been assured that there would be officer support provided for the scrutiny role.

Councillor Buckley referred to the proposed action plan in response to the IDeA review in the following item, which included a proposal to review the management structure of the authority to reflect the changes in the political management arrangements. He pointed out that this review would take into account the officer support for the scrutiny function.

On being put to the vote, the above amendment was lost.

Councillor Cutts pointed out that the Review Group had approached the review in a pragmatic and common sense way with a view to reaching a consensus and was surprised and disappointed that the Liberal Democrats were now putting forward a number of amendments to the recommendations from the Group. He pointed out that the Council had approved unanimously the new political management arrangements last year, including the single party Cabinet and closed Cabinet meetings in accordance with Government guidelines. In this latter respect, the Review Group were proposing to open Cabinet meetings on the basis of the views expressed by members during the review and not in response to any newspaper campaign.

Councillor Teece welcomed the recommendations and felt that the success of the scrutiny system was largely dependent upon the performance of members. He disagreed with the concept of power sharing, as he believed that a one party Cabinet

would give clear political leadership to the Council. With regard to the proposal for a referendum to be held on the question of establishing a Town Council for West Bridgford, he pointed out that there were no elected Liberal Democrat members for West Bridgford and that the issue had been raised previously, with little public support for a West Bridgford Town Council.

Councillor Tiplady felt that the Government's modernisation proposals presented a challenge to all local authorities to introduce transparent efficient and effective decision-making procedures. She opposed the proposal from the Liberal Democrats for a referendum to be held for a Town Council for West Bridgford. She suggested that this should be left to local members and felt that the best way forward was for area committees.

Councillor Buckley indicated that the modernisation proposals were an important step for the authority and would change the roles of members and officers, with the emphasis for members on the scrutiny role, both through scrutinising and questioning decisions and through input into policy review and development. He emphasised the importance of the scrutiny process, which in his view would stimulate community involvement. He also emphasised that scrutiny was not a role for opposition members only, but for all members and that there was a commitment to the development of the scrutiny role and training for members in this respect. Councillor Buckley drew attention to the early successes of the scrutiny process in respect of proposals relating to corporate energy and environmental health, which were raised through the scrutiny process by members.

Councillor McGowan suggested that although the Conservative Group supported the scrutiny process, they were also undermining its success in ensuring that all Scrutiny Groups had a Conservative majority, which meant that the controlling group could avoid contentious issues by motivating their members to vote against particular recommendations and proposals. He also maintained that the Cabinet would debate issues in secret meetings and therefore the proposal for open Cabinet meeting was irrelevant. Councillor McGowan agreed with the comments of the IDeA who had suggested that officer time and resources was stretched in providing support to scrutiny groups and there was a need to consider the provision of dedicated officer support for the scrutiny function.

Councillor Evans indicated that the Liberal Democrat Group were opposed in principle to a single party Cabinet and this was the reason for the opposition to the proposal for giving delegated powers to the Cabinet. He had put forward a reasonable suggestion for a fairer distribution of the seats on the Scrutiny and Policy Review Groups, which had been rejected out of hand by the Conservative Group.

Councillor Clarke indicated that the Review Group had carried out a detailed and structured review of the political management arrangements, which had been approved unanimously by the Council last year. The recommendations put forward were in response to the views and issues raised during the review. He thanked all those members and officers who had contributed to the review.

On being put to the vote, recommendation (e)(i) (Delegated Powers to the Cabinet) was carried with 36 members voting for the motion and 10 members voting against the motion. However, in accordance with the provisions of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, which would allow for delegation to a single party Cabinet only if no member voted against, the recommendation fell. Consequently, recommendation (f) (Call-in Mechanism) was withdrawn.

Recommendation (e)(ii), to retain the status quo for the Cabinet i.e. with no delegated powers, was put to the meeting and carried.

