

TOWN TWINNING NETWORK

THURSDAY, 13 APRIL 2017

PRESENT:- Councillor Kevin Small (Chair), Councillor Junab Ali, Councillor Derique Montaut, Councillor Caryl Sydney-Smith, Cecilia Olley (Swindon Ocotal Link), Nazma Ramruttun (Swindon Mauritius Friendship Twinning) and Dave Richardson (Highworth Twinning Association)

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Oliver Donachie, Councillor Claire Ellis, Cristina Bennett, Mike Ide, Hassan Nur and Mark Sarnowski

15. Declarations of Interest

The Chair reminded Members of the need to declare any known interests in any matters to be considered at the meeting. No declarations were made.

16. Public Question Time

No public questions were received during the meeting.

17. Minutes

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 14th December 2016, be confirmed and signed as a correct record.

18. Swindon Salzgitter Twinning Association

The Network received a report from the Director of Law and Democratic Services about the difficulties experienced by the Swindon Salzgitter Twinning Association prior to its closure and the prospects of the Association being re-established at some point in the future.

The Director explained that he had spoken with the former Chair and Secretary of the Association, who had confirmed that he had stood down at the Association's Annual General Meeting held on 20th November 2015 due to health reasons. He explained that nominations were received for the post of treasurer but not for the Chair and Secretary's posts. The lack of interest from the remaining members of the Association led to the Association concluding that the UK side of the Association was unable to proceed, and a decision was made that it should cease operations.

It was noted that the majority of Association members were seniors, some with health issues and attempts to attract a younger membership had proved to be unsuccessful. Similar struggles were being experienced by the German side of the Association. In view of this, there did not appear to be any obvious enthusiasm from former members to commit time, energy and finances to re-engage or re-create links in the local community with the Association in Salzgitter.

The Chair explained that he would prefer that all avenues remain open to the Association being re-established as a viable and vibrant organisation. The Network was supportive of the Chair's view and in light of this, it was suggested that an event

be organised to publicise the importance of the work undertaken by the previous Association and how this could evolve into a modern link with friends in Salzgitter.

Resolved – That an event be organised to publicise and encourage support for the establishment of a new Swindon Salzgitter Twinning Association.

19. Reports from Town Twinning Associations and Links

The Network considered and noted a report of the Director of Law and Democratic Services of twinning activities undertaken by the Town Twinning Associations and Links in and around Swindon.

Verbal reports were given from the following Town Twinning Associations and Links present at the meeting:

Highworth Twinning Association

The Chair welcomed Dave Richardson, Treasurer of Highworth Twinning Association, to his first meeting as the Association's representative.

Mr Richardson reported on the success of previous visits by the Association to Pontorson, Normandy, France and Wassenberg, Germany and return visits to Highworth by the friends from France and Germany.

The Association had also held a number of successful fundraising events, including a safari lunch and music concert. A further visit to Pontorson was being arranged for the end of May 2017, and there were proposals for a visit to Wassenberg, later in the year. Arrangements were being made to host friends from Pontorson during December 2017 and suggestions for visits and entertainment were made, including visits to Christmas markets, concert, meals at restaurants, meeting the Mayor, Heritage Centre near Cardiff. It was noted that all guests would be accommodated in Association members homes and the only costs incurred related to transport to and from the twinning locations.

The Network discussed how the Association publicised its activities, the numbers attending Association meetings and how links with local secondary schools would benefit the longevity of the Association.

Swindon Ocotal Link (SOL)

Cecilia Olley reported on the recent cultural visit to Ocotal by a number of SOL members. The members visited a number of projects that the Link had supported over many years and how the quality of life has improved for those benefiting from the financial support. In particular, it was noted that funds raised had been used to help provide food at a refuge for abused women and providing school transport, uniform and books for about 40 children, bursaries, funding for a local clinic following hurricane Mitch, funding a kindergarten and help for an old people's home.

The Network received a letter from SOL and noted that members of SOL were considering the way forward for the organisation. There was a need to reduce administrative demands and limit its activities, although it was recognised that the emotional link to Ocotal would continue for many years. It was noted that SOL have

decided to terminate its charitable status, due to administration required, and the time and effort in maintaining a membership base. With this decision SOL would become a formally constituted body, with a constitution and bank account, but with an informal membership. The Network agreed with the Link that there was value to retaining the link between Swindon and Ocotal.

Swindon Mauritius Friendship Twinning

Nazma Ramruttun explained that she been unwell recently and was unable to visit Mauritius, as was her normal practice during other years. She explained that the former Mayor now had an ambassadorial role in Mauritius and the likelihood of him visiting Swindon in the future appeared to be slim.

The Chair was reminded that previous discussions with the Leader of the Council about a friendship twinning link with Mauritius had been put on hold for various reasons. The Chair confirmed that he would raise this issue with the Leader again.

Swindon/Salzgitter Twinning (Civic Visit)

The Chair reported on the planned Civic Visit by the Mayor of Swindon and a delegation of members to Salzgitter between 11th – 15th October 2017. He spoke about the possibility of visiting a number of industrial sites during the trip.

Resolved – (1) That the Activities of the Twinning Associations and Links be noted.

(2) That the letter about the change in status of the Swindon Ocotal Link be noted.

(3) That the Network values the retention of the link between Swindon and Ocotal

(4) That the Chair consults with the Leader of the Council regarding the proposed friendship twinning with Mauritius.