RESOLVED that -

- (a) the Council confirms the political management arrangements based on the Cabinet/Leader model;
- (b) the Cabinet to comprise 7 members to be appointed by the Council from the controlling group, comprising the Leader and Deputy Leader of the Council and 5 other members;
- (c) the 5 members of the Cabinet to be given responsibility for a portfolio for each of the service areas covered by the Scrutiny Groups, namely –  
  
Environment  
Housing  
Community and Leisure  
Community Protection  
Finance and Audit
- (d) the Council be responsible for determining the policy framework and budget for the authority and for the approval of statutory plans as outlined in the guidance document;
- (e) the status quo for Cabinet be retained with all items from the Cabinet requiring a decision to be referred to Council for approval;
- (f) meetings of the Cabinet and the Policy Review Group be open to the public and, subject to the existing statutory provisions relating to exempt and confidential information, the reports and background papers be made available to all members and the public prior to the meeting;
- (g) the existing delegation to officers on operational matters within the policy framework and budget approved by the Council and detailed in the members handbook, be confirmed;
- (h) Scrutiny Groups carry out best value reviews for services/activities within their terms of reference within the best value review programme approved by the Council; and the service areas/activities of the scrutiny groups be adjusted to reflect the best value themes identified within the best value performance plan;
- (i) the Best Value Review Group be retained, but with revised terms of reference as set out below and with a membership comprising the Chairmen of the Scrutiny Groups and a majority Group Member (Councillor G. N. Cutts), who shall be the Chairman of the Group –

#### Best Value Review Group – Terms of Reference

To co-ordinate and monitor the best value review programme approved by the Council and make recommendations to the Cabinet.

- (j) the membership of the Scrutiny Groups be increased from 13 to 16 members to be appointed on a proportional basis to reflect the political balance of the Council, as follows –

<b>Scrutiny Group</b>	<b>Conservative Group</b>	<b>Labour Group</b>	<b>Liberal Democrat Group</b>	<b>Independent Member</b>
Community and Leisure	9	3	3	1
Community Protection	9	3	3	1
Environment	9	4	3	
Finance and Audit	10	3	3	
Housing	9	3	4	

- (k) the membership of the Policy Review Group continue on the current basis i.e. 4 Conservative Group members, 3 Labour Group members and 3 Liberal Democrat Group members;
- (l) the Scrutiny Groups be given authority to propose items for policy review and to manage the policy review programme, within the priorities approved by the Council;
- (m) the Scrutiny Groups/Policy Review Group carry out policy development studies where requested by the Council or the Cabinet;
- (n) individual members be given the opportunity to raise items to be included in the agenda for meetings of the Scrutiny/Policy Review Groups by written notice to the Chief Executive at least 10 working days prior to the meeting and the Scrutiny Group would decide after discussion whether to take any further action on the review of any item so raised, with the proviso that once an item has been raised and considered by a Scrutiny Group, the matter cannot be raised again within a period of six months from the date of the Scrutiny Group which considered the item;
- (o) the existing committees for regulatory functions etc. e.g. Development Control, Licensing and other committees and member groups e.g. Grants Committee, appointed by the Council be continued, subject to review in the light of the legislation;
- (p) all meetings of the Council and Committee and Member Groups would normally start at 7.00 p.m., subject to the Chairman having the authority to vary the starting time of meetings, as necessary;
- (q) the closing time of 10.00 p.m. for meetings be continued, subject to standing order 36 being amended to provide that the Council, Committee or Member Group may by resolution extend the closing time to no later than 10.30 p.m.
- (r) all members would receive the agenda and reports for meetings of the Council, the Cabinet and Development Control Committee and the agenda only for other meetings, subject to any member on request

being provided with reports for any meeting of a Committee or member group appointed by the Council;

- (s) Parish/Town Councils and local West Bridgford organisations be consulted on the establishment of area committees and a report be made to the Council within 6 months;
- (t) the Member Services Group review the support services and facilities available to members and political groups and report to the Council with recommendations within 3 months;
- (u) an Independent Panel be appointed to review the members allowance scheme;
- (v) the above-mentioned arrangements be implemented with immediate effect pending the enactment of the Local Government Bill; and these arrangements be reviewed once the Local Government Bill and associated Regulations are brought into force.

(12) CALENDAR OF MEETINGS 2000/2001

The Council considered the report of the Chief Executive on the proposed calendar of meetings for 2000/2001.

Councillor Evans expressed disappointment that meetings had been arranged during school holiday periods and August in particular, which would make it difficult for those members with children to attend meetings. He hoped that, in future, school holiday periods would be taken into consideration when preparing the calendar of meetings.

RESOLVED that -

- (a) the calendar of meetings for 2000/2001 be approved; and
- (b) the Annual Meeting of the Council in 2001/2002 be held on Thursday, 24 May 2001.

(13) LOCAL GOVERNMENT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

Councillor Buckley, Leader of the Council, presented the report and recommendations of the Cabinet on the report of the Review Team following the visit to the authority as part of the Local Government Improvement Programme.

Councillor Buckley informed Council that whilst the Cabinet supported the vast majority of the IDeA observations and recommendations, it disagreed with the proposal for the benchmarking reserves, as it would not add anything significant to the debate about the appropriate level of reserves. He indicated that the Council was committed to modernising the way the Council delivers services and brought in the Review Team through IDeA to carry out the review. The report had identified areas for improvement and also recognised the strengths of the authority. The proposed action plan was a positive response to the issues raised by the review.

Councillor Clarke seconded the motion.

Councillor MacInnes, Chairman of the Policy Review Group, indicated the Group had supported the report and recommendations of the Cabinet, but considered that it was vital to ensure that the staffing and resource implications were taken into account in the action programme. With regard to the question of benchmarking reserves he suggested that it would be of interest to compare the level of reserves with reserves held by other similar authorities, which could be considered under the scrutiny process.

In supporting the recommendations, Councillor Davidson, Vice-Chairman of the Policy Review Group, felt that many of the issues identified in the review report, relating to the decision-making process, had not been taken into account in the review of the political management arrangements.

Councillor McGowan indicated that the report was positive and identified the strengths of the authority and areas for improvement. He referred in particular to the need to develop greater joint working between members and officers, utilising the skills and experience of members and the need for the scrutiny process to be independent of the executive and members not to vote on party lines. He also expressed disappointment that the suggestions in the report for more minority party chairs on the Scrutiny Groups and dedicated support for Scrutiny Groups had been ignored. He indicated that there was little point in the Council agreeing to take part in the review programme if proposals to improve the scrutiny process were then ignored.

Councillor Davis welcomed the report, but asked for clarification as to how it was intended to utilise the skills and experience of members in the member training programme.

Councillor Woolsey indicated that successful local community involvement and partnership working in other areas should be looked at as examples. He referred to the experience of Cotgrave Town Council in local community consultation and of Nottingham City Council on partnership and local consultation. He hoped that the Borough Council would draw on experience from other authorities to develop local community involvement.

Councillor Vennett-Smith welcomed the proposal to strengthen the scrutiny role and the involvement of external people and organisations in the scrutiny process. He felt that last year, there was no clear understanding of the scrutiny process and there was a

need for member training in this respect, which was important if the scrutiny role of members was to develop successfully.

Councillor Clarke agreed that there was a need for member training on the role of scrutiny and the scrutiny process, which was a forum for members to ask questions and review issues. He pointed out that the report had identified the existing good working relationships between members and officers.

Councillor Boote indicated that there was no criticism of the support given by officers to the scrutiny process, who he found to be helpful and informative. He was disappointed that a number of members never raise issues or questions at Scrutiny Group meetings, particularly from the majority group. He emphasised that to scrutinise did not mean to criticise and scrutiny should be seen as a positive input into reviewing the way we deliver services and looking to improve service delivery and standards.

In view of the concerns about the commitment to provide adequate staffing and resources to meet the proposed action plan, Councillor Tiplady proposed that recommendation (b) be amended by the addition of the words “including a review of the resources required to support the action plan and other responsibilities e.g. Community Plan.”

Councillor MacInnes, in seconding the amendment, noted that it was intended to review the staffing structure, but the amendment was seeking a commitment to provide the necessary staffing and resources to support the action plan.

Councillor Buckley indicated that the changes in the modernisation programme have got to be accepted and that local government must rise to the new challenges. He considered that the changes encourage greater community involvement, particularly thorough the development of the Community Plan. He agreed that in the longer term this role would involve members in scrutinising other agencies providing services to the local community.

Councillor Buckley felt, however, that Central Government had failed to grasp that there is a cost to this change. He pointed out that best value would cost local government £6m per year and the inspection process would cost Rushcliffe £78,000-£80,000, which may otherwise be available for front line services. This was contrary to the approach by Rushcliffe in the past, which has placed the emphasis on service delivery rather than central support. He disagreed with the Government’s inspection proposals, which would use resources, but would add no value to services. The authority had a good record on partnership working for example the Local Agenda 21 and had good working relationships with the County Council, Parish Councils and voluntary groups.

With regard to the question of the allocation of the Chairs of the Scrutiny and Policy Review Group, Councillor Buckley pointed out that at present the Chairmen and Vice-Chairmen of two of the five Scrutiny Groups and also the Policy Review Group were opposition Group members.

He felt that there was a need for members to indicate the training that they required in order to develop a member training programme to meet these needs, for example the scrutiny role. He indicated that there was a commitment to develop member training in the future. In response to the question raised by Councillor Davis, he indicated that

where a member had a specific skill or experience that would add to the training programme, this should be used.

On being put to the vote the amendment was lost.

RESOLVED that -

- (a) the key recommendations for action identified in the report, with the exception of the benchmarking of reserves, be approved;
- (b) the proposed Action Plan be agreed and the Cabinet oversee its implementation and the development of further proposals to meet all the key recommendations for action;
- (c) progress reports be submitted to Council Meetings in October 2000 and January 2001; and
- (d) the Review Team be thanked for its report.

(14) BEST VALUE PERFORMANCE PLAN 2000/2001

The Council considered the report of the Chief Officers Management Team relating to the reports of the external Auditor on the Council's Best Value Performance Plan 2000/2001.

Councillor Buckley welcomed the report, which confirmed that the Council's approach to the development of the best value performance plan met the statutory requirements.

RESOLVED that -

- (a) in accordance with the recommendations contained within the external auditor's reports the following action be agreed -
  - (i) The Best Value Performance Plan for 2001/2002 shall include a full summary of all statutory performance indicators
  - (ii) A procurement strategy setting out the Council's approach to evaluation and appraisal of the differing opportunities for procuring services be developed and agreed by the Council no later than the meeting on 14 December 2000.
  - (iii) The recommendations relating to other matters contained in the detailed report of the Best Value Performance Plan for 2000/2001 be noted, and the Chief Executive ensure that these issues are addressed in subsequent proposals.
- (b) the Council's External Auditor be thanked for the reports on the Best Value Performance Plan for 2000/2001 and notified of the Council's agreed actions.

(15) PROPOSED ARTS STRATEGY AND ACTION PLAN AND MUSEUMS POLICY STATEMENT

Councillor Fearon, Cabinet Spokesperson for Community and Leisure, presented the report and recommendations of the Cabinet on a proposed arts strategy and action plan and museums policy statement.

Councillor Fearon indicated that the proposed strategy had been produced with the assistance of independent research, which had highlighted the enormous amount of well-supported and well-attended arts activities within the Borough, and placed an emphasis on the development of community based facilities.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Mrs. Males informed members that she welcomed the initiatives outlined in the report.

Councillor MacInnes, Chairman of the Policy Review Group, welcomed the proposals and was pleased to see the quality of arts provision within the Borough, which was well supported by local communities. The Group had proposed some amendments to reflect the view that the arts should be available to as many people as possible, including particularly those who would not normally be involved in the arts. However, the Group did not want this wider provision to dilute the quality of art and performance. The following amendments from the Policy Review Group were proposed -

(a) Proposed Arts Strategy “Action Plan”

- (i) within the Objective section add under 2.3 after the word “Arts” to the words “for All”.
- (ii) Add new 2.5 “Increase opportunities for participation in the Arts for All”.
- (iii) Add new paragraph 2.6 “Support is available for community groups in accordance with the Council’s grant aid policy”.

(b) Museums Policy Statement

Delete 3.2 and insert in place thereof the following “The level of current or anticipated support from any relevant parish council and any other organisation.”

In seconding the amendments, Councillor Davidson, Vice-Chairman of the Policy Review Group, informed members that it was important that the Council was proactively involved in providing arts events available to as many people as possible.

Councillor Clarke indicated his support to give opportunities for all in arts provision, but suggested that the Policy Review Group amendment relating to the Museums Policy Statement as set out above, be amended to read “and/or any other organisation” after the words “parish council”.

Councillor Davis proposed that the second statement in Objective 3 in the Arts Strategy and Action Plan relating to increased opportunities for access to the arts should include reference to people with special needs, to read as follows –

“Prioritise support for projects that give, particularly children, young people **and people with special needs**, the opportunity to work with artists and take part in arts activities in their local community, especially in rural areas, outside school hours and in school holiday periods.”

Councillor Brown seconded the amendment.

Councillor Boote supported the proposed strategy aimed at achieving excellence in the arts. He suggested that the Borough and Parishes needed to jointly consider grant aid to local museums and that the benefits from the Lottery should be maximised, where matching funding can be provided.

In answer to a question from Councillor Holt, the Chief Recreation and Community Services Officer reported that the Council was already actively working in partnership with other local authorities in the provision and promotion of local arts events.

Councillor McGowan indicated that the Ruddington Heritage Centre was not a museum and not a full member of the East Midlands Museum Service and questioned how the museums policy statement would effect the funding of the Centre. The Chief Recreation and Community Services Officer indicated that the Grants Committee was responsible for considering grant aid to the Centre and that the fact that it was not a registered museum would not effect its eligibility for grant aid.

Councillor Vennett-Smith commended the local museums in Rushcliffe and stressed the value of the Council giving assistance in kind through promotion and marketing. Councillor Venes referred to the support given by the Ruddington Parish Council to the development of the museums in Ruddington.

Councillor Fearon accepted the proposed amendments as set out above and moved the recommendations of the Cabinet, subject to these amendments.

Councillor Clarke seconded the recommendations

RESOLVED that-

- (a) the proposed Arts Strategy and Action Plan, attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved, subject to the following amendments –
  - (i) To add under paragraph 2.3 (Objectives) after the word “Arts”, the words “for All”.
  - (ii) To add as paragraph 2.5, “Increase opportunities for participation in the Arts for All”.
  - (iii) To add as paragraph 2.6, “Support is available for community groups in accordance with the Council’s grant aid policy.”
  - (iv) To add the words “and people with special needs” in the second statement in Objective 3
- (b) the proposed Museums Policy Statement, attached at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved, subject to the deletion of paragraph 3.2 and the insertion therefor of the words, “The level of current or anticipated support from any relevant parish council and/or any other organisation.”

## (16) GRANT AID POLICY

Councillor Fearon, the Cabinet Spokesperson for Community and Leisure, presented the report and recommendations of the Cabinet on the review of the grant aid policy.

In seconding the motion, Councillor Buckley welcomed the recommendations which had been put forward following consultation with local organisations and individuals.

Councillor MacInnes, Chairman of the Policy Review Group, indicated that the Group supported the proposed changes to the grant-aid criteria, subject to the following –

- (a) To delete the word “policies” in part 3 of the project criteria and insert therefor the words “aims and objectives”, which would be consistent with the wording in other parts of the document; and
- (b) To review the wording “be open to all” in the eligibility criteria, in order to clarify the meaning of this phrase.

Councillor Davidson, Vice-Chairman of the Policy Review Group, in supporting the amendments indicated that the wording “open for all” needed to be clarified in the context of organisations which were open but aimed at a particular group e.g. youth groups

Councillor Fearon agreed to incorporate the above amendments within the motion.

RESOLVED that -

- (a) the criteria, as amended as a result of the comments from the consultation process as set out in Appendix 1 attached to the report and subject to the amendments proposed by the Policy Review Group as set out above, be confirmed and implemented with effect from 1 April 2000;
  - (b) the Grants Committee be programmed to meet four times per year (June, September, December and March);
  - (c) facilities owned by religious organisations should be eligible for consideration for grant aid, subject to there being a well-defined programme of local community use and to the application meeting the approved criteria for grant aid; and
  - (d) all respondents to the consultation process be thanked for their contribution and be sent a copy of the revised criteria
- (17) EXTERNAL AUDIT VFM STUDY 1998/99 - SERVICE AND FINANCIAL PLANNING

The Council considered the report of the Chief Officers Management Team relating to the report of the External Auditors on the Value for Money Study in respect of service and financial planning, and proposing an action plan in response to the recommendations from the Auditor.

The Corporate Services Manager informed the Council that many of the issues identified by the External Audit report were already being addressed by the Best Value performance plans.

RESOLVED that -

the action plan shown at Appendix 1 of the report be endorsed.

The Meeting closed 9.25 p.m.

MAYOR